Plymouth Marjon University

Education

An Exploration of College Higher Education
Academic Identity using The Bead Collage
Technique

by

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Abstract

In all educational sectors, a performativity agenda impacts academic identity. This study explores the academic identity of college higher education (CHE) lecturers based at a South-West England Further Education (FE) college. Currently, 170 FE colleges in England offer undergraduate degrees registered with the Office for Students (OfS) (AOC, 2024). CHE lecturers are responsible for FE and Higher (HE) Education provision, often juggling the demands of both sectors to ensure quality teaching and learning for their students.

This study recruited twenty-seven participants to conceptualise their academic identity using the bead collage technique during eighteen focus groups. The two-stage approach saw participants engage with the bead collage technique to create bead collages in the initial focus groups, later the participants revisited their bead collage photographs during the 'chance to reflect' focus group (between two to four weeks later). Three key themes emerged from the study that formed the basis of the conclusion and recommendations for future practice. These explored the first theme: CHE Role Expectations and Requirements, the second theme: Being a Professional College Higher Education Lecturer and the third theme: The Creative Benefits of the Bead Collage Technique.

The study found CHE lecturer's contribution to HE students' teaching and learning requires greater recognition in the sector. Research and scholarly activity connected to pedagogy was acknowledged as promoting research-informed quality HE practices, whereas, often, any additional research beyond the scope of the job role was individually undertaken. The bead collage technique's unique contribution to creatively engage participants functioned as a successful vehicle for facilitating open, unencumbered discussion. Participants found the opportunity to stop, pause, and consider CHE's academic identity using the bead collage technique beneficial for reflective practice. The study identified that CHE lecturers consider themselves as pracademics, focusing on pedagogy and student achievements. Research was considered beneficial for pedagogical student focused development, with fewer engaging in research activities beyond the boundaries of CHE required scholarship. The study highlighted that CHE lecturers' role in the sector should be acknowledged as a valuable contribution to the widening participation agenda for students in local communities to reach their full potential.

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Statement of Originality

I confirm that I have fully acknowledged all sources of information and help received and that the work is my own where such acknowledgement is not made.

Signed: A D Milner

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My PhD journey has been a wonderful experience. I have had the opportunity to indulge in my research and creatively explore alternative ways of engaging with the world and preconceived ideas. A few intrepid travellers accompanied me as I paused and wondered at different places while journeying. I am thankful for their presence in my life. The inspiring discussions have strengthened my resolve to explore academic identity. From the early chats over coffee with Anna, Sam, Issy, and others, too many to mention, I imagined the research as it unfurled in my meandering thoughts. Chris, Elliot and Charlie, thank you for your patience and human response to some of my abstract ruminations. I thank Daphne Loads and Suzanne Culshaw for personally meeting and discussing my research methodology during the early stages of my design process. Thank you also for exploring ideas as I decided on the path I wished to take as I developed the golden thread of my research, Ian, Tanya and Helen. Thank you also goes to all my participants for giving, thoughts, and engaged interest in my research that contributed to the 'bead collage'. Like many journeys, there have been many trials and tribulations, but as the old saying goes, what doesn't break you makes you stronger – For this, I am grateful.

1. Introduction

Academic identity debate centres predominantly on the shifting roles and responsibilities in college higher education (CHE) (Billot & King, 2015; Neary & Winn, 2016; Whitchurch, 2008). With the delivery of Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) curriculums in the same setting, CHE's academic identity is hampered by the different requirements for lecturers' roles. Neary and Winn (2016) posit that professionalisation in academic identity is not the issue; instead, suggesting scholarship is intrinsic to the whole of academia. The confusion lies in Higher Education Providers (HEPs) adopting the use of different titles to represent academic roles and expectations (Clandinin et al., 2009). To fully appreciate the challenges surrounding CHE academic identity, it is essential to recognise the myriad of lecturers' contractual obligations, which Scaife (2004) suggested as 'frenetic structural instability' (p.1). This perceived or otherwise ambiguity around HE lecturing titles and subsequent roles are often used interchangeably in and outside the HE community (Whitchurch, 2007). Potentially adding to HE lecturers' identity confusion about the responsibilities to fulfil their role and job title. Distinguishable overlapping terms lead further to uncertainty for the HE lecturers themselves. There has been considerable research carried out in the context of CHE by Wilson (2007), Gale et al. (2011), Lloyd & Jones (2018) and Schofield (2018), but there remains an absence of exploration offering a specific focus on CHE academic identity. While a plethora of information surrounds perceptions of academic identity (Barrow et al., 2020; Feather, 2011), a gap remains regarding CHE lecturers' academic identity.

As a CHE lecturer, I must recognise the importance of my researcher role as an insider/outsider. The tensions with insider research highlight the evidential researcher's reflexive, interrogative conduct (Aiello & Nero, 2019). Therefore, rather than ignore the ever-present reflexivity strand as an insider/outsider. I embrace the merits of reflection throughout the research as reflexivity interweaves the thesis, illustrating my identity formation. Comprehensively connecting with the reflexive nature of my narrative, I use 'I', and sometimes I use the term' the researcher' to describe myself and capture my academic voice to identify experiential thoughts. Conversely, the third-person perspective includes an evidence-informed narrative to counter/substantiate and often acts as the pragmatic voice to ground the excitement of my emerging researcher identity.

The long-standing perception of identity formation draws on the personal, professional, or social standing within society (Harris, 2005). Though there are some stages in identity formation,

professional or academic, everyone wrestles with the confusing state of flux (Ennals et al., 2016).
Within FE colleges, this is even more apparent as CHE lecturers' academic identity is characterised by
individual accountability, value and belonging in the wider framework or structure (Whitchurch,
2008). Adherence to independently governed overarching centrally administered approaches for the
educational curriculum shapes FE College's academic identity (Augar, 2019). Unhelpfully, different
lecturer titles, roles and responsibilities are, as already referred, too often inherent in many pre-
existent management structures create complications (Gleeson et al., 2015). CHE lecturers' collective
identity remains a culturally multifaceted establishment in FE colleges, adding to the confusion and
blurring academic identity rather than a static role (Lewis, 2014). The lecturer's moniker is an identity
status symbol highly regarded in HEPs (Henkel, 2010) but not reflected in CHE. Academic identity
evolved representations are confined to organisational roles and responsibilities (Whitchurch, 2008).
Therefore, the research focus is the gap in the research about CHE academic identity.

The bead collage technique research method used for this study and discussed in 3: Methodology
supports how I chose to explore CHE lecturers' academic identity. To my knowledge, the research is
the first to explore academic identity incorporating the bead collage technique. The adoption of the
bead collage technique draws on an individual's engagement with a creative activity that is
intentional, relies on the production of a collage in context (Richards, 1999). Creatively producing an
original tangible form, the bead collage technique harnesses an individual's introspective strengths to
create. Generating meaning from initially unconnected items draws on the conceptualisation of ideas
being made real in the form of metaphors for individuals to make sense of the world (Brown, 2019;
Kapoor & Kaufman, 2020). Hereto is the formation of the bead collage technique to enable the
participants to explore their CHE lecturer's academic identity. The forthcoming sections illustrate and
introduce the formulation of the theory that underpin the research.

1.1   Outline of the Research

The research focuses on the perceptions of CHE lecturers' academic identity, including interpretations
of identity contextualised to the FE college setting (Clarke et al., 2013; Deem, 2006; Henkel, 2000;
Kogan, 2000). The distinction between academic identity in traditional universities and CHE
provision remains unclear when CHE lecturers fulfil the same roles and expectations as traditional
universities (Flecknoe et al., 2017). Many misperceptions about the CHE lecturer role are associated

with the challenges of meeting the increasing student needs. The HE curriculum is often considered an extension of the growing range of FE courses offered in FE colleges (Parry, 2009). FE colleges' provision is seen as responsive to the local community (Bathmaker, 2016). If FE colleges presented a clearer resume of courses offered in the local community, perhaps the misunderstanding of the provision offered would be alleviated. Clarifying FE and HE courses would help dispel the misperceptions faced by CHE lecturers' roles and academic identities (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005).

The setting for the research study is an FE college in Southwest of England. HE student numbers in the college are small compared to universities at approximately 600. However, the college offers a gold standard experience for student's learning experiences. The college promotes study programmes for a lasting passion to provide a wealth of learning options, enabling individuals to advance into the workforce and provide the foundation for success. Based on the four-day Higher Education Review 2015 findings, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) was awarded a positive college assessment. It is ranked as one of the top universities in the country, according to the Report for Higher Education Studies (2015), and one of the best providers of student satisfaction in England. In 2017, the college received the Teaching Excellence Framework's highest accolade, "Gold," for exceptional teaching within the university-level curriculum. The college upholds outstanding academic standards to foster personal growth and broaden graduate skills. Therefore, the decision to use the college in question to explore CHE lecturers' academic identity is aligned with the quality provision offered. Inquiry into the perceptions of CHE lecturers' academic identity in an award-winning FE college is well-placed to enhance the CHE setting.

In September 2019, the college was awarded Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (FDAP) after a thorough and comprehensive assessment outlined by The Right to Award UK Degrees guide (QAA, 2018). For FDAP to be awarded, "the organisation needs to be a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to quality assurance supported by effective quality and enhancement systems" (QAA, 2018). The FDAP award enabled the college to grant foundation degrees to students. The shift provided a nuanced accountability for the college and CHE lecturers. At the time of FDAP, the CHE lecturers' experience was extensive in their areas of expertise. In many ways, the permission granted by FDAP to award degrees celebrated the work and academic roles the CHE lecturers were already performing. The college was significant transformed by the FDAP award, generating income to financially stabilise the HE curriculum, jobs and recognition in the sector. CHE lecturer's contribution to the FDAP award reenforced the already well established HE community at

the college. Historically, the college has worked with local businesses to improve and offer educational opportunities for the community (The College, 2024). The college has gained national recognition for its continued development to serve the local area. As one of the nation's foremost suppliers of CHE, the college continues to celebrate the CHE lecturer's contribution to FDAP, which is distinct from the FE provision offer (The College, 2024) The college's position as an outstanding provider of higher professional and technical education is an accolade fewer than ten further education colleges in the United Kingdom (UK) currently hold (The College, 2024).

The terms FE and CHE interchangeably identify the college context to determine the differences between the curriculum offered and the pedagogical framework. For clarity, the term college is adopted throughout. Any subsequent gaps identified within the literature and research explore the enquiry of CHE academic identity. The research encompasses the two main strands of inquiry outlined in the research questions below:

1. What, if any, are the unique attributes that contribute to the concept of CHE academic identity?
2. What impact does the bead collage technique have on research about academic identity?

1.2   Background Context of the Research

As a lecturer in a mixed economy, HE/FE setting, I can see how the development of my interest in values stemmed from my childhood experience when, with my family, I attended the local village Methodist church. Methodism has continued to inform my professional identity. From an early age, specific values rooted in Methodist polemicism were embedded in my life, acting as threads that bound family and community together. My values stem from the experiences of a secure network of individuals and family. I have since identified links between Methodist thinking and Humanism. Twin doctrines enable stability of self and mind [1]. Identification and attraction toward humanistic thinking have become my second nature, remaining foremost in my pedagogy and learning role today.

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[1] Humanism and Methodism are two different approaches to understanding human nature for guiding personal growth. Humanism highlights the importance of individual uniqueness and values personal agency and self-actualisation. Methodism, conversely, focuses on a person's spiritual, emotional, and social aspects as they relate to their actions, with personal piety and growth being key values. Despite their differences, personal agency (free will) for the pursuit of self-actualisation or holiness is in tune with their commitment to social justice (Cuadra-Martínez, 2019). Additionally, they both place the importance of education as a tool for personal growth and critical thinking. For humanists' compassion and equality upholds the inherent worth and dignity of every person, while Methodism values reason and

My humanistic approach to life personally and professionally influences the epistemological grounding of my research. I believe people have a positive impact in the world, a sentiment often reflected by professional educators and their impact, strength, resourcefulness, and continued faith in education on students. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) assert that the relationship between a researcher's study, design and conduct aligns with their epistemological stance. My theoretical framework has been developed and influenced by a constructionist approach, implying that a meaningful reality, suggesting that understanding, learning, and knowledge are achieved via subjective lived experiences situated in practice (Gravett & Ajjawi, 2021). The interpretive epistemological framework adopted for my research explores CHE lecturer perceptions of academic identity. Drawn from the interpretivist philosophy, the reflexive lens (Attia & Edge, 2017) supports the exploration of CHE lecturer's academic identity to address research question 1 (RQ1): What, if any, are the unique attributes that contribute to the concept of CHE academic identity? Meanwhile, research question 2 (RQ2): What impact does the bead collage technique have on research about academic identity? adopts both a feminist and reflexive lens to inform the research design. They are related to the creative approach often championed through a feminist lens for hearing and listening to individual voices (Mannay, 2015; Ravetz & Gregory, 2018). In conjunction with the reflexive lens, the research embodies the opportunity to reflect on academic identity organised through focus groups (FG) (Aiello & Nero, 2019; Gilmore & Kenny, 2015).

The methodological interpretative framework positions a subtle interpretation of knowing the world through individual experiences, contributing to the contextualisation of understanding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; 1988). My educational approach focuses on the value of learning for staff and students alike, entwined with the value of my doctoral research. Often, academic discourse is firmly embedded in the belief and value of the merits of educational learning (Taylor, 1998). My positionality as an insider/outsider in the research acknowledges the interplay between the two roles, repeatedly offering a complex mixture of feelings (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Hamdan, 2009; Robson, 1999). My interpretations and analysis of what I see, hear, and experience during the research are informed by my perceptions, what I value, believe and consider important (Braun & Clarke, 2022a), in my practice as a CHE lecturer. Interchangeably, my perceptions highlight the challenges of an insider/outsider researcher (Taylor, 2017). My close proximity to the research offers heightened awareness of the

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compassion as a foundation for guiding spiritual and ethical lives (Forster, 2018). Overall, there is a strong connection between individuality, holistic perspectives, and personal growth connecting humanistic approaches and Methodism in their underlying principles.

lived experience (Cousin, 2008; Delamont, 2009; Duncan, 2004), a valuable insight to understand the research area.

Pedagogical practices often depend on a lecturer's beliefs and decision-making for individual identity (Donche & Van Petegem, 2011) and when working as part of a team in an organisation (Ennals et al., 2016). Unfortunately, in my experience as a CHE lecturer, this has not always been the case, often with leadership directing requirements for the curriculum, sometimes against my better judgment. Relationship dynamics in the CHE community at the FE college in the Southwest of England, in part, determined my actions, role and accountability to the students, the staff in my team (lecturers that teach on the programmes I coordinate), and the wider FE community.

Historically, I have often been a confidant for colleagues to share their concerns or queries about practices, presenting a different perspective for them to reflect on their feelings, actions and behaviours. Meyerson and Scully (1995) and Blackwell & Blackmore (2003) adopt the term 'tempered radical' to express the tension often experienced in professional practice when an individual's values, beliefs and practices appear at odds with the organisation. Tempered radicals use gradual, strategic actions to promote positive change while balancing their membership in the dominant work culture (Meyerson & Scully, 1995; Blackwell & Blackmore, 2003). Those without recognition work quietly in the shadows and gradually have a significant impact. As a tempered radical (Meyerson & Scully, 1995; Blackwell & Blackmore, 2003), I believe that the juxtaposition of ethical practice is present in the recruitment and ongoing conduct of participants in the research. The participants could share thoughts and feelings that are counterintuitive to the professional practices undertaken, which are expected in CHE and the organisation (Robson, 1999). Adherence to professional boundaries includes confidentiality (Robson, 1999) and open engagement so that participants' experiences are modelled in a fair and balanced, non-judgmental way (Acker, 2000).

As I wrestle with the role and responsibility of being a CHE lecturer, I am aware of the limitations of my identity as a professional and academic. Professional interactions with fellow lecturers have piqued my interest in their roles and responsibilities working in the CHE environment. The evolving sense of professional identity is highlighted by the amalgamation of several selves in formation (Feather, 2016). CHE academic identity resides as a unique perspective of professional identity where challenges often remain daily (Ennals et al., 2016). Reflections have often led me to value the

importance of my research journey about being and becoming a CHE academic. This has enabled me to feel a sense of pride in my academic transition, which is tied up with my PhD journey.

I present the Kaleidoscope theory to understand better the immersive experience of identity formation and reformation during my PhD journey (Milner, 2022) (see Appendix 1 - The Kaleidoscope Theory). The Kaleidoscope theory (Milner, 2022) (see Appendix 1 - The Kaleidoscope Theory) demonstrates my conceptual framework that allows researchers to explore and comprehend their surroundings while deriving significance from the various experiences they have along the way. This method of self-disclosure during the research process takes advantage of the chance to highlight the frequently underappreciated abilities and tools produced during the research process as a conscious involvement leading to outcomes (Batliwala, 1994). Multiple formative suggestions are pivotal for influencing different researchers' views during the research process, leading to the development of Kaleidoscope theory (Milner, 2022). Individual perspectives at the start, middle, and conclusion of the research period are encouraged by Billot and King (2015), Lamont and Nordberg (2014), and Taylor (2017) as a crucial experience that moulds the researcher's identity. My reflective journey during the PhD research process is linked theoretically to the Kaleidoscope theory (Milner, 2022) (see Appendix 1 - The Kaleidoscope Theory) which acknowledges the research experience (Barrow et al., 2020; Zhou & Hall, 2018). Often researchers begin to reflect on the development of self-knowledge during the journey's reflective stages.

Pursuing self-identification requires either a deeply shared understanding or cultivated meaning to appreciate professional roles and responsibilities in communities of practice [2] (Ennals et al., 2016). Professional recognition suggests an additional personal aim to provide a sense of worth to fulfil the role. Self-perception becomes a factor when considered within the already established HE academic community to relieve individual feelings of importance and self-worth (Delanty, 2008). The collective identity of CHE lecturers' are governed by the professional organisations (in this case, the research site) assumed naming convention of roles and responsibilities already in place (Hökkä et al., 2017). The collective identity links to the site of my research, a CHE setting in the Southwest of England. If, as proposed, identity is a forerunner of established titles, the conventions for establishing meanings and interpretations from lived experiences play a part (Slay & Smith, 2011). Among these

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[2] Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger coined the term community of practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1998). A CoP is formed when a group of individuals share a common interest or passion related a particular area. The group collaborate, learning from each other as they work together. CoP are formed when there is a shared mutual interest or when working together on a common project, for example in education, course or programme teams. The shared experience draws the individuals together forming personal and professional growth (Hollweck et al., 2022).

conventions, the interaction between the importance placed on professional relationships could have a bearing on identity. Jenkins' (2008) point supports identity formation conducive to interrelationships with colleagues, students and communities at work. The sense of belonging created in education, individually and collectively for many, remains a pivotal transition for realising a sense of professional community (Lamont & Norberg, 2014; Wenger, 1998). In the professional workplace, individual traits or characteristics link to a collective meaning of identity (Jenkins, 2008). Interpretations of identity often are too simplistic as there are many variations and explanations for consideration (Ingleby, 2015). As will be discussed in the forthcoming chapters, identity can be individual and collective. This study will explore both individual and collective aspects of identity, to understand how lecturers' CHE academic identity is formed. In the following section, I will explore the formation of CHE to begin to explore the significance of CHE lecturer academic identity.

1.3   The Formation of College Higher Education

CHE emerged from HE as educational diversification was introduced in the 1960s. The 1963 Robbins Report led to knowledge accessibility for individuals previously excluded from elitist educational opportunities (Barnett, 1990, 2003). The widening participation (WP)[3] agenda (Dearing, 1960) aimed to address the discrepancies in HE, introducing fair access to students from underrepresented backgrounds, removing barriers such as income and disadvantaged backgrounds to study, graduate and improve chances of employability (Hubble & Connell-Smith, 2018). This resulted in the formation of polytechnics with the foundations of vocational expertise (Bathmaker, 2016; Nixon, 1996). A clear divide in the merits of academic versus vocational education was still evident through parity of esteem (Tight, 2015). Until the introduction of the Further Education and Higher Education Act 1992 HEPs were still focusing on academic courses, with polytechnics on vocational. The changes in HE funding introduced as part of the Further Education and Higher Education Act 1992 lead to the shift in focused curriculum. Previously viewed constraints of educational providers were openly making HE provision more accessible (Parry et al., 2012). Following the 1997 Dearing Report, the provision

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[3] Introduced in the 1960's the widening participation (WP) agenda aims to widen access to education by increasing diversity in the United Kingdom. Following the Dearing Report in 1997, WP was refocused to include access and WP for all learners by becoming the role of local and regional higher education (Thompson, 2019) providers.

modification led to the formation of modern HE in FE, with partnerships and pedagogic strategies fostered.

The Association of Colleges (AOC) was founded in 1996 as a not for profit organisation to support professionals' and colleges' collective voices from FE, sixth form, tertiary and specialist colleges (AOC, 2021). CHE represents HE in FE colleges. The chosen moniker CHE represents the body of College Higher Education as the term identified by the QAA in their Review of College Higher Education: A Handbook for Colleges (2012). Changes in provision, pedagogy and responsibility led to the introduction of FDAP (Esmond, 2021). There was a significant shift towards student choice for undertaking HE studies in colleges for FE colleges. HE has been a stalwart of universities in contemporary education's diversification of curricula fostered in the UK education system (Turner et al., 2015). HE courses are offered in various forms of study in numerous locations to accommodate the learning needs of CHE and identify it as a dynamic and systematic pedagogy (Gale et al., 2011). Contractual obligations are heavily teaching-focused, and there is a new expectation to engage in scholarly activity, sometimes completed beyond the professional role of staff (Whitchurch, 2012).

The growing need for lecturers to ensure quality in HE teaching and learning provision has become essential for the metrics-driven economy of HE. Shifting the focused facilitation of a metrics-driven provision in HEPs impacts the CHE student-focused approach. The WP agenda, in part, contributed to the growth in the diversification of skills and qualifications held by undergraduates on entry to HEPs (Bathmaker, 2016; Parry et al., 2012; Thompson, 2019). Increased student applications from diverse backgrounds to CHE continued to stretch the resources and skills of academic staff. Similarly, the policy shift provided flexibility in HE offers, creating accessibility for entrants from areas surrounding local colleges (Parry et al., 2012).

The emergence of regulating bodies such as the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in the early 2000s developed a consistent policy for HEPs. In addition, the direction of regulatory practices clarified the management of CHE staff and students' expectations (King & Widdowson, 2012a; HEFCE, 2003). Dualism in the sector became apparent when permission was granted for students to move from one area to another between traditional HEPs and CHE (Bathmaker et al., 2008). As CHE resources are significantly smaller than conventional HEPs, the provision offered alongside the skillset of staff between the two often appear incongruous.

Nevertheless, one set of rules for the sector applied to differing provisions and structures led to FE and HE being pushed further apart (Parry et al., 2012).

In FE, students gained qualifications closely aligned with the sector and future employment with the opportunity to engage in and with practice and industry to enhance learning (Widdowson and King, 2018). Despite the growing trend for education to enable, empower and lead students to find a job, HE provisions are now answerable to several growing employability metrics (Gleeson et al., 2015). FE has always provided the necessary skills training for employment, yet they remain measured alongside HEP for student characteristics, provider location, and provision (Donovan, 2019; King & Widdowson, 2012a). HEPs offer accredited provisions outside of foundation degrees. Accreditation is a process that confirms opportunities for professional development that are aligned with the professional standards framework (PSF). The professional identity of lecturers delivering the same courses but in different organisations may direct the delivery and assessment of courses (Donovan, 2019; King & Widdowson, 2012a). Traditionally, the teaching of HE in FE is fragmented. Coursework is integrated into the FE delivery, and part-time lecturers are often employed on a sessional basis (Feather, 2010).

The Foster review of the FE college landscape (2005) acknowledges the need to develop the skills of adults in the UK to increase the country's economic success (DfE (Department for Education), 2019). The decline in funding affected the disparity of resources available (Hicks, 2012), with all HEPs still expected to compete with an appropriate student offer. In CHE, expectations continue to drive the WP agenda (DfE, 2019). The approach to HE delivery in FE is one where the learner comes first, and their learning is assessed and worked upon to aid the transition from FE to HE (King & Widdowson, 2012a). Unfortunately, the OfS (2020) does not allow these differences, expecting dualized provisions measured by the same quality metrics. CHE still supports and nurtures students in the college's locale, thus showing an appreciation for prospective students seeking entry to CHE. There remains a place for various provisions to accommodate the growing need for potential student applications to continue individualised HE learning journeys.

Whereas the evolving nature of academic environments correlates with perceived or actual changes in academic identity (Feather, 2016; Henkel, 2005), CHE introduces a new way of examining academic identity. Indeed, with the introduction of new HEPs in the 1990s, academic roles have shifted with significant diversification of roles and responsibilities, including the WP agenda (Lamont & Nordberg,

2014; DfE, 2019). Alongside the diverse demands on CHE lecturers to deliver HE courses on behalf of HEPs, there is a growing trend for educational change in different forms. HE has altered society in response to the reshaping of students' attainment for graduate places introduced in the late 1990s by the then Labour Government (DfEE, 2000). The Government pledged that 50 percent of young people would gain a university education with the realisation met twenty years after the manifesto (Parry & Thompson, 2002). Educational reforms introduced the pledge to uphold widening the choice and options for students to undertake HE study (Augar, 2019).

The shift to increase the number of young people gaining university places led to widening student opportunities and has also led to the diversification of HE (Augar, 2019). Effectively instigating a noticeable change in how HEPs viewed their offer to prospective students has led to adjustments in their practices. The academic community-maintained support subsequently changed to meet growing student and sector demands and learning needs (Ntim et al., 2017). With academic upskilling, CHE lecturers are required to meet the growing needs of students, which have become generally become more pressing in HEPs (Smith & Walker, 2022). Additional emphasis on the role and service of students has resulted in CHE lecturers undertaking scholarly activity (Healey et al., 2014a). Confusion surrounding CHE lecturers' identity necessitates their focus on the pedagogy elements of teaching and learning instead of professional academic self-development or both (Ennals et al., 2016). Exploration of the contextual landscape leads to the following section considering CHE lecturers' academic identity.

1.4   Academic Identity in College Higher Education

CHE lecturers' academic identity alignment often incorporates the role and job description. Feather (2011) highlights the complex nature of CHE academic identity, which can be compounded by contractual obligations in FE colleges where there is provision for HE students. The complexity of identity is surrounded by different meanings and understandings for individuals, which has led to challenges in finding a definitive meaning (Barrow et al., 2020), emphasising an inconsistency with the positioning of HE lecturers in FE colleges. The rise in mixed academic identities influencing practice and recognition of the continual demands on organisations with revision of roles and accountability should be acknowledged (Whitchurch, 2008). Barnett (1990) suggests that the deconstruction and

construction of identity formation of HE lecturers continues to evolve in the creation of HE communities. Nevertheless, confusion in terms of the labels accorded with the lecturer role is continuing to be recognised, delineating differences and variety in practice and research (Gleeson et al., 2015; Lloyd & Jones, 2018). CHE lecturers have both a professional academic identity and roles that are determined, in part, by the changes within HE (Archer, 2008). As such, CHE communities are richly diverse, with differing needs and requirements revolving around the students.

Academic staff working as college lecturers are characteristically employed on FE teaching-only contracts; gradually, lecturers are expected to undertake research and scholarly activity (RSA) alongside their teaching (Healey et al., 2014b; Lloyd & Jones, 2018). In traditional university settings contracts differ depending on the direction of the role, whether the lecturer is scholarship or teaching focused the different role requirements will have to be met (Smith & Walker, 2022). In line with Boyer's (1990) scholarship model, all college lecturers continued professional development (CPD) requires regular updating to ensure currency in the role. However, the regular scholarship updates for individuals are and can be directed by the college. Often with less autonomy for CHE lecturers' to seek their own scholarship outside of the college. Enhancement, change and reflection are fundamental for the continued growth of CHE educational practices (Cordingley, 2015). These changes in practice align with strategic political alterations for student entry offers in HE, alongside constraints and limitations for academic staff to meet the demands and trends highlighted by government bodies (King & Widdowson, 2009; Gilmore, 2019). Individual reflective practice for development ensures the accountability of professionals in their pedagogy. Additionally, the continual organisational updating required each academic year could be viewed as placing a strain and pressure on the professionals in the sector. Academic practice identity affects individual differences and similarities in the CHE community in alignment with Wenger's (2008) conceptualisation of communities of practice (CoP).

The impact of the transition into a new role or changes in the leadership structure of a HEP can have implications for professional and academic practices (Kok & McDonald, 2017). Even when introducing or reintroducing new lecturers into the already complex nature of HE communities of practice, there are often challenges. Despite the possible tensions encountered when joining a new team, as part of CHE or the wider HE community, there are often nuanced differences in practice. Any potential for pedagogical alterations can cause consternation for the lecturers around the goals of a teaching team and organisations (Briggs, 2017). These differences can stem from experience in a different

educational setting, pedagogical expertise, or personality (Edwards & Blake, 2007). In HE communities of practice, continual amendments to quality practices have sometimes fostered unease (Winter, 2009). This was highlighted with the formation of the OfS (2020), which identified universities that already conform to a lecturer's scholarship to meet the needs of students. In CHE, academic scholarship requirements were seen as trailing universities (Kim et al., 2021; Tierney et al., 2020). The continual stress of meeting the shifting demands of the government and regulatory bodies to uphold institutional standards confuses the already complex nature of CHE's academic identity.

Nevertheless, the perceived challenge of workloads experienced by lecturers in HEPs differs from those in CHE, with a shift of emphasis on scholarship and pedagogy (Kim et al., 2021). Diversification of research responsibility is not solely the property of HEPs. Nevertheless, CHE has a rich teaching environment, with lecturers with experience in professional practice (Turner et al., 2015). Evidence-informed research practice follows a similar trend that permeates the growth of academic scholarly engagement. Drawn from the community of CHE, the lecturer's knowledge and experience usher in a change in the formation of research in non-traditional HE (Parry, 2009). The starting position for each is diverse, with importance placed on scholarship from different perspectives, including recognition for research embedded in practice signifying changes in CHE lecturer's perception of professional scholarly activity.

Research-informed CHE lecturers' pedagogical practice could be considered the foremost part of their identity. Respect for evidence-informed and research-engaged pedagogy fundamentally alters lecturers' potential engagement with their students (Evans & Kozhevnikova, 2011; Kim et al., 2021). CHE lecturers' interaction and approach to students' learning enhance their practice in the college environment, empowering lecturers to diversify teaching practice, assessments and research (Lamont & Nordberg, 2014; Lloyd & Jones, 2018; Simmons & Lea, 2013). Far from the natural inclination for a pedagogy-informed practice in university, CHE may be acknowledged with outstanding pride of place in educational circles, the historical foci of a student-centred approach (King & Widdowson, 2013b). Pedagogical focus in universities is currently being addressed with the requirements of evidence for submitting the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) (2019). On balance, the evidence offered by CHE stands up to the same scrutiny in the sector and demonstrates a competitive reorientation of HE (Gray et al., 2013). However, whilst some aspects of practice plateau, any deficit in size, funding and student numbers and lecturers scholarship, is linked to the prospect of research-informed practice becoming the norm for CHE lecturers (Smith & Walker, 2022).

Identity is complex, with different meanings and understandings for individuals, and it is challenging to find a definitive definition (Feather, 2016). Professional identity development, including an academic focus, caters to how individuals interpret identity (Skelton, 2005). Given the complexity of individual perceptions surrounding identity, it becomes further complicated when shrouded within practice (Schmidt, 2011; Wenger, 1998). In comparison, Jenkins (2008) emphasised that identity stems from the relationships between individuals, collectives and organisations with varying degrees of similarity and difference. At any given point, identity can be represented by a state of flux, depending on the time of the academic career or year (Turner et al., 2009a). The complexity of interpreting identity formation is diversely challenging, given the generic meaning connected to the terminology. Weber and Mitchell (1995; 1996) evidence narrative discourse as an innovative interaction of creative activity becoming a vehicle to discover an answer. Individuals are given the tools to investigate thoughts about their identity and are better prepared to pinpoint meaning that makes sense (Munday et al., 2017). As such, conceptualising a creative method to frame the exploration of CHE academic identity is a boon for an unresearched area.

Whitchurch (2010) recognised the implication of exploring professional identity, suggesting that the workplace is central to academic traits. My perception of a lecturer's academic identity is intriguing; I am interested in my CHE academic identity and contextual belonging. Therefore, an insider/outsider research reflective exploration of my experiences of what it means to be a CHE academic captures my reflective journey. For this, I introduce the Buffer-fly concept (Milner, 2017) (see Appendix 2 - The Buffer-fly Concept) to explore my research journey, offering a contextual transition of my personal and professional buffered self. Transitional development of self-perception is buffered by time and experience (Mansfield et al., 2016). There is much significance in forming academic and pedagogical skills to be practiced and realised within an educational setting.

The CHE CoP is situated in a uniquely diverse environment supportive of the sector's growing needs for lecturers and students (Wilson, 2007; Kim et al., 2021). As Lave and Wenger (1998) assert, a CoP exists in varied learning environments where individuals share practice. CHE at the college where my research is based is uniquely smaller than most universities, incorporating a wide range of subject areas, differing significantly from larger HEPs in capacity and geographical space (Flecknoe et al., 2017). In universities, students and lecturers in the individual faculties or departments form smaller communities of practice (Habel & Whitman, 2016; Kim et al., 2021). The university community focuses on HE pedagogical practices where research is central to lecturers' professional development

(Child, 2009). My perception is that this has only sometimes been the case in CHE, alternatively lecturers experienced professional progression both within the college and to external organisations (Mason et al., 2010). Perhaps, my experience of the small scale HE provision at my college compared with the FE curriculum has impacted my perception, for example the FE students numbers exceed that of HE.

Pedagogical alterations can present consternation around the goals of teaching teams and organisations. Nevertheless, within HE CoP, with CHE leadership and lecturers having different perceptions of quality (Winter, 2009). Whereas CHE leadership viewed the importance of compliance to meet budgetary needs to keep the business buoyant, CHE lecturers are student focused. Therefore, CHE lecturers are required to fulfil and conform to quality teaching and learning practices to meet student curriculum needs, sometimes the scholarship focus outside of the job role is ignored (Mittelmeier et al., 2024). The formation of the OfS (2020) intensified universities' requirements to meet the needs of students, often creating a compromise between tangible data and student relationships (Healey et al, 2014a). Consequently, CHE was identified as increasingly trailing in its quest to meet academic scholarship requirements (Simmons & Lea, 2013). The complex nature of CHE lecturers' academic identity is partly linked to the continually shifting demands experienced within the sector, from the government and regulatory bodies to institutional standards (Campbell, 2019).

CHE, the CoP, engages lecturers in college-wide activities such as quality meetings, with standardisation and HE-focused updates distinct from those in FE. Though there is often crossover when updating is required for collegewide systems, support and mentoring of new colleagues do span both disciplines. HE lecturers are familiar with each other and have a shared identity beyond the organisation's academic curriculum and quality assurance processes (Bennett et al., 2016). Suggesting lecturer identity significantly depends on a 'dialogic relationship' (Lopes & Calapez, 2012, p.89) that is fostered with other lecturers in CHE. Familiarity with the organisation and a developmental understanding of the professional needs required to fulfil the job is unique to each organisation (Ennals et al., 2016; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2014). At the college, the site of my research, the collective agreement, which is not unusual in a working environment, is a guide to managing the expectations of the staff team. The college collective agreement outlines the supportive culture of the college with provisions listed to garner a collaborative workforce. At the

college, the collective agreement provides information about the remitted [4] time allocation for those undertaking additional qualifications, in part to demonstrate a commitment to the culture of the college. However, there are differences of opinion related to the operationalisation of the collective agreement. Whilst the collective agreement is central to the allocation of hours lecturers are contractually obliged to complete, where the remitted time allotted to additional roles is not evidenced there. For example, undertaking a higher-level qualification generates an extra hour of remitted teaching to enable a lecturer to study, as CHE does not account for individual academic scholarships. There are fewer examples in FE colleges where remitted time for scholarship is reflected due to the teaching focus to meet timetable requirements (Widdowson & King, 2019). To explore the CHE academic identity, the following section outlines the methodology, including the bead collage technique method.

1.5   Methodology Including the Chosen Methods

Two identified contributions of my research commence with a contextual focus on academic identity with the bead collage technique - a creative method within my methodological approach. Enquiry into these foci culminates in a response to the two research questions guiding the design, implementation and analysis. Justification for the theoretical framework identified the decision to align the research design to incorporate the bead collage technique into the focus groups. The distinct formation of all elements provides a novel yet innovative approach to research with an exploration of CHE lecturer's academic identity. Others have used creative methodologies in their anthropologic research approaches in the past (Loads, 2009; Leitch, 2006; Barron et al., 2008). I have explored the transitional state identified in the Chrysalis concept (Milner, 2021) (see Appendix 3 - The Chrysalis Concept) to demonstrate the holistic nature of the research with its interconnecting strands. Creative conceptual imagery may be identified in the research design and implementation based on Kay's work (2013a).

In 2013, Kay (2013a) introduced a collage with beads, following an arts-based workshop, inviting participants to share their thoughts, feelings and reflections with beads. Coming from an art therapy

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[4] Remitted time is often filled by other colleagues in the team. The allocation of an appropriate person to effectively cover the teaching can add additional pressure on the remaining team members.

background, Kay (2013a) identifies the benefits of explorative creative methods. However, whilst I am interested in the therapeutic medium of art therapy, it is not the research focus. The bead collage technique is a conduit to explore the research methodology (to be explored in greater depth in 1.5.1: Bead Collage Technique and 3: Methodology). Gauntlett (2018) suggests that 'the thoughtful, physical process of making something - such as a video, a drawing, a decorated box, or a Lego model - an individual is allowed to reflect, and to make their thoughts, feelings or experiences manifest and tangible.' (p.3). The discussion focuses on the bead collage technique to facilitate reflection and uncover meaning and significance for analysis. Using the bead collage technique as a method to explore CHE lecturers' academic identity seems appropriate, given my methodological approach. In the following section, I will outline the complexities of the method.

1.5.1   Bead Collage Technique

Roberts and Woods (2018) adopt collage to explore 'hidden meanings' (p.626). Additionally, conceptualising 'individual participant's narratives' to illicit participant's 'reflective engagement' in collage illustrates the strength of their experiences' (Culshaw, 2019, p.269). Eisner (2004) cites that the development of form and content creates an interaction that generates beneficial unification of mind and body. Holistic thought emphasises the rich opportunities for exploration, meaning, and learning that emerge naturally in the creative arts (Black, 2011; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997), including a creative method aligned with my innovative approach to life, enabled authentic engagement through each stage of the research journey. Justification for the interpretivist research philosophical approach question posed in support of the creation of the bead collage technique indicates a research study's rigour (Biggs, 2005). My motivation for adopting the creative bead collage technique as a method is supported by a growing trend for visual data (Kara, 2015; Kay, 2013a; Loads, 2009; Mannay et al., 2018; Roberts & Woods, 2018). The embodied form of academic identity conceptualised through the bead collage technique removes the requirement for gathering rigid written forms of data (Burge et al., 2016). Instead, an open discussion that takes place around the formation of an artefact using your hands can be less obstructive (Biggs, 2002). I removed the requirement for pen and paper for individuals to develop a concentrated introspection, fuelling experiential reflexive self-learning (Moon, 2004). In turn, the methodological and conceptual framework nurtures reflexivity to be appreciated and accomplished individually.

Conceptualising the bead collage technique as a conduit to harness creative self-expression (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005) can nurture contemplation. The pilot study trialled the bead collage technique in preparation for the main study. The meaningful act of piloting the bead collage technique became a rehearsal for the main study and tested preconceived expectations for my research and I. Anticipation of any actions or exhibited behaviours from the participants or moderator remains central to testing the trustworthiness of the research tool (Celestina, 2018; Nowell et al., 2017). The artful actions visualised during the bead collage technique become a transformative process for individuals (Black, 2002, 2011), leading participants to reflect on their sense of self, place and community entwined with academic identity perceptions (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Feather, 2016). As Olmos-Vega et al. (2023) acknowledge,

> '... reflexivity is a set of continuous, collaborative, and multifaceted practices through which researchers self-consciously critique, appraise, and evaluate how their subjectivity and context influence the research processes.' (p.241)

Therefore, creating an environment for participants' self-expressive reflexivity strengthens the bead collage technique as an artful vehicle promoting verbal interactions. Loads (2010), Bager-org and Loads (2013), Kay (2013a; 2013b), Roberts and Woods (2018) and Culshaw (2019) recognise the benefits of the bead collage technique as a fruitful medium to foster reflexive discussions. The conceptualisation of the bead collage technique draws on feminist ideals to interpret, explore and reformat ideas for academic identity (Hookway, 2017). Ropers-Huilman and Winters (2011) advocate the central tenets of feminist theory as an acknowledgement of change to radicalise practice, sharing feelings and beliefs previously hidden. Both collage and the bead collage technique offer a chance to transform consciousness, challenging previous interpretations of identity to establish new meaning and understanding (Kay, 2013a). Any discoveries identified by the participants may develop alternative CHE academic identities that individuals may consider. The data generated by the bead collage technique is supplemented by the insider/outsider reflections.

1.5.2 Researcher Positionality

My positionality in research design and enquiry enables a connective, authentic consideration of the benefits of an insider/outsider approach to academic identity research. The importance of self-discovery, removed from the hedonistic view of ego strength coined by Kornfield et al. (2003), began to shape my authentic self. As I commenced my research journey, my self-awareness developed as I became the insider/outsider researcher. As Loads (2009) suggests, the tenets of humanism, illustrated by Rogers (1961/2004), conceptualise authenticity, congruence and self-acknowledgement attributed to recovering the self. Affirming my humanistic perspective places importance on the authorised knower (Hegerty, 2008), an individual removed from traditional HE practices towards the intrinsic learning process. For me, the combined holistic perspective remains in the strands of the research. Including the human aspect rather than the expected formal research processes strengthens the developmental self-knowledge to become a meaningful and transformational researcher (Stronach et al., 2007).

My authentic self is 'intricately interwoven' (Cunliffe, 2018, p.8) into the sense of knowing who I am, extending my professional identity. As a lecturer in CHE, an identity I am proud of, my personal and professional values are embedded into the practice and the work I do with the students, lecturers and the organisation. I align with my Buffer-fly concept (Milner, 2017) (see Appendix 2 - The Buffer-fly Concept) as distinct parts of my identity are balanced by my nature, professionally and personally. Recognition of the Buffer-fly concept (Milner, 2017) (see Appendix 2 - The Buffer-fly Concept) enables the consolidation of a richer self-awareness in my practices, professionally as a lecturer and a PhD student. Nevertheless, my identification of individual values such as power, beliefs, conformity, selfhood, acceptance, and trust all determine the natural alignment to the political motivations of the professional role (Milner, 2018). Aspects of self-identification encompass the importance placed on the values and attributes of being a professional (Luke & Gourd, 2018). The developed awareness of how and why educational practices are evolving opens my eyes to the local and wider community within society, in alignment with Hegerty's paper (2008). I found a connection with the term tempered radical (Scully & Meyerson, 1995; Blackwell & Blackmore, 2003), which reinforced my theoretical and reflexive positionality. Mason et al. (2010) suggest that research contribution to practitioner-researchers empowers lecturers to gain a sense of self. My intention is to provide such an opportunity through my research design, for my participants to also gain a sense of self as practitioner-researchers. I agree with the statement that my self-development (personally and

professionally) appears to be a well-placed position to strengthen my justification for being an insider/outsider researcher.

Similarly, adopting an insider/outsider approach was an appropriate choice for me to gain an holistic knowledge and understanding underpinning a 'self-centric' (O'Leary, 2005, p.186) research study and remembering that the objective balance from the insider/outsider approach draws a greater depth and meaning from the data (Wall, 2006). Gilmore and Kenny (2015) suggest that self-reflexivity fosters a growing awareness of insider research. Married with participant involvement, the bead collage technique fosters a connection with the research medium, practice, and data. At the beginning of the research journey, the knowledge and experience of the bead collage technique was theoretical. Indeed, the subjective researcher perspective steered a credible path for the research conduct and data analysis (Pearce, 2014). Self-documentation during the research supported my understanding of the participants' connections to the CHE academic community.

As I wrestle with my evolving academic identity, the emerging sense of self-growth of academic identity cultivates practical wisdom (phronesis) aligned with Plowright & Barr's paper (2012). Freire (2006) values researcher engagement as '... a wise and prudent practical judgement about how to act in a given situation.' (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p.190). The insider/outsider researcher philosophical connection offered a unique insight into the research. There are always rules that can circumvent the logistical conventions expected within academia and learning (Pearce, 2014). Harnessing and developing alternative ideas around set parameters requires diligent confidence to seek the frames of focus that work (Webber, 2015). Any philosophical musings may empower a deeper pedagogical engagement paralleled to my epistemological approach (Chapter 3: Methodology). Engagement and self-identity support excellent practitioner-researcher responsiveness (Mason et al., 2010) to establish exploration of the CHE lecturer's identity for scholarship and self-development (Thomas, 2017). Guided by professional academic identity, promotes the theory-to-practice or praxis connection (Friere, 2006).

The lecturer's role and title are familiar terms within the CHE environment in which this study was conducted. Whilst not always the practice case, the term lecturer/s encompasses all staff who teach CHE regardless of responsibility. At times, educators may also be interchangeably adopted to denote the pedagogical focus of the discussion. The professional identities in educational settings tend not to alter unless a new job title heralds a change in role or responsibility (Briggs, 2017). The CHE lecturer's

role is not traditionally HE-focused, encompassing all pedagogical practices in the college environment (Wood et al., 2016). Instead, a different approach is found in the CHE environment which forges differentiation for the future of HE, setting it apart from the interpretations expected in universities (Turner et al., 2009b). The shifting role of CHE is considered in the research as the backdrop for the CHE lecturer's academic identity. The changes in educational reform led to the CHE lecturer role being more complex than ever (Henkel, 2000; Whitchurch, 2008). My methodological approach resulted in a large amount of data being gathered. In the following section, I will outline my approach to data analysis.

1.5.3   Insider/Outsider Research

Incorporating the insider/outsider approach in the research aligns with the theoretical frame to capture the authentic narrative of CHE academic identity, recording my research journey. Mizzi (2010) and Ellis (1998) propose cultivating a shared insight of inside and outside narratives to locate the research within the research. Singularly, insider/outsider research enriches the space for exploring individual positionality. Discursive processes are in the rhetoric jointly observing individual's storylines (Davies & Harré, 1990). Non-traditional research approaches connect the insider/outsider researcher to the participants, retaining a conceptual metaphor for the transcendental relationship between the two positions (Brown, 2019; Ellis, 1998; Sparkes, 2000). To aid comprehension of the esoteric, abstract, innovative, or incredibly speculative conceptualisations to acknowledge experience (Olmas-Vega, 2023). Whether conceptual or hypothetical, the more extensive the range of metaphors needed to deal with abstract ideas supports understanding (Brown, 2019; Yob, 2003). Incidentally, the development of the methodological framework remains central to incorporating a thoughtful, well-placed inquiry to envelope the emergent academic self (Stronach et al., 2007). Here, I introduce my conceptualised Chrysalis concept (Milner, 2021) (see Appendix 3 - The Chrysalis Concept) to demonstrate the interconnected elements of the research process and product that shape the emergent academic, moulded from the creative space that considers the mental and geographic retelling of the authentic self-narrative. The Chrysalis concept (Milner, 2021) (see Appendix 3 - The Chrysalis Concept) presents how the intertwining elements of my research journey, analysis and identity as an insider/outsider researcher are holistically combined. Mizzi (2010) adopts the term multivocality, evoking the representational collective space, which prompts to gain deeper insight into, at times, dormant tensions experienced in individual storytelling narratives. Self-exploration enables individuals to understand the complexities of their narrative personal stories (Goffman,

1959). Supported through the engagement of the bead collage technique method, the space to discuss and reflect on CHE academic identity, individually and as a collective, reinforces the insider/outsider research perspective.

My voice in the narrative denotes the reflexivity of the insider/outsider researcher approach. I am using 'I' to acknowledge my presence and ensure my positioning is apparent within the research. Zhou and Hall (2016) agree with first-person positioning in qualitative academic writing, observing individual writers conveyed within the narrative. In addition, my presence as an insider/outsider researcher enables me to share in the subjectivity (Méndez, 2014; Berry & Clair, 2011) to explore CHE academic identity. While many limitations are stated about the narrow focus of the insider/outsider approach, there are many advantages, including insight into situational aspects from within the research (Foley, 2002; McCormack, 2008). Ellis and Bocher (2000) advocate the far-reaching aspect of the insider/outsider research approach to view the impact of culture on and through an individual. The insider/outsider research impacted my position in the research, the impact of culture on and through the researcher, and research into academic identity in a specific setting. Moreover, my insider/outsider positionality enhances my researcher role as a member of the CHE college culture, which I will discuss in the next section, which is strongly aligned with an insider/outsider approach to research. In the section below, I outline the research in more detail.

1.5.4   Data Analysis

The implementation of the reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) framework by Braun and Clarke (2019) aligned with the data analysis phase for the research to extend the reflexive lens adopted in the study. Braun and Clarke's (2019) RTA focuses on six phases which include: 1: initial familiarisation with the data, 2: systematically generating initial codes from the data, 3: creating initial themes and codes from the data, 4: reviewing and developing the identified themes, 5: refining, defining and the naming the themes, 6: finally writing the research including quotes that were representative of the findings. In section 3.6: Identification of Reflexive Thematic Analysis, I discuss how I implemented the six phases of Braun and Clarke's (2019) RTA. The subjectivity of the RTA approach lends itself to the naturalistic approach of my research design, remaining as authentic as possible with the data findings (Gray, 2014; Carpenter, 2014). Boud and Brew (2013) suggest that interpretative research gains participants' authentic views and beliefs, supporting the research and representing experiences. The potential to make changes from the research findings could be lost, challenging the whole purpose of

the research (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). In all educational research, quality is tantamount to the continuation of excellent practice, teaching and interactions with students and fellow lecturers (Graham & Buckley, 2014). Indeed, quality is at the centre of all education practice, closely aligned with the work and processes in HE of the QAA (2018). Therefore, the research's authenticity and trustworthiness should reflect the approach to hearing the participants' voices (Celestina, 2018). The lecturer's identity remains central to the research to represent them authentically. As such, Barbour (2007) suggests that much can be learned from concentrating on the voices of individual participants. Preserving the participants' voices in the analysis is required to authenticate the research by incorporating all the aligned themes as a blended data representation (Dutton et al., 2019).

The familiarity fostered by the inclusion of the insider/outsider positioning generated a richer, more intimate consideration of the data (Hamdan, 2009). Rather than simplifying the data collected into an objective analysis, the meanings derived from the themes will emerge as richer for the insider/outsider positioning. Likewise, the adoption of reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) corroborates the intricate elements of the data considered in the research, analysis and findings (Braun & Clarke, 2019). They correspond with the research to preserve the value of the self-narrative insider/outsider research (Gilmore & Kenny, 2015; Vanner, 2015). The rich insight into the daily workings of a situation, both value and guarantee meanings, is gifted from the process to be fully explored (Nomanesi, 2017). These semantic meanings in the data offer a textured tapestry woven about the exploration of CHE academic identity, including all its vast intricacies. As will be discussed in section 3.7: Identification of Reflexive Thematic Analysis.

1.6   Thesis Structure

There are five additional chapters in the thesis.

The second chapter is the literature review, which includes the strategy for reviewing the literature and setting the scene for College Higher Education Academic Identity. Opening with a section that includes The Academic Professional Identity in College Higher Education that contains six subsections: What is the Purpose of College Higher Education? What is Professional Identity? What is Academic Identity? What is Professional Academic Identity? Consideration of Personal and Professional Identity in College Higher Education and The Professionalisation of College Higher Education Teaching. The third section in the chapter introduces The Conceptualisation of Academic Identity with the subsection, How are Professional and Academic Identity Different? Finally, the chapter concludes with a Literature Review Summary.

The third chapter is the methodology which introduces a review of the literature that supported the decision to conduct the bead collage technique. The chapter includes the rationale and justification for the Qualitative Methodology with a discussion about researcher positionality, the incorporation of the Feminist Lens and The Reflexive Lenses and Insider/Outsider Approach to the research. The Conceptualising a Creative Methodology illustrates the Pedagogical Approaches to Creativity links the Bead Collage Technique as the Research Tool to promote solution focused pedagogy, metaphors and visual thinking research. The methods section provides the justification for the pilot study, focus groups, the bead collage technique and the research design. The participants section details the choice of population, sample group with ethical consideration that impact confidentiality with the inclusion of authenticity and trustworthiness. The final section in the chapter identifies and explores reflexive thematic analysis and how it was used to identify the themes in the data.

In chapter four, the Reflexive thematic analysis of data and discussion details the themes identified from the data: Theme one: College Higher Education Role and Expectations presents the three subsections beginning with CPD and Scholarly activity, secondly, Policy influences on practice and finally The politics of college higher education. In Theme Two Being a Professional College Higher Education Lecturer, the sections includes an analysis broken into three subsections, firstly, A space to think about being a professional, secondly, College higher education lecturer's attributes and thirdly, Self-perception and self-worth. Theme three: The Creative Benefits of the Bead Collage Technique has

four subsections, the first is Artful Research, secondly, Self-Knowledge Development, thirdly, Personal Interaction finishing with the fourth which is College Higher Education Reflexive Pedagogy.

Finally, the fifth chapter addresses the Contribution to Knowledge: The Conclusion and New Beginnings exploring what was identified from the research. The following two sections are in response to the two research questions: A Response to RQ1: What, if any, are the unique attributes contributing to the concept of CHE academic identity? and A Response to RQ2: What impact does the bead collage technique have on research about academic identity? Which leads a section about Rewriting College Higher Education's Academic Identity. The final section includes three sections that identify firstly, Limitations to the Study, the Impact on Policy and Practice in College Higher Education and finally concludes with a section on Future Research.

2. Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to illuminate the literature in the field of academic identity in college higher education (CHE) in response to RQ1: What, if any, are the unique attributes that contribute to the concept of CHE academic identity? For RQ2: What impact does the bead collage technique have on research about academic identity? The literature is included in Chapter 3: Methodology. There are limited resources about CHE academic identity, I seek to enhance the study by incorporating concepts and theories used in the subsequent stages of the research (Denscombe, 2007). The vast availability of literature relating to academic identity and traditional Higher Education (HE) provided the exploration of many avenues. The historical context established association with HE curriculum, processes and providers for academic identity formation (Feather, 2016). Identifying any gaps in knowledge highlighted in the introduction chapter, I begin by reviewing the strategy adopted for finding the literature. The literature review aims to evaluate the information available about the relationship between academic identity and CHE.

2.1   Strategy for Reviewing Literature

The literature gathered to support the chapter's focus contributes to the unique attributes of CHE's academic identity. The search was broken down into distinct groups of terms to narrow and gather the selected literature relevant to the study. Literature on academic identity and CHE, such as the subtle variations in expectations for students, educators, and universities, was sought in recognition of the numerous terms used across the sector (Bell, 2020). Starting with CHE's academic identity, terms included college-based education, HE in further education (FE) and CHE acknowledging the use of different terms of reference for the sector. Secondly, focused keyword terms and concepts were searched, including variations of identity formation and academic, professional, and personal identity amalgamation, which supported the choice of literature for the review. Thirdly, to explore personal and professional practice factors such as the influences of professional practices in CHE, practice regulation, personal values and teaching identity were also considered, including professional development, scholarship, university-based quotas, continued professional development (CPD), and qualifications in and for higher education providers (HEPs) inherent to the sector and contextually bound to the CHE settings. Fourthly, to gain an overview of how lecturers perceive their role, search terms included teacher, lecturers, pracademics, student-centred practice and pedagogy. Fifthly, to gain the perspective of providers' and regulators' oversight of the college's role in the sector, terms

including curriculum development, regulations, policy and professional practice were considered. Given the study's creative element, another path of inquiry focused on keywords about reflexivity, innovative methodologies, and methods. Alongside the searches mentioned, the overarching golden thread throughout the searches was the humanist approach to research to determine an authentic application of theory into practice. After identifying the creative method in the bead collage technique, in preparation for learning more about the subject area, I approached two key individuals in the field. I met and discussed this with the two individuals identified, Daphne Loads and Suzanne Culshaw. Both individuals offered advice from their research using collage to explore individual perceptions, personally and professionally. The assistance I received from Daphne and Suzanne helped construct my research design and methodology.

2.1.1   Setting the Scene for College Higher Education Academic Identity

This chapter explores the literature about CHE academic identity in a South-West England FE college. The literature considers the professional identity of CHE lecturers and the contributing factors that influence perceptions of the role and that of the pracademic (Dickinson et al., 2022). If, as discussed in the introduction, tensions exist between the lecturer's role in CHE and that of traditional universities, what contributes to the tension will be analysed. Given the professionalisation, training, and accreditation of recognition through qualifications or Higher Education Academy (HEA) fellowships, the myriad of statuses consider the CHE lecturers' academic identity. Related to researcher scholarship, the associated pressures can lead to feeling like an imposter (Wilkinson, 2020), which impacts lecturer confidence. The diverse range of tasks often creates tensions surrounding the requirements to meet the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) quality standards at HE. However, the strength of the communities of practice (CoPs) within the college is a testament to the CHE academic identity to fulfil the sector's responsibilities and diversify skills to meet the challenges of HE in FE. The college's primary focus is FE, the responsibilities are often vast therefore the remit to complete scholarship responsibilities that extend beyond the job role are challenging (Robson, 1999). As the sector continues to adapt to meet student needs, the WP agenda is about the HE positional response to bridge the gap in skills, both vocational and academic (Thompson, 2019). In meeting the needs of the students, the various metrics in place to measure the sector's achievement combined with the pedagogical foci with scholarship explored. HE in FE planning and strategy, alongside the business needs of the college and the sector's support offered by the mixed economy group (MEG) (2018), the dualistic pressures to fulfil the diverse role. Locating the

support offered from partnership relationships between universities and CHE and implementing the skills and knowledge required to meet Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (FDAP) will be identified. Structural changes and accountability for maintaining the student's learning could impact the CHE lecturer's teaching role. Interplayed between CHE lecturers' personal and professional identities contextualised by the sector's politics impacts the outcomes achieved. The backdrop of the political and strategic motivators of UK HE and presents an overview for the focus on CHE. I will begin by discussing the impact of lecturers' academic identity and its formation on professional practice and contemplating the unique properties of the adopted theoretical framework (Attia & Edge, 2017; Brew, 2010), an interpretive philosophical exploration of CHE lecturers' perceptions of academic identity. The structure and flow of the literature shape the enquiry and demonstrate the interlinking nature of the research represented in the study. Initially, based on my experience as a CHE lecturer, this is a difficult concept to agree on. The upcoming discussion supports the interpretation and establishment of academic identity in the context of professional identity in CHE.

2.2   The Academic Professional Identity in College Higher Education

The exploration of academic professional identity in CHE begins with identifying the key terms of reference to support the critical review of the literature that follows. Before responding to academic professional identity in CHE identity, the three areas will be addressed separately before being drawn together. Each term will be defined and contextualised in the CHE environment to gain an overview of the words, naming conventions, and adopted monikers to understand how and why they are significant. Then, further exploration will begin to unpick how professional, academic and the combination of the two are represented in the literature and subsequent research.

2.2.1   What is the Purpose of College Higher Education?

A positive academic perception fostered in universities breaks down imagined or natural barriers, alienating potential students from reaching their potential (Wheelahan, 2010). As the OFS (2020) strives to attract students to study, remodelling HE for modern society would benefit the sector and its applications to HE studies. Accessibility for information-sharing experiences to attract students to study in HE has become a focus for the business managers in HEPs (Independent Commission on the College of the Future, 2020; Sipilä et al., 2017; QAA, 2019). The negative, inaccessible perceptions of

academia should no longer be a barrier to students' learning opportunities in HEPs. Thompson's (2019) review of the Dearing report argues that the direction of students' accessibility to HE aligns with the WP students' various and varied identities [5]. The OfS (2024b) annual review 2023 recorded 2,048,216 full-time equivalent students (at all levels of study) at HEPs registered with the OfS in 2021-22. Student numbers have been on an upward trend since 2017, when undergraduate students increased, reversing a decline in numbers reported in the preceding years (OfS, 2024c). These identities affect how students experience HE and interact with social, cultural, and economic elements. A large part of the neoliberal environment impacts the approaches driving the accessibility to HE. Despite the activities, projects and support for student retention, research to identify new ways of overcoming the challenges to meet the WP agenda remains largely unmet. The role of CHE enables WP students to engage in HE in a community environment without the complications of transitioning to a university. The Augar Review (2019) highlighted increased access for students entering HE programmes. Similarly, the OfS (2019) review recognised that many universities have integrated programmes for applications to enter HE with fair and transparent access available.

2.2.2 What is Professional Identity?

A commonly accepted definition of professional identity as a complex construct that is concerned with every aspect of professional life (Clarke et al., 2013; Feather, 2015; Lamont & Nordberg, 2014; Land, 2007; Taylor, 2007). Individual personal perceptions combined with professional identity are also linked to the working context and sense of agency (Briggs, 2017; Giddens, 1991). Professional identity remains a dynamic, ongoing (re)formation determined by the theoretical and practical knowledge of the role (Lee & Jang, 2023). In no part limited to self-perception, professional identity is interconnected with the work environment and is a product of the individual role within the organisation (Archer, 2008; Whitchurch, 2010). Often, individuals align themselves with their professional identity as the role provides a sense of belonging within the group or organisation. Professional identity formation is interchangeable within an organisation associated with fulfilling the designated role's requirements. Yet, professional identity remains vital for forming participation within the group, enabling the group context to recognise group identities (Lee & Jang, 2023).

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[5] The rise overall in student participation demonstrates accessibility , however, there are some HEPs such as elite universities that remain inaccessible (Elliot-Major & Banerjee, 2019).

2.2.3 What is Academic Identity?

Initially, it is important to understand why academic identity should be considered distinctly for the professional context. Academic identity falls into two domains: theory and practice. Theoretically, academic identity is a construct that has significantly evolved from the historical connections of individual autonomy, freedom, and choice (Harris, 2005). Whereas academic identity is now often associated with the practical performance-related activity linked with the subject discipline with accountability to the organisation (Harris, 2005). Simply, the social construction of academic identity is drawn from the interaction between the organisation and agency (Barrow et al., 2020). Concerned with belonging, individual or to the collective, academic identity has become a fluid changing reality that often incorporates, not just one but multiple identities. In part, due to and as a response to HE reform in the UK, autonomy which has often been linked to academic identity has changed. These changes for academic autonomy are connected to the sector's requirement to quantify processes as Shukry (2017) acknowledges the businessification of education.

2.2.4 What is Professional Academic Identity?

Academic professional identity is the amalgamation of the values that academics align with their organisation and profession (Winter, 2009). In the case of CHE lecturers having an academic professional identity, they are recognised professionally in their subject area and within the college. Whereas perceptions of CHE academics are still not equal to the status of university academics (Parry & Thompson, 2002). The premise of academic identity depends on ideological rewards, such as the value of discipline scholarship, intellectual curiosity, a CoP, accountability to peers and professional autonomy (Ramsden, 1998). Academic professional identity often comes from external factors such as awarding bodies, regulators and individual organisations' policy processes.

In 2000, the DfES established foundation degrees [6] which addressed the skill shortages in the labour market enabling graduates to engage in HE studies (DfES, 2006). The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland places foundation degrees at level 5 (FHEQ). The impact of changes to HE courses available to students opens the opportunity for many mature students locally to engage in studies that were previously considered accessible. The often localised

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[6] With only two years of study required, full-time foundation degrees are shorter courses in England that are equivalent to the first two years of an honours degree (Part-time study for a Foundation Degree can be from three to four years, depending on the provider). Once completed, students can "top-up" to a full degree if necessary.

foundation degrees presented flexibility in timetabling, fitting around part-time jobs and childcare responsibilities (often dependent on women) (Thompson, 2019). Foundation degrees are shorter courses with only two years of study to complete, equivalent to the first two years of an honour's degree, with the option, once finished, to top up to a full degree as required (QAA, 2018). In response to the growth of HE courses in FE colleges, CHE lecturers were expected to meet the demands of the provision and professional development by upskilling to deliver and manage foundation degrees (Wilson, 2007; Gray et al., 2013). However, there are alternatives for students who do not necessarily have a traditional entry path. One option is to enrol on a Foundation year, which is an extra year of study at the start of a HE course, where students who still need to meet the required entry requirements to study for a degree can progress. For some students, there are benefits for commencing a foundation year, as the course offers a useful taster of the subjects and content that will form the majority of the full degree.

Typically, foundation years are included in a full HE qualification, classified as HE, and attached to a full degree at the same HEP. Students can enrol in a foundation year with the same HEP for the full HE qualification, or if advancement to the full HE qualification is assured, it is contingent on completing the foundation year. Unfortunately, when students apply for HE courses, they incur the course fees associated with HE study, often requiring them to obtain loans to meet the costs. The introduction of HE study fees in 1998 and further review in 2012 following the Browne Review (Browne, 2010) (proposed splitting the HE study costs between the student and the taxpayer) was to increase the number of young people attending university. Elliot-Major and Banerjee (2019) suggested that student course fees, in many ways, support WP and accessibility. If course fees were cut or reduced, this would only further benefit the students from the middle classes, leading to potential HE course growth (Elliot-Major & Banerjee, 2019), but it would not be accessible to all students.

Alternatively, to support student accessibility to HE courses, the second option is to enrol in Access to HE courses. Access to HE course fees could be absorbed by an Advanced Learner Loan (subject to credit checks) (Gov.uk, 2024). However, if eligible, the 'Adult Education Budget' grant has no requirements to repay the monies (Gov.uk, 2024), making Access to HE more financially viable. Access to HE students often benefit from the subject-specific introduction to the course content before embarking on a full degree in a similar subject (Bathmaker, 2016). However, it could be argued that limiting the geographical variation in students' experiences can potentially narrow perspectives. The fees for studying at CHEs are only marginally less than those in universities, with the choice to stay in

CHE often linked to the locale and family connections, with money being a contributing factor (Bunce et al., 2016). Another benefit of undertaking Access to HE progressing to CHE Foundation degree courses is that they are generally located in the local community, making them more accessible geographically (Bathmaker, 2016; Simmons & Lea, 2013). Limited recognition of the quality standards ensures all HEPs are subject to the exact quality assurance requirements.

In England since the FE and Training Act of 2007, FECs have been able to petition the Privy Council for foundation degree granting powers (Further Education and Training Act, 2007). Whereas, in Wales, since 1 October 2010, under the provisions of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, FEPs have also been able to apply for foundation degree granting powers (Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act, 2009). Foundation Degrees are validated and conferred by HEP external reference points such as the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements, National Occupational Standards, Sector Skills foundation degree frameworks, professional body accreditation schemes and apprenticeship standards, and apprenticeship frameworks inform the design of foundation degrees. The relevant degree-awarding body uses them in course approvals (QAA, 2018).

Parry (2012) asserts that CHE lecturer contracts do not explicitly require them to undertake research and scholarly activity. Contract adjustments or the release time from teaching is considered individually (Mixed Economy Group (MEG), 2012). Teaching is often heavily weighted or wholly focused on HE, perceived as being a more significant reward of CHE teaching in contrast to FE teaching (Wilson, 2007), suggesting that CHE lecturers might feel more like a 'proper HE lecturer' than those with fewer teaching commitments in HE (Turner et al., 2009b, p.14). However, expectations to write and publish papers and apply for grants and funding to conduct research should not be ignored. The pressure to meet the growing demands of the HE sector to research in response to and auditable by the Research Excellent Framework (REF) does increase the burden for university lecturers (McCulloch, 2017).

In comparison, Clarke et al. (2015) conceptualise six sometimes interconnected roles aligned for lecturers: teaching, research, managing, writing, networking, and upskilling. There are few distinctions between the academic role of lecturers between CHE and universities other than the writing. However, in CHE, many lecturers need help to continue with the multidimensional requirements of a lecturer's role, which spans FE and HE curricula (Creasy, 2013). Tensions are often fraught between the different yet similar requirements for the FE and HE provisions in colleges. As a

promoter of CHE, MEG (2018) supports 43 member colleges in strategic CHE development and delivery to maintain CHE's high standards for quality-focused scholarly activity and organisational change for lecturers (King & Widdowson, 2009). Advocating for CHE lecturers' diverse roles, offering advice for CHE providers to gather, share and exchanging best practices (MEG, 2018). Addressing currency and CHE decision-making with specialised guidance about HE-related issues, the group updates members about financing and quality bodies, government agencies, and other well-known HE individuals (MEG, 2018). Committed to promoting the value of vocational HE to raise individuals' aspirations and meet the economy's skills needs, MEG (2012) remains influential in developing national policy and shaping how CHE is delivered. The partnership working with organisations continually supports the development of high-quality innovative delivery approaches in HE, particularly in FDAP colleges (MEG, 2012). Sharing good practices with all CHE providers ensures that communication about the sector remains relevant and valuable. Advocating WP amongst student groups currently under-represented in higher education to engage in further studies. MEG's (2012) focus on the benefits of CHE demonstrates the requirement for the group to highlight the needs and recognition of CHE lecturers' roles.

The backdrop of the wider political climate of professional role and qualifications directly impacts CHE lecturers' responsibilities (Wood et al., 2016). The formation of professional identity and Professionalisation of College Higher Education is discussed in more depth in section 2.2.5. In the rhetoric around the CHE lecturer role, it has often been described as either a chameleon (Kensington-Miller et al., 2015) or a chimera (Mitchell, 2013; Sikes, 2005), illustrating the complexity of the CHE academic professional is complicated and fraught with unknowns. In CHE and traditional universities, the QAA (2024) outlines the requirement for professionalism to be appropriately qualified by stipulating that any professional involved in teaching, supporting learning, and assessment should be qualified to deliver the courses awarded. To ensure positive outcomes for students to achieve the level of study conducive, with their course which meets the national qualifications framework (QAA, 2018). If research degrees are delivered in supportive environments conducive to learning and research, then the scholarship for CHE lecturers has to reflect the standards. CHE lecturer scholarships should be recognised and celebrated as a notable enhancement to an individual's adherence to quality standards and professionalism (Gray et al., 2014). Therefore, given the potential tensions to meet many different goals, individual aspirations may be sought independently. Indeed, the CHE lecturer's professional conduct in the sector is accountable to the educational governing

body at any given time. The QAA (2024) requires regulations and quality processes in conjunction with governance to provide an optimum student experience (OfS, 2020; Hökkä et al., 2012) to ensure the fulfilment of quality processes for all HEPs in the UK. Potential conflicts can arise when CHE professionalism is compromised by accountability to HEP's (Simmons & Lea, 2013) organisational agenda or strategy.

While CHE cultural professionalism encompasses specifications, QAA (2024) standards are also required. CHE lecturers are accountable to the same QAA (2024) standards and FE specifications. The tension often means lecturers experience pressure to fulfil their job description while aspiring to be more than those requirements (Robson, 1999). Plowright and Barr (2012) contend that including a 'code of professional practice' (p.1) could lead to the professionalism of CHE lecturers being at risk of being de-professionalised. The apparent risk to professionalism results from the limited professional recognition for CHE lecturers (Wood et al., 2016). The experience of professionals working in schools and other educational settings in the UK differs from professional recognition within society and professional standards. Partially, the inception of the Institute for Learning (IfL) in 2002 promoted the recognition of professionalism in CHE for professional identity to be acknowledged (IfL, 2012). The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) introduced a register for qualified teachers in the sector through the FE White Paper' Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances' (2006). Acknowledged as a move in the right direction, recognising professionalism in the sector requires CHE lecturers' contribution to the development. Still, there needs to be more clarity about the CHE lecturers' role.

2.2.4.1 Partnership working

CHE lecturers often navigate the gap between FE and HE and support students in transition. Gourley (2008) refers to the CHE workplace as a hybrid model, blending of HE in FE significantly fosters partnerships between universities and colleges. However, improvements surrounding professional titles are needed because CHE professionals frequently see themselves as a hybrid inside the organisation (Parry & Thompson, 2002). The negotiation of a lecturer's positionality from a personal, social, and cultural perspective continues despite lecturers having multiple professional identities depending on the situation (Antunes Scartezini & Monereo, 2018). Pleasance's (2016) observations on personal values, views, and FE lecturers prompt them to misinterpret how they define academic identity, suggesting more focused scholarship and opinions on what academic identity means in CHE

(Harwood & Harwood, 2004). Antunes Scartezini and Monereo (2018) indicate that negotiating multiple identities in different social contexts, perceptions of the academic role, engagement with teaching, learning and assessment and the associated attitude can take their toll on an individual. CHE lecturers question their understanding of the term academic. Even more so now, there is a growing pressure to fulfil the requirements of the role and sector increases.

As lecturers seek to understand their identity, the developed pedagogical role within the learning environment (Flecknoe et al., 2017; Williams, 2010) comes into question. To better appreciate the dilemma, Korhonen and Törmä (2016) propose a typology of HE lecturer identity to assist the explanation. The two themes contained in the typology highlight the relationship to teaching (from stabilisation to stabilised) and the relationship to development as lecturers (from goal-reflective to reassessment). The themes orient a lecturer's identity into four quadrants: 'constructive-conflicting', 'development-orientated', 'unsolved', and 'routine-orientated' (Korhonen & Törmä, 2016, p.74). The development-orientated lecturer identity aligns with the HEA Fellowship standards (HEA, 2011). Goal-orientated, reflective lecturers committed to teaching and teacher development identify with the typographical theme (Korhonen & Törmä, 2016). Korhonen and Törmä's (2016) development-oriented participants emphasise collaborative work, in contrast to a greater focus on a lecturers' learning environment and individual pedagogical approach (Mezirow, 2000). The present educational climate in CHE supports lecturers nurturing students as a normative practice (Daniel, 2021), suggesting students are regarded as novice colleagues in the academic community, further reinforcing the traits emphasised by HEA Fellowship standards introduced since 2003 (HEA, 2011). The expectations between FE and HE lecturers may connect professional acceptance with accountability from the academic community.

2.2.4.2 Professional Academic Identity Recognition

There are few differences between the two sets of standards for a lecturer's teaching qualifications, as both emphasise pedagogical knowledge, skills, core subjects, and professional values. The first is the Education and Training Foundation Professional Standards (Education and Training Foundation, 2014) in FE teacher training qualifications, the Level 5 Diploma for Education and Training, or the Postgraduate Certificate in Education: Post-Compulsory (Education and Training Foundation, 2018).

The second is the Professional Standards Framework (PSF, 2023)[7]. The latest iteration of the PSF (2023) reflects international applications. While working in CHE, as discussed earlier, there are different emphases on professional accountability and the requirements for lecturers teaching in both FE and HE. Any potential conflict between the FE and HE curriculum requirements is apparent as CHE lecturers adhere to two sets of professional standards applied to their practice. The FE teacher training qualifications are embedded in the Education and Training Foundation Professional Standards (Education and Training Foundation, 2014). In Turner et al.'s (2009b) research, using surveys and interviews enabled 12 CHE lecturers to reflect on the challenges of feeling like 'proper' HE lecturers related to professional and social identity. Developing the CHE lecturer's understanding of professional identity exploration in the contextual environment of the college will support the enquiry. A CHE lecturer's professional identity focuses on pedagogy (Harwood & Harwood, 2004). Irrespective of the two standards, focused teaching practices are foremost in the colleges' core purpose. Therefore, the continued endeavour of the collective to achieve excellent practice in supporting students is integral to the college mindset. Unsurprisingly, the shift to research-shaped scholarship remains challenging when there is widespread pedagogy focused practice in the college.

An exploration of professionalism may be formed from engagement in qualifications to develop and evolve as a professional (Sommerlad, 2007). Professional identity could then be the prospect of fostering a role outlined by a job description or knowing what the job entailed (Lewis, 2014). Dryburgh (1999) proposes a three-stage integration process into a professional culture. Stage one requires professionals to internalise professional identity; stage two is about professionals adapting to the organisation's culture, and the third stage is about demonstrating competence with other professionals. The first is professional cohesion, 'phronesis' (Plowright & Barr, 2012), where professionals reflect on their decision-making within teaching. The integrative nature of 'phronesis' harbours the values of making sound decisions aligned to professional pedagogical principles of artistry and reflexive engagement in and with learning (Eisner, 2002; Plowright & Barr, 2012). The proviso for identity formation is as much more about engagement with the principles of pedagogy, self and the professional working environment as previously thought. Adaption to the professional culture fosters integration into the group (Lewis, 2014). As professionals, we adopt the accepted

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[7] To be awarded an HEA Fellowship, educators must demonstrate their educational research engagement, teaching practice, and dedication to ongoing professional development since 2003 (HEA, 2011). Associate Fellow, Fellow, and Senior Fellow are some of the HEA Fellowship levels; each has distinct requirements. Achieving the HEA Fellowship shows your dedication to excellent teaching and learning, strengthening your teaching credentials in the sector.

behaviours of colleagues and students in CHE. Building rapport is necessary for trust and confidence in each other and cohesive working relationships (Lewis, 2014; Murray et al., 2011; FETL, 2018). When teaching, the bonds created with students and colleagues give individuals confidence in the curriculum and policy processes in the setting (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2019). Maintaining professionalism reflects humanistic approaches, which are encouraged and modelled on organisational behaviours and language use (Aloni, 2013; Colmer, 2017; Day et al., 2006; Kenton, 2014). Lecturers' professionalism is acknowledged in the sector through the HEA Fellowships, illustrated by Dryburgh's (1999) third stage for integrating competence into a professional culture. Educational settings have historically monitored the performativity of pedagogical approaches for assessment and achievement (Ball, 2017; Czerniawski, 2011).

Confirmation of an academic and professional identity can be assumed from many different avenues, one being via the professional standards framework (PSF). The introduction of professional recognition of the educational role in HE displayed how research engagement and scholarly activity influenced professional practices (HEA, 2011). Within educational system frameworks and governments, HEPs and research institutes supply the leaders, workers, and critical thinkers needed to address the demands brought on by socio-political shifts, technological disruption, economic recovery, and expansion in productivity. To support professionals in HE, PSF contextualises the role of teaching and supporting learning, offering a system to recognise individuals commitment (Shaw, 2017; Spowart et al., 2016) that oversees leadership, learning and teaching, equality and diversity (AdvanceHE, 2023). The reach and impact of leadership and efficient governance to address inequality and improve teaching and learning could be argued to professionalise HE (Spowart et al., 2016). Fellowship applicants reflectively account for their knowledge, teaching skills and professional values mapped to a professional standard framework (AdvanceHE, 2023). Lecturers' reflexive pedagogical engagement in HE enables further appreciation of the theory practice links. Beneficial for lecturers' professional and personal acknowledgement, increasingly HEPs are drawing on the endorsements for appointments and promotion in the sector (Botham, 2018). The professional recognition (with post-nominal letters to identify their expertise) in the HE sector demonstrates HE collaboration with individuals and organisations, internationally and locally.

The HEA Fellowship does not fully encompass or meet the academic identity of every professional. Instead, the establishment of the HEA Professional Standards Framework (HEA, 2011) goes a long way toward valuing the professional more widely than individual practice or HEP. Despite the HEA

Fellowship being open to all HE professionals, CHE and university lecturers are fulfilling the same requirements for fellowship. However, perhaps recognising CHE lecturers in the fellowship scheme is a welcome boost of morale and confidence in support of CHE academic identity. The HEA fellowship scheme could be seen to remove differences across the sector with equal recognition of the skills and scholarship required to meet the standard.

The forming and reforming of academic communities in CHE are pivotal for the continued value and sense of belonging for lecturers' identity (Hollweck et al., 2022). Lave and Wenger (1991) initially used the term CoP to describe learning through practice and participation. As humans, we constantly engage with others to meet a specific role or task, and we often seek out individuals with a similar focus or endeavour. HEA defines the CoP approach as the regular engagement between individuals that can improve practice while considering learning as an interconnected social experience (AdvanceHE, 2023). Located in FE colleges, CoPs are numerous and diverse smaller teaching teams, departments, or sections of the college (Parry, 2012) and, in the case of this study, curriculum areas. The college study site includes CHE as a unique silo apart from the departments, sections, and curriculum areas, which present a unique management structure to oversee the running and maintenance of CHE. The defining features of CoP are the contextualisation of practice, critical reflection, the cultivation of strengths, and cycles of inquiry (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The CHE community upholds these principles and practices and focuses on helping HE students fulfil and meet the curriculum requirements outlined by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code).

Internal CPD is required to ensure lecturers are informed about new systems, processes, or policies at the FE college's discretion (Buckley & Husband, 2020). These internal updates, regularly scheduled throughout the academic year, are focused on internal practice updates to ensure all lecturers can do their jobs. Unfortunately, this standard focus on CPD offered in FE, forms the majority of CHE lecturers' CPD time allocation, which is distributed to accommodate the scholarship requirements for all lecturers depending on their area or level of practice (Buckley & Husband, 2020). Meaningful, CPD-focused CHE lecturers engage, as Boyer (1990) states, in scholarship to upskill in their field of interest with relevant research is not always accommodated (Schofield, 2018). CHE lecturers face possible daily struggles between personal and professional role requirements. Individuals negotiate how the lecturing role relates to the perceived academic professional role in a CHE context (Creasy, 2013).

The introduction of FDAP at the college demonstrated how the CHE COP articulated the principles of UK higher education, evidencing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality (QAA, 2024). Modelled and reflected in the wider HE sector, the CHE at the college is maintained in the ongoing cycles of inquiry, illustrating the continued development of the college's COP with the award of FDAP. As such, the CHE COP empowers the shared ethos of innovation and growth for themselves and the college. Reflected in the practices upheld in CHE, the community reinforces the expected behaviours and pedagogical practices that motivate them to continue developing the curriculum. Individual community of practice members can help other members expand their understanding of a topic, which can collectively improve the group's skills. When the entire group contributes and collaborates, it can help individual members gain new knowledge or develop their skill sets. Simultaneously, the joint enterprise of CoP membership supports the ongoing accomplishment of tasks as shared interest in projects promotes commonality in the bigger picture. The CHE CoP advocates for the student experience to ensure all enjoy a supportive, transformative learning process. The engagement with the students demonstrates the mutuality of the community of learners present in the CHE, especially considering the WP agenda to support, motivate and empower students who already feel disadvantaged.

In 2011, Gale et al. conducted 12 semi-structured interviews with CHE lecturers, exploring their educational/professional backgrounds, with thoughts about how university HE lecturers work and how this contrasts and compares to their roles. Each CHE lecturer has a different number of HE teaching hours on their timetable, which could influence how they distinguish their identity as professionals rather than by the terms of reference (Pleasance, 2016). Whether perceived or not, the time and space to review and evaluate may benefit reflexive engagement with the job. Gale et al.'s (2011) research showed that CHE lecturers' roles are diverse and that while challenges remained with time commitment, there was an appetite and aptitude for possible research engagement. Reflexivity determines 'intensive reflexive interrogation' (Trahar, 2011, p.46) to enrich the ability to identify the merit of individual pedagogical practices. Whether through continued studies or improvement in teaching, seeking improvement in part is research. The opportunity to reflect on the role of being a CHE academic may benefit the individual, the CoP and any research dissemination that follows from my study.

The myriad of individual and collective initiatives within the professional environment leaves little room for professional integrity to be acknowledged. Dhillon et al. (2011) suggest that non-agentic

profession-driven performance targets control teachers' professionalism. Rather than the idea of professionalism as a static entity, the political shift has potentially become a point for debate (Colley et al., 2007), which has challenged lecturers to make their own decisions to develop a sense of self within the limitations of the professional organisation. Associated with the political shift mentioned, during the transitional process, professional identity recognition for both being and becoming can embody the 'task-oriented' and 'functional' models of professionalism (Colley et al., 2007). CHE teaching roles constantly involve flexibility to meet the requirements within the sector (Gale et al., 2011). For some professionals, there remains a certain level of conformity to meet the organisation's needs for personal integrity. Therefore, the myriad of responsibilities of a CHE lecturer in fulfilling the daily tasks of a lecturer shapes the formation of academic professional identity.

Deregulating FE teaching credentials supported individuals' professional identities in FE colleges rather than the collective (The National Archives, 2018). The Level 5 Diploma for Education and Training or the Postgraduate Certificate in Education: Post-Compulsory (Education and Training Foundation, 2018) and the EFS (2023) could be seen as qualifications devaluing the role of CHE, despite the change in government guidelines for FE teaching. CHE lecturers' role responsibilities are varied, and 'jack of all trades' (Turner et al., 2009, p.362) is undoubtedly a fair perspective compared to a university lecturer[8]. Presenting professional CHE identity as 'multifarious' (Feather, 2015, p.325) integrating elements to the role (Feather, 2015), focused on the vocational, not professional. Under the Education Act of 2002, all FE lecturers had to be trained and qualified in teaching, but interestingly, the different experiences were of the same intensity expected of schoolteachers. The Deregulation Act of 2015 removed the requirement for FE lecturers to complete training and qualify as professionals following the recommendations from Lord Lingfield's (2012) study investigating the usefulness of credentials for establishing teaching standards (The National Archives, 2018). Teacher training qualifications were no longer necessary for FE lecturers teaching after 2015 before signing a contract (Esmond & Wood, 2017) [9]. The provocative deregulation may impact HE lecturers' professional identity by revealing the dominant professional identity in HEPs. Minimising the teaching role and industry experience removes attachment to the professional knowledge that often motivates CHE lecturers to give back to the profession. Again, this raises the question of how professionalism

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[8] Knowles & Burrows (2014) assert university lecturers have experienced similar time pressures in their roles. Organisational requirements are accounted for to ensure the systems are being measured appropriately. Metrics are measured to ensure student satisfaction is high, the processes are reported and evaluated.

[9] Historically, university lecturers can come from a practice base, for example lecturers in social work, physiotherapy and education and have been employed, in the same way as university lecturers with no practice history or teaching qualifications.

relates to professional training and certification to create a professional habitus (Beck & Young, 2005; Turner et al., 2015).

Often, aims, mission statements and business goals influence individual integrity and professional development, informing decision-making about future projects inside or outside HE organisations (Fung, 2017). Discussions around potential conflict professionals experienced in their development should be at given points in their employment (Van der Want et al., 2018). During annual job reviews, reflections often form the basis of professional discussions between line managers and lecturers. At this point, lecturers can discuss any additional challenges that arise when there is too much pressure, potentially creating conflict in the place of work (Varghese et al., 2005). When lecturers experience challenges completing numerous tasks by tight deadlines, their mental health can also be impacted, leading to professional responsibilities moving into personal time that would ordinarily be reserved for family or downtime (Blaxter et al., 1998). The compromise of personal integrity, time and commitment can impact the negotiation of personal and professional identity and impact positive association with academic identity.

The intrusion of time impacts the personal health of lecturers, particularly when professional commitments conflict with the individual requirements to live their lives (Mansfield et al., 2016; Schutz & Zembylas, 2009). They lead lecturers to experience further discomfort when the pressure becomes too much, affecting professional and personal identity collision (Canrinus et al., 2011a). The possibility of inciting burnout is ever-present in the work environment; even so, within the education sector, recognising self-efficacy is evident (Chang, 2009; Van der Want et al., 2018). Given the recent pandemic, lecturers experienced additional pressure in their roles, continually meeting the role's demands. Professional demands often impact lecturers' duty of care and self-care (Peters et al., 2020). The effect on lecturers' professional identity and confidence required to teach, research while concurrently interact professionally in the education sector, for some can become untenable (Canrinus et al., 2011a; Canrinus et al., 2011b; Haidt, 2007). Influential for pedagogical practice, understanding identity formation is helpful for lecturers' role with students, colleagues and professionals (Van der Want et al., 2015). However, when lecturers experience additional pressures to meet extra performativity requests (Beck, 2008), another prerequisite of the marketisation of the education sector, demands on time and performance can become unmanageable. The constant pressure to be a consummate professional with little, if no, consideration for the aspects of our personal lives being impacted negatively in the workplace takes its toll.

2.2.5 Consideration of Personal and Professional Identity in College Higher Education

Personal and professional identity contribute to a CHE lecturer's perception of meeting the needs of the college, sector and more comprehensive educational platform. Professionals working in non-educational settings may need more knowledge of the FE teaching qualifications offered. However, the impact on personal identity can be questioned (Milner, 2017). Personal confidence and integrity could challenge a lecturer's professional identity in the sector (Cunliffe, 2018). The removal of the standards for lecturer roles places less importance on the associated training and expertise, suggesting that professionals' professionalism has decreased (Colmer, 2017). The decisions of the 2015 Deregulation Act have potentially compromised the education sector. As professionals from non-education sectors sought employment in colleges, the shared experience of a craft or trade increased knowledge transfer for themselves and their students (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2019). In contrast, the Deregulation Act 2015 removed the duration of training and experience required to gain employment in the FE sector. The fast-track approach could devalue the teaching profession, minimising the government's commitment to the industry and valuing those already teaching in whatever capacity (Czerniawski et al., 2018).

The introduction of an appropriate standardised approach for the delivery and quality of teaching and learning in HE in England has changed how students and academics interact with the sector (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2019; Wilkinson, 2020; Tomlinson, 2016). The evolving nature of academic and professional identity, academia, and the requirement for updating are commensurate with the standards outlined by the OfS (2020). The unification of the required reporting process for the role of academics in both traditional HE and CHE remains, irrespective of the size of the HEP (OfS, 2020). This could support lecturers' professional identity by minimising academic elitism, historically seen in university hierarchies (Bathmaker, 2016; Harris, 2005). Since the introduction of WP during the 1960s in the UK, the opportunity for equality has improved for students from all backgrounds (Kettley, 2007). The additional reform during the 1990s, when former colleges were permitted the credentials to teach and support students in their academic studies, created further parity in the sector (Parry & Thompson, 2002). Even though the QAA (2024) and OfS (2020) uphold the equality of experience on the part of both lecturers and students, there remains a perception that CHE degrees are considered a second-class opportunity to gain a degree (Widdowson & King, 2018). The potential impact on CHE lecturers' work appears to undermine their qualifications, academic identity, and ability to provide a quality experience for students (Creasy, 2013; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2019).

The complexity of academic identity is more comprehensive than just the job titles the professional holds (Clegg, 2008). Job titles representing rank and duty, shown on organisational charts, business cards, and contracts, are widely accepted as identification benchmarks (Caza & Creary, 2016). Job titles are also highly significant symbols. Unfortunately, titles represent a range of research and teaching activities, and the career paths that underpin them and the positions they offer have become more diversified and unpredictable (Locke et al., 2016). Perhaps this indicates that for a lecturer's role to remain impactful, a CHE academic identity can only be assumed and appropriated with the relevant academic cultural framework to support relational practices (Bourdieu, 1988). Slay and Smith (2011) suggest academic identity is linked to 'relational and social influences within' (p.86), signifying the wider societal factors impacting the individual's sense of self. Schofield's (2018) study explored the teaching-research nexus in college-based and university higher education. The study comprised focus groups for 40 participants: 10 students from two post-1992 universities and 30 from college-based higher education. The findings often revealed misconceptions about the HE courses delivered in CHE, citing limited research, even when research informs practice, on active or qualified staff teaching teams and indicating the dual function of providing FE and HE provision (Schofield, 2018). The Government white paper , Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice, recognised that teaching has been regarded as secondary to the research (DfBIS, 2016).

However, the CHE teacher's identity could be considered duplicitous. Attempting to fulfil both FE and HE requirements effectively, to meet the standards for quality and learner/student needs, simultaneously delivering a comprehensive curriculum outlined by awarding bodies, could be considered an extension of the previously understood remit of teacher identity (Quinney et al., 2017). Indeed, teacher requirements ebb and flow within the academic year, leading to potential struggles to commit to additional study or research. As in any organisation, the reciprocal strain and variety of challenges experienced by professionals could not take place alone but in the collective experience of growth in the zone of proximal development[10] (Mentis et al., 2016). As the requirements for professional roles change, depending on the leadership in a department and curriculum area of specialism and practice (Wilson & Wilson, 2011), the identity of professionals also

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[10] Vygotsky (1978) presented the zone of proximal development (ZPD) to underline the value of scaffolding, or progressive support through social forms of learning. The difference between an individual's known abilities and what they could achieve with peer or expert support is known as the ZPD.

evolves. Though pressure with undue stress is never a good situation, there can be individual and collective growth when experienced together.

An additional complication to understanding what a professional is and what a professional identity is per se is the idea of having a dual identity within the teaching environment. In CHE, there are different paths each professional takes to become a lecturer; some come through the academic path, schooling throughout to attain the required role (Esmond & Wood, 2017). For others, the chance of a career change to demonstrate the accumulation of gathered knowledge from working in the industry presents an alternative direction. As such, the concept of FE lecturers having a dual professional identity (Esmond & Wood, 2017; Education & Training Foundation, 2018; Peel, 2005; Plowright & Barr, 2012) refers to the simultaneous possession of two professional identities within one context, lecturer and the vocational industry specialist. For FE lecturers who already possess the dual professional identity of vocation and lecturer, their identities could be additionally muddled by teaching HE modules (Orr, 2009).

Dual identities present the crossover of skills, where one identity overshadows the other, both formally and informally, resulting in the potential for anomaly and confusion (Robson, 1998). Initially, professionals joining FE teaching could be seen as experts in one field, becoming novices as they enter the profession (Benner, 1984). Sometimes, the unrealistic expectations required for teaching must be clarified for individuals moving from one professional organisation to another (Peel, 2005). Transitioning from industry to teaching in an FE college has been considered a more accessible option. They very quickly realise that the daily pressures of the teaching role are more arduous than they had initially thought. Adopting several identities within the workplace is a complex transition, with the assumption of separate roles with different requirements sometimes creating undue pressure. Esmond and Wood (2017, p.229) suggested that dual identity 'privileges occupational expertise that vocational educators bring from their former employment alongside pedagogic expectations of the teaching role', but challenges associated with learning the new role can be experienced. The neoliberal approach to teaching changed when the traditional measures for training were abandoned (Baltodano, 2012).

Accountability for the decisions made in practice determines personal attributes, including beliefs, morals, and views, which are integral to the organisation's values (Bukor, 2015). The juxtaposition of personal and professional identity is often at the core of decision-making in practice (Kreber, 2010) as

professionals negotiate how to model an organisation's requirements with their values and beliefs (Bukor, 2015; Pleasance, 2016). Likewise, in CHE, finding a balance between the requirements of the role and meeting the needs of students can often impact personal and professional values. MacBlain et al. (2017) adopted 'algorithms of accountability' (p.150) as an explanation for the pressure experienced by professionals and organisations. Within CHE the constant realignment with personal and professional values can become contentious, leading professionals to agree their negotiables and non-negotiables for professional identity (Downey et al., 2014). Negotiables and non-negotiables have become a way of navigating the professional journey, resolved by the individual or collective (Hegerty, 2008; Keddie, 2015), enabling lecturers' agency to proceed in their position, including daily functions in education. Individual progression in conjunction with collective decision-making often lies in the aspirations of organisational aims or with the professionals themselves (Biesta et al., 2015).

Decision-making and accountability for the continued numbers on courses and marketing are increasingly becoming a growing requirement to account for the business side of education (Wilkinson, 2020). Lecturers' administrative role must also encompass their ability to support student achievement through achievement data (Day et al., 2006). Unfortunately, managerial marketisation has become increasingly ingrained in the educational sector (Robson, 1998; Spenceley, 2006). The generation of educational values that define professionalism and professional identity in HEP's culture has led to opposition (Harris, 2005). Indeed, while the professional's remit is to nurture confident, autonomous students in their studies and subsequent employment, this does not appear to be reflected in their employment (Stromquist, 2015; Walker & Gleaves, 2016). The CHE lecturer's role is concerned with individual student achievement. Given the diverse student cohorts within CHE, the opportunity to gain another chance to study is afforded, drawing mature students, mothers, and career changers to engage (Webber & Dismore, 2020). Non-traditional students often require additional support to participate, and lecturers' support to progress, develop, and graduate is down to the individual's professional responsibility (Stanley & Stronach, 2013). Perhaps this suggests that CHE is regarded as a second-class option for HE studies rather than the opening WP for non-traditional students to embark on their studies in a flexible practice-based approach. HEPs often make lecturers' autonomy increasingly challenging in fulfilling individual professional interactions and identity (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2019; Stanley & Stronach, 2013). The pressure to conform to a given view or opinion negates elements of individuality that some professionals aim to achieve in their pedagogical approach. Often, tension to meet students' needs and maintain professional

integrity creates personal and professional uncertainty for lecturers. Professional identity is formed and moulded by working with/in the HEP, often adopting the views and principles that create organisational conformity (Lamont & Nordberg, 2014).

Various pedagogical initiatives have enhanced the consummate teaching profession, but development is still needed (Henkel, 2000; Hook, 2007; Wilson & Wilson, 2011). Introducing and continuing professional creative teaching has been regarded as an unwanted/or required pedagogical anomaly (Campbell, 2019). The political waves of direction sway the nature of the curriculum. These teaching-based initiatives have altered over the years (Campbell, 2019). However, the education sector increasingly requires sustained reflexive practice, with lecturers willing to consider alternative approaches to new ways of doing things (Attia & Edge, 2017). Perhaps achieving individual career aspirations models educational attainment.

Similarly, reflexive engagement in scholarship continually supports research informed practice (Boyer, 1990). The promotion of Boyer's (1990) model of scholarship has become synonymous with the continuation of academic practice for evidence informed pedagogy. Nevertheless, scholarship encapsulates a lifestyle choice for many working in education, whether they acknowledge the reading, researching and pedagogical engagement to remain current (Wright Mills, 1959). Educators, whatever the level of pedagogical practice, aim to have a professional career recognised within society whilst 'paying the bills' (Whitchurch, 2012, p.108). These sentiments echo Pleasance (2016), who states that values, beliefs, and attitudes affect our perception of the professional self in such a unique way that professional identity has a different meaning for all involved in being a professional. The study explored individual reflection as part of the collective academic community to create a sense of being and belonging (Lamont & Nordberg, 2014) and holistically connecting the professional and personal self in academic identity.

Lecturers often find themselves in a juxtaposition within their careers as they continue to develop professionally into new roles and with fledgling responsibilities (Lindqvist & Nordänger, 2016). These changes experienced within a lecturer's role can align with the 'constructive-conflicting' (Korhonen & Törmä, 2016) quadrant, as there are established ideas around professional role requirements. Contrasted to the 'Unsolved lecturer identity' (Korhonen & Törmä, 2016), it is identified as the quadrant with unexplored aspects of the pedagogical approach and philosophy of teaching yet to be resolved. It could be that the exploration of academic identity presents a mismatch between the

context of individual integrity and personal ownership of learning (Moore & Clarke, 2016). This is further complicated by the individual's desire to develop professionally into leadership or management positions (Boyd & Smith, 2016). Conflicting professionals in the sector have their aspirations met in line with Boyer's (1990) model of scholarship, encouraging the provision of research-informed practice. Academic identity becomes a transitional state as individuals find a sense of belonging connected to pedagogy.

The values instilled in the community could become pivotal for the practice's success, influencing professional identity modelling pedagogy for students. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model supports the conceptualisation of individuals becoming empowered by their environment. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model offers an inclusive overview of how social environments impact human development. As lecturers are accountable for interacting with colleagues, students, policy and curriculum, they create social participation (Bleach, 2013). Self-recognition impacts professional practices by refining social interaction in a pedagogical community and reinforces the agency of individuals (Vass, 2015). In turn, training and qualifications undertaken relate to lecturer achievements on their pedagogical journey. The quality of the curriculum regulates the pedagogical approach. In the same way, the curriculum delivery model is adopted by lecturers in their teaching (Coffield & Edward, 2009; Donovan, 2019; Kay, 2008). Living and imparting education standards and practicing the values instilled through a curriculum and the learning community becomes a way of being for some pedagogues.

Conformity towards a professional identity is dependent on the individual. Bourdieu (1988) stresses that the organisation has power over professionals and its impact on an individual's identity formation and resolve, where there is a case for agency beyond the hierarchical structure. How individuals meet the job description or negotiate their professional identity is personal. The role could determine the introduction of a set of negotiables for being a professional, other's perspectives and expectations in the role (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Alsup, 2006; Beijaard et al., 2004; Calvert et al., 2011; Meijer et al., 2009). The formation of what it means to have an academic identity again could be connected to the relationship dynamics professionals have within an organisation between the sociological and epistemological structure (Barnett, 2000; Gale et al., 2011). As they evolve, these relationships enable lecturers to gain a sense of belonging with their academic identity, whether linked to a personal or professional sense of self or job fulfilment. The consideration of identity exploration's individual and professional characteristics remains relevant to the CHE academic

identity. The directives from the policy could be more explicit in the consolation of terms of reference aimed at valuing and trusting FE lecturers' professionalism (Mason et al., 2010; FETL, 2018; Tully, 2022). This indicates the trust and value given to teachers in schools, universities, and professionals, including understanding clearly defined titles. Therefore, exploring academic identity is an area of ambiguity that requires clarity for professional self-worth and credulity in their field of expertise (Day et al., 2006). All these attributes of academic identity, personal and professional, positively or negatively affect CHE lecturers' position.

2.2.6   The Professionalisation of College Higher Education Teaching

The professionalisation of teaching in CHE could be introduced with the underpinning theories to support professional identity formation. Consideration of the various elements of professionalisation from the perspective of the CHE pedagogical focus versus university. The professionalisation of CHE teaching has often been fraught with introducing initiatives to develop the FE sector (Shaw, 2017; Gale et al., 2011), requiring lecturers to gain recognition for their research and teaching commitment (Spenceley, 2006). Often, CHE lecturers experience challenges that have led to many feelings of discontent with the continued upheaval and changes in compliance. As an alternative, Allen and Newcomb (1999) support the establishment of professionalisation of a professional body to unify a community of practitioners. Many want to avoid involvement in a collective, citing the incremental underhand negotiations formed from such unions (Meyerson & Tompkins, 2007). Instead, collective reinforcement often removes the fragmenting individual specialism, combining the practice of professionals and professionalism in higher education and other sectors (Whitchurch, 2013). This means that individuals can remain distinct with their pedagogical approach to teaching if they conform to internal and external initiatives to uphold professional practices.

The research-informed paradigm requires individuals to endeavour for excellence in their professional practice (Fowler et al., 2024). Debates surrounding evolved professionalism are identified with two strongly advocated positions. The first is a position of power, typified by the traits exhibited as identification of being a professional or not (Johnson, 1972). The second focuses on recruiting members into an elite community of professionals from a given occupation (Leicht & Fennell, 2001). The adopted professional's positionality could be more about how and why there is relevance for professionals working within the CHE environment. Evetts (2005) suggests occupational and organisational professionalism are two firmly held positions in professional practice. Pedagogy

remains central to occupational professionalism, permitting professionals to make decisions while remaining lecturer-focused (Evetts, 2005).

On the other hand, democratic approaches to professionalism advocate trust and professional improvement, including practice development (Sachs, 2016). Nowadays, more autonomy in professional accountability is often needed instead of becoming a control-orientated practice (Cramer et al., 2023; Ntim et al., 2017). Perhaps the integration of values based approaches in educational settings could support professional practices (Pleasance, 2016) providing a focus for individual professionals to gain a sense of belonging. The amalgamation of an integrity-based approach to pedagogy often mimics the underpinning tenets of the research methodology, with insight into how these will materialise in forming relationships built during the research journey.

Academic professionals often embark on personal development journeys while pursuing their career goals. Some continue their academic studies and explore research opportunities, while others seek management positions. Those pursuing management positions tend to identify more with organisational or managerial professionalism (Sachs, 2016). However, trust and advocacy are essential to organisational professionalism (Sachs, 2016). These professionals focus on the organisation's statistics, attainment gaps, funding opportunities, and fulfilling government directives (Bathmaker et al., 2003; Bathmaker & Avis, 2005). Both positions are valid in higher education, and professionals carry out their responsibilities accordingly (Whitchurch, 2006, 2008). These two divergent positions serve different interests and individuals at the heart of organisations.

Professionalism within education is difficult to clarify as individuals and the collective can interpret the term. On the other hand, appropriate modelling of behaviours and expectations in education functions as a form of control. The introduction of mission statements attaches an expectation for an employee's role, creating a sense of shared belonging within the organisation. These views of professionalism acknowledge the unification of professional characteristics (Archer, 2008). However, Archer (2008) promoted professionalism as a 'principled, ethical and responsible approach to work' (p.397), which remains a positive affirmation of the relationship for collaborative working. Whilst individual lecturers fulfil the directives of the sector and the organisation, suggesting there could be a separate requirement to align with the collective. Evans (2008) acknowledged that professionalism matches the requirements and expectations of lecturers and professionals in the organisation. The

shared beliefs, values, working patterns and culture reflected in the working environment support the notion of professionalism in practice (Ball, 2017).

The aspiration may be to form a collective identity within the professional practice. The requirements for the community should be reflexively addressed as professionalism still needs to be deemed in place, even when the organisation models the attitude of professionals. Shared language and configuring beliefs and symbols in the practice environment are critical factors in considering professionalism (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005). Often, the articulated formation of significant academic language aids the acceptance of a collective identity in HE practices (Feather, 2010). Evetts' (2005) view of occupational professionalism could be linked to how specialised knowledge and adherence to outside norms and guidelines align with the lecturer's academic and professional identity. Day et al., (2006) suggest that including a required set of norms in an educational organisation is applicable inwardly and outwardly considering the wider political climate. Acting as a shared collective academic identity portrayed within the organisation should, in theory, be acquiesced outwardly. Conceptualising how lecturers' practice models the intricate attributes of CHE academic identity, the section concludes with the many aspects of teaching that should value lecturer professionalisation (Mason et al., 2010; Winter & O'Donohue, 2012). CHE academic identity is critical to creating self-worth and belonging in the wider academic community (Delanty, 2008; Lamont & Nordberg, 2014). The formation of academic identity is underacknowledged as the practical wisdom shared by teacher educators (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2006).

2.3   The Conceptualisation of Academic Identity

The following section addresses ideas surrounding academic identity for the individual, CHE and the university to begin to piece together the unique attributes that contribute to CHE's academic identity. Academic identity often conjures imagery of an antiquated individual extolling their learned self on an audience, present only, to learn and gain knowledge (Feather, 2016). Indeed, academic identity presents an image of an old-fashioned persona with the illustration of a knowledge-sharing forum that is not misplaced by modern-day perceptions (Louvel, 2013). In 2006, Scaife argued that FE was dominated by a culture of the present, creating barriers to research and professional autonomy development for a transformative learning culture. Perhaps, based on an indifference to research, when the FE prioritises a learning culture to support pedagogy. Exclusively collaborating with an

externally imposed audit culture, college leaders tend to undermine the knowledge capacities of lecturers (Turner & Carpenter, 2012). Lecturers connect to pedagogical research in an academic cognate area further conceptualises CHE's academic identity (Deem, 2006) to their practice. Quigley (2011) suggests that being an academic is not a fixed state but developmental, relating to lecturers' self-identification as integral to their being and becoming academics (Lamont & Nordberg, 2014; Quigley, 2011). Tilly (1996) argued that 'identity could be blurred but indispensable' (p.7). Symbolic constructions of identity conceptualised robustly clarify professional formation (Harding, 1993). Boterro (2010) described the blurred state of identity that removes personal wholeness into segmented parts of the self.

2.3.1 How are Professional and Academic Identity Different?

Similarly, Volpe and Chandler (2001) coined the term 'pracademics' to describe scholarly and practical lecturers. According to Posner (2009), pracademics are hybrid individuals—simultaneously practitioners and academics—navigating the worlds of teaching, research, and professional practice. Panda (2014) proposed an ambidextrous mindset. Meanwhile, Wolfenden et al. (2019) called them practice academics. The dual role supports sharing discourse with students and developing practice (Wasserman & Kram, 2009), using the term scholar-practitioners to build relationships (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2019). Lecturers experience conflict between the priorities of their roles. Some lecturers are discontent when practical work is undervalued or when colleagues are engaged in or are involved in research (Dickenson et al., 2020; Hollweck et al., 2022). Additionally, some pracademics primarily hold positions in their field of practice but engage in scholarly activities. Wilson (2019) argues that the theory-meets-practice concept is overly optimistic. For example, in youth workers, teachers, and CHE lecturers, pracademics can be categorised into two subtypes: 'pracs' (primarily practitioners) and 'demics' (mainly within academia) (p.1). To make sense of the diverse priorities of the pracademic, Macduff and Netting (2008; 2010) have identified three approaches to professional pracademic work: the engaged scholar, the reflective professional practitioner, and the collaborative team.

Jackson's research (2017) relates to student identity transformation in HE as the self-authorship framework developed by Baxter Magolda (2014). The transformative nature resonates with forming identity transitions for CHE lecturers in response to RQ1: What, if any, are the unique attributes that contribute to the concept of CHE academic identity? The framework suggests that students develop a

professional ideology based on external factors in the following formula stage. Nevertheless, the notion of CHE lecturers' academic identity was reflexively explored using the bead collage technique, signalling a crossroads with potential conflict between internal and external factors influencing critical thinking. Communication with participants using the bead collage technique and CtR could, in turn, relate to nurturing the crossroads (Baxter Magolda, 2014). The self-authored stage described how students voice a deep understanding of who they are and what they want to become, again relating to the participants' discussion about their CHE academic identity in the bead collage technique and CtR FGs. In the final stage of Baxter Malgolda's (2014) frame, students developed consistency between multiple identities and entitled internal foundations, enabling their professional values and beliefs to become homogenous with their overall professional and personal identity (Milner, 2017). Jackson (2016) expressed the process of identity formation as ongoing and transformative, dependent upon the support and interaction with the HE landscapes.

Therefore, this suggests that pracademic reflexivity could blur the inclusion of self-indulgent research endeavours when pursuing a reflexive approach (Hine, 2020). Integrating specific personal and professional attributes contributes significantly to individual identity (Harris, 2005). However, Quigley (2011) discussed how experience could compellingly facilitate change in an individual's identity, with various attributes influencing the daily working life of a professional CHE academic lecturer (Creasy, 2013). Meanwhile, professional and personal conversation develops resilience (Mansfield et al., 2016), practicably resulting in forming or reforming academic identity. The job role requirements and academic tasks organisationally bind lecturers' self-perception of academic identity.

If, as Billot (2010) suggests, new experiences, learning, and evidence-informed practice accumulation contribute to academic identity, then adopting a conducive environment for academic professional advancement in CHE is required. Developing a new skill and learning about a new policy or intervention in practice contribute to identity formation (Schaap et al., 2019). The evolving nature of academic environments correlates with changes in academic identity (Henkel, 2005), as all experiences, positive and negative, contribute to the formation and reformation of the self. Imposter syndrome (Wilkinson, 2020) is a reasonable response to a challenging situation where individuals develop self-doubt, impacting confidence (Larcombe et al., 2021; Walker & Gleaves, 2016), often experienced by new teachers or lecturers, or anyone starting a new venture. Feelings of self-doubt or not being good enough can impact individual confidence, forming physical and mental barriers that prevent task completion. Perfectionist tendencies and comparisons with colleagues and other

professionals can harm confidence and motivation (Wilkinson, 2020). Often impacting stress levels, exhaustion, or feelings of inadequacy, imposter syndrome is considered a real phenomenon (Haney, 2015). Therefore, by exposing CHE lecturers to changes in their role coupled with undertaking research, which potentially assumes a new level of pressure, doubts can manifest themselves, making it challenging to see a way forward. The decision-making context of the research had the potential to support and advance thinking and behaviours, while others negatively influenced life and confidence (Haidt, 2007). Inclusive learning environments modelled in the education sector support academic role shifting as boundaries alter (Sachs, 2016). Depending on the policy requirements, a difference in academic identity between HEPs leads to new, diverse roles in the HE. Nonetheless, as time passes, the historical conceptual understanding of academic identity shifts as each lecturer navigates academia as part of a collective (Wenger, 1998).

Appreciating the learning environment from another perspective provides insight beyond a single experience. As the pedagogical requirements change and shift depending on the policy or practice, an appreciation to value students remains central. In the learning environment, pedagogical and scholarship requirements fluctuate to meet student needs. However, being situated where identity is forming or reforming remains a pivotal element of identity creation identity (Barrow et al., 2020; Harris, 2005). In addition, the unique position of entwining a sense of worth and self-esteem with the expectations of the academic role fulfils the vision of being an academic (Barrow et al., 2020; Henkel, 2005; Quigley, 2011; Wenger, 1998). Consolidation of academic identity enables lecturers to begin their professional learning journey.

Unquestionably, the CHE lecturer's role links to the community of learning, including the impact pedagogical practices have on the students they are teaching. If a person partly selects identity interpretations and meaning (Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016), full acceptance of individual agentic identity moves towards a brand identity in the CHE sector (Lamont & Nordberg, 2014; Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016). The collective recognition and representation of the academic community shape and signify the construction of a shared identity (Berger, 2011). Then, too, the representation of what constitutes brand identity in HE reinforces professional academic identity (Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016). Although suggesting the above notion could be too simplistic, presenting a reductionistic view of academic identity (Boud & Brew, 2013), the primary approach fairly represents how HE lecturers are perceived irrespective of location or organisation. Acknowledging lecturers' connection to their

identity, individual academic achievement, pedagogy, and role, as well as in the collective, has become fundamental for academic identity formation.

The perception of what constitutes academic identity is viewed differently by those in the throes of educational practice and those outside. Historical barriers created a divide between individuals who study in the academic community and those who do not (Barnett, 2005). Community connections form part of normative CHE practice to develop employment curricula opportunities (Eraut, 2004; Lomas, 2007; Parry & Thompson, 2002). Curriculum development of knowledge, skills, and employability sustained by the partnership working of CHE in local communities and the student body (Healey et al., 2014a; Neary, 2014; Simmons & Lea, 2013; Wheelahan, 2010). Removal of the traditional perception of academics is often found to be less apparent in sector-endorsed CHE curricula (Independent Commission on the College of the Future, 2020

On the other hand, there is a tenuous connection between pedagogical practice and the distinction of identifying lecturers' meaning and understanding at the time of the study. Loads and Campbell (2015) distinguish the practice of what academics 'do' as 'social practice' (p.256), extending to the full range of activities undertaken. Indeed, engagement in social practice could support professionals, as part of the whole academic community, to facilitate the continuation of self, academic and community development.

However, Loads and Campbell's (2015) research, conducted across Scotland's 19 HEPs academic community, focused on the benefit of academic enhancement activities, such as being a seconded lecturer. The research included semi-structured interviews with two secondees from each university studied. The findings from the study indicated that the benefits experienced by seconded lecturers often felt like being an outsider (Muchmore, 2002). Removed from the constraints of internal politics, seconded lecturers appear uniquely positioned to draw back the curtains in their pedagogical role/s. Seconded lecturers can stop, think, and disrupt standard practice patterns' flow (Muchmore, 2002). Unorthodox patterns of work permit seconded lecturers to challenge decision-making and engage in academic professional development (Loads & Campbell, 2015). Professional development activities equate to the amount of time scheduled for reflection. Realistically, professional development actions can create a new sense of self or academic identity (Mitchell, 2013). As Boud and Brew (2013) suggest, authentic academic professional development enacted in practice-based environments is of immense value. Loads and Campbell (2015) highlight the continued operationalisation of practice-

based professional development as a benefit to critique and disrupt practice. Novel professional practice experiences can compel individual recreation of an academic skillset/s.

2.3.1.1 *The College Higher Education Teacher Identity*

The creation of the teacher has become increasingly crucial for HEPs as they compete for student numbers (Cunningham et al., 2000). However, pressure often places performativity-driven 'output' on lecturers, challenging individual values and beliefs that underpin academic professional work (Harris, 2005, p.425). Additionally, it juxtaposes teacher identity with ongoing pressures to fulfil the requirements of a lecturer's role. Professionally, academics are between the 'economies of performance' and the 'ecologies of practice' (Stronach et al., 2002, p.102). Lecturer accountability changes as a response to HEPs (Ntim et al., 2017). Discussions about increasing student numbers are often at odds with aspects of teacher identity (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005; Buchanan, 2015). Related to the economy of performance, professionals in the current education system are judged and appraised, in contention with individual beliefs and practices established in their work (Stronach et al., 2002). Articulation of teacher identity within the academic environment is becoming more evident as the development of regulated quality teaching is managed (Feather, 2011; OfS, 2020).

The requirements for being a teacher are learning on the job and observing professional practices to facilitate the role simultaneously (O'Leary & Cui, 2020). Reflexive normalising of the role, construction, and interpretation of teacher identity begins when teaching for real (Vähäsantanen & Billett, 2008; Zembylas, 2003). Arvaja's (2016) research focuses on a one-year study of teacher identity adopting self-narrative to explore their experience. The data included the weekly entries of a diary over a year from the participant, 'Anna', the student teacher's 18 learning diary entries, were between 1500 – 2500 words (Arvaja, 2016). The study incorporated the renegotiation of self as 'I', the relationship with self and others when encountering everyday experiences of being a teacher. In earlier professional teacher identity, there are different dimensions of identity, including the personal aspects of self, to be considered (Day et al., 2006). Arvaja's (2016) study concluded that the emerging narrative self was constructed from identity negotiations from the multiple positions assumed when transitioning from a student to a teacher.

Similarly, my study will require participants to consider their academic identity as it has already formed or emerged in CHE. Arvaja's (2016) research demonstrated difficulties reconciling the personal and professional aspects of self when forming an emerging identity. Repeatedly overlooking

the individual aspects of life leads to a compartmentalised approach to professional working (Gibson et al., 2010; Wood et al., 2016). Instead, presenting time to consider personal feelings about professional identity as a teacher can be reflexively identified (Day et al., 2006). Exploration of CHE academic identity resonates with the reflexive engagement of an insider/outsider inquiry where individuals write themselves into a particular phenomenon (Mcilveen, 2008). Individual everyday experiences contribute to forming academic identity drawn partly from the subjective pedagogical updating required in a professional teaching role.

Invariably, the length of time an individual works in a sector, the greater their capacity to assume an identity (Kemmis, 2009). Personal identity has often been embodied in the work environment, being more holistic than simply fulfilling a role (Boud & Brew, 2013). Usually reflected in professional development, the lecturers' value in an organisation (Loads & Campbell, 2015) often links timetables and sessional activity. Nonetheless, supportive organisational mechanisms verify or alter an individual's agentic identity (Kemmis, 2009). Beyond these initial points, CHE lecturers' academic identity connects pedagogical student relationships. Any potential ambiguity CHE lecturers' experience around academic identity lies in the importance placed on their professional self-identity (Milner, 2017).

2.3.1.2 Conceptualised Models of Identity Formation

To make sense of my research journey, I conceptualised the Kaleidoscope theory (Milner, 2022) (see Appendix 1 - The Kaleidoscope Theory). The inclusion of perception bestowed at the beginning, during and after the initial of the research process supports individual, unique experiences shape identity (Billot & King, 2015; Lamont & Nordberg, 2014; Taylor, 2017). The Kaleidoscope theory (Milner, 2022) (see Appendix 1 - The Kaleidoscope Theory) provides a space for individuals to discover their perceptions of the world around them, acquiring meaning in the different experiences, each becoming a tool of self-revelation. Individuals interact differently, choosing to share self-revelations whilst others do not. For some individuals, the ability to notice events and recognise significant life patterns and behaviours is forged in education (Day et al., 2006; Lamont & Nordberg, 2014). How or why individuals react positively or negatively as they move from one situation to another on their life journey is up to them (Hookway, 2017). The colours and patterns in the kaleidoscope represent an individual's choice and experience.

A combination of interlinking perspectives about significant key life events with visual, sensory and emotional connections are often stimulated by an encounter or memory (Cotterall, 2013; Ezzy, 2005). Experiences become committed to memory as the physical or metaphorical space expands or contracts to receive and store the information (Brown, 2019; Madikizela-Madiya, 2014). As individuals interact with the world around them, experiences and memories are stored. The stimulated memory recall affects experiences and alters life perspectives. The mirrors in the kaleidoscope reflect the environment, educational setting, place, and time in society and become significant depending on the light (or perspective). In part, the Kaleidoscope theory (Milner, 2022) (see Appendix 1 - The Kaleidoscope Theory) mimics symbolic interactionalism (Turner, 2015) to represent the impact of social interactions on individuals in communities or groups in society. Individual choice and identity have implications for interactions, stimuli and conceptualisation of the world, assembling the necessary impetus for self-understanding (Slay & Smith, 2011).

Here, I introduce the conceptualisation of my Buffer-fly concept (Milner, 2017) (see Appendix 2 - The Buffer-fly Concept) as a significant contribution to understanding the formation, transition, and realisation of the professional and personal self. The combination of the personal and professional self can be difficult to reconcile when, as professionals, we are often asked and requested to fulfil the tasks that we personally feel compromise our values. Values-based approaches, whilst useful in instilling a focus in organisations, are often difficult to maintain with honesty that meets the business and person-centred practices expected in education (Winter & Donohue, 2012). The Buffer-fly concept (Milner, 2017) (see Appendix 2 - The Buffer-fly Concept) acknowledges the professional and personal interplay and how they align to ensure individual functionality. The identification of personal values such as authority, beliefs, conformity, selfhood, acceptance and trust will provide a foundation for determining a natural connection to the political incentives of the function professionally with the individual values fostered before entering the position (Luke & Gourd, 2018). In part influenced by Eriksen's (1968) selfhood, identifying the six influential factors all intertwine to impact individual responses to outlook and task-oriented practices. As a PhD student and early career researcher, finding my place in the CHE sector was often complicated by professional expectations of me as a lecturer, raising questions about why I was undertaking further research when I worked in a college. My belief and motivation impact my selfhood as I navigate the academic world and reconcile that with my CHE lecturer role. How I or others flourish or flounder, depending on the situation, often depends on the environment and people we are surrounded by. No amount of confidence can be

impacted when there is determination. However, when confidence is low, and ability questions, an individual's selfhood becomes undermined, which can be a difficult challenge for newly qualified professionals, whatever their profession (Archer, 2008).

2.4   Literature Review Summary

The literature review explored what being a CHE academic means, with the discussion presenting the responsibilities assigned to a CHE academic's role with the combined pressures to conduct research and teach (Ingleby, 2015) as a pracademic (Dickinson et al., 2022). Feather (2016) suggested that academic identity as a bricoleur for pedagogical and scholarship activity is heterogeneous and complex. Alternatively, Clegg (2008) proposed that the entwined conceptualisation of academic identity becomes bound with individual relationships experienced in academia. Nevertheless, any previous professional practice development (Boud & Brew, 2013) alone does not outline the establishment of CHE academic identity. If, as highlighted, the CoP (Ntim et al., 2017; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015) continues to evolve to enhance the collective identity of CHE academic identity then dialogue, development and acceptance in part through the recognition from HEA Fellowships (HEA, 2011) can help to reduce the impact of imposter syndrome experienced by CHE lecturers. Instead, further exploration of the complexities of the role is required. The CHE working environment includes the students, roles, and the hierarchy of the research participants. Advocates for CHE lecturers, MEG (2018) continue to offer support to professional working in the sector but as they are not directly involved with each of the 43 FE colleges they can only offer advice and best practices.

What has been learned from the literature review in response to RQ.1 What, if any, are the unique attributes that contribute to the concept of CHE academic identity? First, there are myriad ways of understanding academic identity in the HE context, let alone within the CHE CoP. Often, the perceptions of others, namely the local community, determine personal views of jobs and responsibilities in CHE. Even with the changes since the 1990s, CHE's response to WP has supported individuals in local communities to re/engage with HE in a diverse nurturing environment. From the confusion surrounding identity formation, CHE lecturers struggle to see themselves with a distinct identity removed from the focus of the FE college curriculum. Linked to the contractual obligations to fulfil timetabled sessions, time and scholarship, though required, are often overlooked to ensure students have lecturers in their sessions. As such, the conflict between delivering HE and FE, whilst

vastly different in terms of time, preparation, and scholarship, is perceived as the same when timetables are agreed to meet the demands of college students. Whereas the introduction of the AOC (2024) and MEG (2018) shed light on the need to support and recognise CHE, there is still unfinished work to ensure lecturers feel able to challenge the system and manage their imposter syndrome (Wilkinson, 2020).

The literature review has considered academic identity in the context of higher education and how concepts of identity align with professionalism in CHE and wider HE educational roles, frequently highlighting how a lecturer's scholarship engagement aligns with HE roles and responsibilities. In line with sector and or organisational strategies, lecturers' identity is determined, in part, by pedagogical engagement. Coupled with lecturers' personal attributes, skills, and experience, conceptions of the interplay in the dynamic of academic identity impact the job. The role of pracademics, which recognises the transitional role of academics and practitioners, significantly harnesses selfhood and confidence, managing imposter syndrome when challenged by new experiences. While the HEA fellowships align with university and other HE provisions, the barriers between the different contexts of lecturers are perhaps alleviated. Whereas the emphasis placed on student satisfaction initiative lends itself to the growing need for pedagogy-focused practices in HE, amalgamated scholarship and pedagogy are not consistently recognised as sitting together.

The next chapter outlines the methodology, firstly opening with an in-depth consideration of my positionality. I explore the underpinning tenets of feminism and reflexivity lens that have informed the choice and selection of the overarching methodological approach and the methods used to respond to RQ2: What impact does the bead collage technique have on research about academic identity? Secondly, the chapter will consider the literature about creative methodology, which includes how the use of creative approaches in pedagogy and visual thinking research, support the decision to conduct research using the bead collage technique method. Thirdly, the chapter will outline the research design, including the focus groups, sampling, participants and ethical considerations. Finally, the chapter will acknowledge the significance of the research methodology, feminist and reflexive lenses for selecting the reflexive thematic analysis adopted to analyse the data.

3. Methodology

The methodology chapter begins with an overview of the research study's conceptualisation, application, and justification. The literature justified the research approach and design (Carter & Little, 2007). The research was contextualised in an FE college in the Southwest of England to define CHE's academic identity. Given my inclination towards creativity, I adopted a qualitative research approach, which informed my positionality and choice to use three focused lenses: the feminist, humanist, and reflexive. These lenses encouraged the interpretative qualitative methodological paradigm for gathering in-depth information through focus groups (FGs) and the bead collage technique method. Integrating my positionality from these three focused lenses further justified the insider/outsider researcher role I undertook in the research. Guiding the creative method conceptualised the bricolage, making it possible for the flexible qualitative technique to gather the various voices and narratives. The research relied on the subjective methodological interpretative paradigm and analytical representation (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Reinforcing my positionality for the lenses and research techniques strengthened the qualitative research perspective. The two research questions are:

Research Question 1. (RQ1) What, if any, are the unique attributes that contribute to the concept of CHE academic identity?
Research Question 2. (RQ2) What impact does the bead collage technique have on research about academic identity?

The chapter opens with a section detailing the reasons for employing a qualitative approach, followed by a brief justification for my researcher's positionality and lens of focus, including adopting the insider/outsider researcher approach and research with colleagues. Secondly, the theoretical basis for adopting and applying the bead collage technique and the conceptualisation of the creative methodological approach will be outlined. Thirdly, the chapter explores how the bead collage technique and Chance to Reflect (CtR) FGs functioned as constituent parts of the research design to gather the necessary information from participants' responses to the two research questions. The fourth section explains the research strategy in detail, summarising the population, sampling, ethical issues, authenticity, and reliability. The chapter closes with a description and justification of reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) and theme identification.

3.1   Qualitative Methodology

When designing this study, it was crucial to consider that the approaches used should practicality support the exploration of identity research and creative approaches. Qualitative methodology establishes individual representations of the social world (Day, 2006). Given that the research was responding to RQ1 and RQ2, gathering information from participants about their academic identity was the primary focus. Therefore, the justification for adopting a qualitative approach was to gather in-depth information about the participants perceptions of their academic identity. Identifying the underlying assumptions about knowledge creation in research is important to understand how we know what we already know and claim to know. A strength of qualitative research is the flexible way that information can be gathered from multiple data methods. As the data was collected using the bead collage technique method during focus groups, the discursive benefits were evident from the number of transcribed words (see Table 1, p. 98). I acknowledge the potential limitations of a subjective study however I counter the arguments cited against such an approach, without which the individual participant voices would not be heard. As there are limited generalisability for the chosen research design, the benefits are the transferability of the creative approach, which functioned as a worthy justification for the research to explore CHE lecturers' academic identity. The data analysis was complex, but without the consideration of participant voices the themes identified as part of the reflexive thematic analysis would not be gained. As legitimate knowledge of the research culture is accomplished through understanding power, identity, and the researchers' positionality (Aiello & Nero, 2019; Day et al., 2006).

3.2   Researcher Positionality

As a CHE lecturer conducting research in the context of an FE college, I am acutely aware of the constraints imposed by my professional and academic identity. My professional identity became in flux (Ennals et al., 2016). I encountered different experiences that were new and outside of my knowledge. Reflecting on my research journey, I appreciated the significance of becoming a CHE academic, a transition intertwined with my PhD experience. For CHE, lecturers engaged in scholarly activities are likened to the pracademic (Dickinson et al., 2020; Panda, 2014; Posner, 2009; Volpe & Chandler, 2001; Wasserman & Kram, 2009; Wolfenden et al., 2019), an often-overlooked role in academic circles. The experience gained as a CHE lecturer at the FE College at the research site where the research was conducted. This college is in Southwest of England, with a smaller student body than many universities (approximately 600 students). Despite this, the college provides a gold-standard learning experience, promoting study programmes that ignite lasting passion and equip individuals for success in the workforce.

Often, reflexivity within pedagogical practice aligns with positionality in life and the impact of societal and cultural knowledge (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007). My research positionality remained integral to exploring the personal and professional journey of academic identity formation (Vanner, 2015). The selection of an inclusive insider/outsider perspective guided the direction offered from the contextual knowledge base as a fledgling reflexive, humanist, and feminine researcher. My confidence, connected with positionality, enhanced my awareness of the political perspective I was casting on qualitative research (Pillow, 2003). These shifting boundaries created significant changes in an insider researcher role, enabling me to rebuild relationships to review the studied community (Kerstetter, 2012). Critiques of insider research raise issues about the trust fostered between the community members, suggesting that rebuilding or sustaining new relationships for future working together often emerges (Attia & Edge, 2017; Greene, 2014). Open, honest conversations are essential to avoid broken relationships between the participants and the researcher (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2017). Of course, there are positive aspects to the insider research role. Namely, three benefits: already being a member of the community group eases accessibility, familiarity with the topic, I already understand the subject of the researcher as a CHE lecturer; and finally, as I work in the CoP, I have experience with the terminology and language used in the college and have an appreciation of the dynamics to understand participants' reactions (Kacen & Chaitin, 2006; Padgett, 2008).

The insider research perspective encouraged connectedness (Ademolu, 2023) with the community, which was beneficial for promoting shared CHE narratives. As the insider researcher, I did not encounter challenges during the research process; the role was to assist, not hinder, participants' participation, and data production remained central (Greene, 2014; Kerstetter, 2012). Integration of the shared narrative impacted my research positionality by offering an insightful, reflexive experience of the research environment (Fleming, 2018). Navigating the shifting perspectives of insider researchers faced by the participants shared cultural values (Attia & Edge, 2017; Vanner, 2015). Dwyer and Buckle (2009) acknowledged the challenges the insider/outsider researcher faces as their space alters depending on the context, participants and community. Experiential situational knowledge during research often exceeds original preconceptions (Green, 2014). Therefore, the insider role remained central for me to minimise any, if all, potential dilemmas that may have challenged the process (Mercer, 2007).

The possibility of insider research perspectives significantly altering personal and professional practices is often unforeseen (Palaganas et al., 2017). Nevertheless, insider/outsider research does not necessarily account for the possibility of contentious issues arising after the event (Kerstetter, 2012). Developmentally, CHE academic lecturer knowledge supports the growth of a new conceptualised researcher identity (Aiello & Nero, 2019). Cunliffe (2018) proposed that values and commitments to the original narrative challenge the transition of self-identity. The experience changed my perceptions of research and gave me confidence as a researcher. I began to acknowledge that complex feelings evolved, affecting my thoughts while conducting the research in the work environment (Attia & Edge, 2017). Any such changes experienced promote alterations for the insider/outsider researcher, such as language modifications, interactions with colleagues and growth in self-confidence (Aiello & Nero, 2019; Goodall et al., 2017; Harris, 2005; Kerstetter, 2012; Trahar, 2011). My new sense of self emerged from the Chrysalis concept (Milner, 2021) (see Appendix 3 - The Chrysalis Concept) that endeavoured to capture my metamorphosis.

The Chrysalis concept (Milner, 2021) (see Appendix 3 - The Chrysalis Concept) underpinned the PhD process, as evidenced by the application of the research study. The embodiment of visual imagery was especially significant throughout the research, evidencing the choice of methodology, methods, and data analysis. Marshall (2007) suggested that innate connections with imagery using visual representation are synonymous with knowledge construction. As with creating all new ideas, understanding interpretations becomes essential for conceptualising the idea in the first place,

enabling a conceptualisation of the research from a theoretical reality, metamorphosising from a knowledgeable CHE lecturer to a pracademic (Panda, 2014), while discovering new information. The research journey is navigated as an inside/outside researcher transition, moving from knowing to unknowing as what was first assumed becomes unclear. The integrated rediscovery of the nature of the research signifies my impact as an insider/outsider researcher. Supported by the imagery and metaphor, the meaning-making ideas became integral to the research journey. Metaphors culminated from earlier conceptualisations of professional and personal self-identity in the form of the Buffer-fly concept (Milner, 2017) (see Appendix 2 - The Buffer-fly Concept), which emerged from the visual imagery to symbolise the evolving researcher and research. Only in the stages of evolution are we innately entwined with the world's natural order (Milner, 2017). Conceptual imagery afforded a greater profound reflexive response for me to understand the various stages required to fulfil the journey while remaining the same person, which revealed a shift in perspective. The self-conscious transformation highlighted in the Chrysalis concept (Milner, 2021) (see Appendix 3 - The Chrysalis Concept) is synonymous with my research journey.

The Chrysalis concept (Milner, 2021) (see Appendix 3 - The Chrysalis Concept) demonstrates the emergence of self as an insider/outsider researcher immersed in research. Vass (2015) discusses the notion of selfhood being interchangeable and that there are expectations and nuanced structures for an insider/outsider researcher. The overarching moral etiquette encompassing the researchers' role is immersive and reflects my humanistic approach. Meanwhile, like other insider researchers, I guide research as an authentic response to the research question, so the participant(s) become the authors of their narratives (Arvaja, 2016; Brady & Brown, 2022; Lomax et al., 2022; Mannay, 2010). As such, the interwoven stories tell and retell the significance of experiential repositioning of CHE's academic identity. The subtle complexity of the insider/outsider researcher exposes the veil of intrigue often in place, perceived or otherwise when revelatory research is being conducted (Mannay, 2010). What transpired was a developed sense of self-knowledge (Loads, 2009). The notion is that through self-reflexive practice, researchers can, in many situations, learn from experience supporting self-revelation (Berry & Clair, 2011). Uniquely entwined with the creative methodological approaches to transformative revelation, fresh insight emerged, exposing unforgettable experiences. In response to solving a problem or dilemma, the Chrysalis concept (Milner, 2021) (see Appendix 3 - The Chrysalis Concept) became a way to unpick nuanced meaning from self-revelatory reflexive practices.

Adopting the insider/outsider researcher approach developed an appreciation of the researchers'
relationship for maintaining reflexivity (Jootun et al., 2009). An outsider's perspective, garnered by
the otherness experienced when individuals do not fully appreciate the environment, continued to
justify the connected notion of insider research. Rather than being a cultural stranger typified by the
outsider, the insider researcher can access the nuances of the cultural community (Ellis et al., 2011).
Any outsider researcher could encounter challenges in ingratiating themselves in an established,
unfamiliar community (Kerstetter, 2012). If an outsider can research an unfamiliar community, the
insider shapes the interactions with the individuals rather than remaining tokenistic towards the
environment (Bruskin, 2019). There remains an unwritten/unspoken understanding of the intricate
nature of a research environment. Indeed, the insider/outsider researcher positionality enabled me
to gather the nuanced meanings from being situated in the space between, to understand the
environment from 'being with' the participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.60). Scaffolded
insider/outsider perspectives situated in the role illuminated my knowledge about the CHE
environment. However, the insider perspective also presented challenges when participant views
differed from my experience. The bead collage technique promoted personal inside/outsider self-
discovery for cultivating professional academic self-understanding acquainted with their surroundings
(Day et al., 2006). Beneficial for raising awareness of self, the insider/outsider consideration
strengthened the deontological premise of duty: 'doing unto others as you would like to receive'
(Misselbrook, 2013, p.211).

There are many ways to approach social research that value decisions about research
appropriateness and trustworthiness can be confusing (Ademolu, 2023; Corple & Linabary, 2019).
However, my research focus was to explore the perceptions of CHE lecturers' academic identity,
demonstrate the research purpose, and aim to have measurable outcomes to the research questions
(Punch & Oancea, 2014). The bricolage paradigmatic stance (Vanner, 2015) relationally constructed
the individual items to create or complete the required action (Kay, 2016). The bead collage
technique harnessed the layered meaning created from individual bead selection, creating a powerful
interpretation of the creative process (Kay, 2016), thoughts or otherwise. In support of the
epistemological standpoint, the philosophical thread chosen for the research method and tools
aligned to the underpinning humanist approach. Alongside the evaluation of the feminist influence,
which I experienced when I studied for my undergraduate Theology degree, highlighted the
prominence of feminist ideas and principles celebrated in the feminine nature of gender (Greenbaum,

1999) (See section 2.2.2 – The Feminist Identity, for a more in-depth discussion). The lived experience of a feminist lens raised an increasing awareness of influences that change worldviews (Massey, 1999). Continued reflection on the research (Massey, 2005) advanced my evolving researcher identity, encapsulated in the space, with a sense of belonging depicted as scholarship. Recognising the care and consideration during the interactions (Stromquist, 2015; Walker & Gleaves, 2016) between participants and myself established the importance of the heightened connectivity between the research, myself, and design, reinforced the depth of the association (Berger, 2015), emphasising myriad factors impactful in the emic perspective (Lytle & Conchran-Smith, 1992), namely, the emergent changes experienced during my research journey (Vanner, 2015). The filters/lenses are influential, as I am a female CHE lecturer and a creative reflexive practitioner.

Different individual creative understandings produced a contemplative perspective previously unconsidered (Freedman, 2007). I was rendering reflexively previously silenced voices to be heard. Self-discovery benefits creative work (Weber & Mitchell, 1995; Winchester & Green, 2019). When sewing a quilt or exploring the purpose of focused symbolism and meanings, individual enlightenment follows (Leitch, 2006; Weiler, 2008). Similarly, Lavalee (2007) piloted a study with an Anishinaabe symbol-based reflection exercise. As part of this project, participants were asked to make or buy a symbol that expressed the significance of their martial arts training and then give it to the researcher (Lavalee, 2007). For many Indigenous peoples, symbols are fundamental to their cultural and spiritual expression and meaning, both inside and outside artistic creation (Lavalee, 2007). Lavalee (2007) demonstrated the possibilities of symbol and arts-based methods within Indigenous research using an Anishinaabe symbol-based reflection activity. Loads (2009) suggested that college instils contemplation about individual engagement in professional and personal elements of life. The reflexive engagement as an insider allowed a thoughtful response to the research; even when participants struggled to reflect, ideas were still shared. Prior (2008) suggested that 'the act of creating draws attention to the role and place of cognitive, aesthetic dimensions revealed through inquiry such as assimilation, internalisation, and integration' (p.12).

3.2.1   The Feminist Lens

As a contributing element of the theoretical framework, feminine identity supported my epistemological interaction with the world. Intricately linked with the insider/outsider positioning in the research, the feminist lens continually influences the value of equality of individuals in society to open progressive action in the world (Weiler, 2008). This creativity resonates with my engagement on a personal and professional level placing the feminist lens as a signifying perspective that enables me to do things differently (Pillow, 2003). As Weiler (2008) acknowledges, subjective proximity experienced through the feminist lens reveals the personal as political. To change how the research can influence change, particularly in the practical data generation, analysis, and evaluation, revealing new insight (Clover, 2011). As with any creative research approach, there can be a greater appreciation for the reflexivity needed to reveal an individual challenge, social locations, and identities (Kay, 2008; Rose, 2001). These revelations are significant for the insider/outsider researcher, as the importance of the narrative interconnects with the feminist lens of vision along the way (Greenbaum, 1999; McCormack, 2008; Vanner, 2015). Influential for my feminist identity, drawn from the creative methodological approach (Kay, 2008; Rose, 2001; Vanner, 2015) the bead collage technique method is aligned with my identity and values within a specific belief system (Kreber, 2010; Vanner, 2015) that captures how I view the world, shaping my feminine identity (Clover, 2011; Greenbaum, 1999). The specific lens of focus comprises a mixture of filters for consideration, such authenticity, change and value all of which have influenced my researcher's roles (Milner, 2019), affecting the articulation of pedagogical identity in the research.

The creative feminist revelation of methodological choice advocates the exploration of unspoken, hard-to-reach realities (Gale et al., 2013; Loads, 2010). From a feminist perspective, the development and awareness of self-exploration historically outlined how this view paved the way for women to gain a voice (Greenbaum, 1999; Vanner, 2015). Indeed, feminism illustrates the need for individuals to get in touch with their reality to gain deeper self-knowledge and to understand the world around them (Clover, 2011; Eisner, 1991). Supporting the production of ideas and creative ideals enables focused thoughts to develop different perspectives previously unexplored (Newton & Plummer, 2009). Therefore, the justification for the creative approach does present a novel introduction to the creative benefits of feminist practices to reflect alternative interaction with the world (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007). The awakening of individual voices, sharing thoughts and emotions about previously

unspoken realities, may be revealed during the research (Cox, 2017; Ravetz & Gregory, 2018). Whereas individual empowerment can potentially connect the metaphorical lens, the shared experience with others in their reflections (Greenbaum, 1999), releasing untapped insentient thoughts enhances their understanding, knowledge, and experience of academic identity (Eisner, 1991).

Often influenced by historical and sociological contexts (Weiler, 2008), feminist positionality offers normative assumptions beneficial to Western societies (Ademolu, 2023). I identify as a second-wave feminist, and for me, feminism means achieving a balance of gendered power that leads to the nurturing of pure wholeness (Crowder, 2016). As stewards of the world, we have a responsibility to take care of the environment (Major, 1904), and this underscores the interconnectivity between individuals working together to build sustainable relationships (Thomas, 2017), the feminist lens as a theoretical framework aligned with my reflexive nature and worldview. The feminist lens promoted an encompassing vision to hear all the voices in the research, actively hearing participants' perceptions of their academic identity in bead collage form.

Visual artefacts enhance the voices of marginalised or silenced people in society to be heard (Mannay, 2015). The conduit of the artefacts provides marginalised individuals, not exclusively women, with a space to voice their thoughts and feelings (Scarles, 2010). The central tenets of feminist theory, as stated by Ropers-Huilman and Winters (2011), acknowledge change by incorporating radical practice to discover greater self-knowledge and hear more voices. Examples of feminist creative practice, such as finding a voice by sewing a quilt, focus on the nature of symbolism to explore what experiences mean (Weiler, 2008). Questions about self-representation in research studies raised how insider researchers fully appreciate the ideas and ideals of self within their or other's fields of study (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2017). Portrayals of feminist ideals in the creative exploration of the bead collage technique focused on interpretation and exploration, reformatting future ideas of emic identity (Hookway, 2017). In conjunction with the ability to reflexively engage with the world of research, the heightened appreciation of meanings, interpreted from the researcher's perspective (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007; Pillow, 2003; Stronach et al., 2007), offers a unique insider viewpoint. Strengthened perceptions of initial impressions and thoughts reflexively considered the impact of creative endeavour on CHE academic identity.

3.2.2 The Reflexive Lens

The following section explores RQ2: What impact does the bead collage technique have on research about academic identity? Reflexivity can improve and develop the underpinning wide-reaching practice that befits the engagement of thoughtful actions (Colucci, 2017). Associated reflexivity becomes more than the activity or theory in learning. The art of reflexivity uniquely represents individual active engagement drawing on emotional experiences (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007; Kilmore & Kenny, 2015). Reflectivity requires a comprehensive understanding, which has a far-reaching impact. However, reflexivity is a complex undertaking (Palaganas et al., 2017), a skill that is not easy for all individuals. Reflection, or reflexivity, can establish learning more meaningfully (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007; Wiley, 2019). Schon (1991) acknowledged reflection as a step back to consider the epistemology of practice.

Arguments remain for thinking that takes the individual beyond the superficial practice of self-awareness (Bottero, 2010). Finding or creating a space to develop and gain time for self-reflection can often become vital for self-awareness to maintain good mental health practices (Mansfield et al., 2016). Reflexivity can be about an individual seeking the space to think and pondering the actions required to resolve a problem or issue (Priest & Glass, 1994; Romm et al., 2013). Increased awareness of the implications of reflexivity ensures that the professional has time to foster good mental health and well-being (Larcombe et al., 2021; Mansfield et al., 2016). Mindful promotion of professionals' health in education remains a natural progression for a reflexive environment for wider society (Gravett & Ajjawi, 2021). Lamont and Norberg (2014) assert that professional identity alignment within university structures, at times, can be challenging to reconcile. Therefore, professional identity formation can only be improved if individual reflectivity is valued (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007).

Reflexively engaged researchers value the beliefs and status of their communities (Palaganas et al., 2017). Individual intersubjectivity relies heavily on the tacit nature of self and emphasises the significance of a reflexive approach (Bottero, 2010). There are subconscious and conscious barriers to reflection. Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond (2004) offer that reflection can develop teaching practice by critically evaluating what and why an activity went well. Critical reflection bestows the opportunity to move towards 'professional realisation' (Light & Cox, 2001, p. 273) for developing self-awareness and individually accepting who we are and how we can move forward (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). The insider/outsider position captures internal narratives exploring how people

construct their identities and those of others (Arvaja, 2016; Possick, 2009) that otherwise may be missed. While reflection remains a fundamental component of teacher training and instruction, reflective practice can be difficult for many. Nevertheless, with regular reflexive engagement, the generation of a critically self-aware CoP can be beneficial for the individual and organisation (Berry & Clair, 2011). The justification for reflexivity in research design is pivotal for the ongoing pedagogical practices of lecturers and students. Doucet (2008) discussed reflexivity concerning individual motivation within a specific research strand. However, it is essential to consider how political, personal, theoretical, and institutional factors influence the exploration of academic identity. Understanding the hidden motives behind research agendas allows us to examine the aspects measured at the end of the process rather than the journey to get there.

3.2.3   Insider/Outsider Approach

Insider/outsider research connects with the entire research journey (Sermijn et al., 2008), beginning with the planning, revisions, and alterations during the initial stages. The insider/outsider researcher approach strengthens integrity, affirming CHE lecturers' academic identity as an illustration of selfhood involved in the research (Fleming, 2018) and minimising barriers between the insider and outsider researcher (Wall, 2006). From the humanistic approach, the insider/outsider researcher's presence signified how the research process was conceived and realised, from conception to fruition. As with any narrative, personal history impacts the ethical complexity of emotional responses to an event (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). My previous research experience signified the informed use of language around CHE academic identity as a research area (Delamont, 2009). My positionality contributed to the impact enacted to gain a shared understanding of research subjectivity (Ellis & Bouchner, 2000; Nicol, 2013). In many ways, the subjective awareness of my presence in the research ensures enhanced credibility of researcher engagement (Mitchell, 2010). Connections between the insider and the outsider researcher could support an authentic narrative about the CHE academic community.

In contrast, the insider/outside researcher perspective may enable closer connectivity with the HE academic cultural requirements. Self-recognition and identity work are the focus of my research, with the underpinning nature of the teacher being at the heart of all CHE lecturers (Creasy, 2013; Hussey & Smith, 2010). The academic identity accurately aligns with the insider/outsider researcher, representing the culture or phenomenon (Berger, 2015; Dickinson et al., 2022). The participants in

the college knew my role and engagement as a pracademic (Clegg, 2008; Dickinson et al., 2022). Some researchers argue that insider/outsider research is not a valid research paradigm (Greene, 2014). Insider research can compromise the researcher's objectivity and professionalism, causing participants to misunderstand the associated subjectivity (Berkovic et al., 2020; Mercer, 2007). However, a researcher's values and experiences can influence bias and the research questions, design, and data generation procedures (Chavez, 2008). To minimise potential bias through the various stages of the research process, ensure that the research design remains consistent and transparent throughout the data generation.

Instead of silencing academic voices in scholarship, insider/outsider research promotes the unspoken self (Dauphinee, 2010; Jootun et al., 2009; Scarles, 2010). The combination of the various strands continues to place prominence on the conceptual and theoretical frameworks relevant to the research journey (Burr, 2015). The reflective diary entries (see Appendix 4 - Reflective Diary Title and Excerpts) of noteworthy events captured my insider reflections during the qualitative research process. I openly share my internalised narrative research experience in my reflective diary, which connects the insider and outsider perspectives (see Appendix 4 - Reflective Diary Title and Excerpts). Poignantly, the record of the sensory stimulation is forgotten or excluded in research design or conduct, yet the personal expressions of the high and low moments in the narrative are of equal value (Kafar & Ellis, 2014; Sermijn et al., 2008). Reintroduction for the integration of personal narrative to '(re)live and (re)tell' (Black, 2011, p. 3) modelled the arts-based movement reflected in the research. Previously, progressive reflexive narratives within qualitative data production and analytical approaches have been ignored (Pillow, 2003). Indeed, removing objective filtering of the data introduces reflexive storytelling with no limits, including emotional turbulence (Pillow, 2003), as I have experienced as a CHE academic lecturer. The reflective diary accounts provided insight into the insider/outsider account of the research journey (Garoian, 2004; Harris, 2005; Palaganas et al., 2017; Trahar, 2011). First-hand experience with FG moderation offered valuable insight into the untold story from the other side of the research process (Rabiee, 2004), supporting the research design. The occasion to pause, think, and reflect on various events during the research journey enhanced the insider role (Wall, 2006), connecting to the reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) and the additional level of information recorded from my insider research experience.

Reflection was necessary for the personal interpretative framework to evoke reflexive action (Kelchtermans, 2009), informing professional practice development (Palaganas et al., 2017). Each

perspective encountered during the research journey provided a lived experience that further enhanced the knowledge and meaningful output development (Cousin, 2008; Pillen et al., 2013; Duncan, 2004) acquired during the research process. Hence, progressive educational attainment related to professional identity is actively fused with reflectivity (Palaganas et al., 2017). Consideration of the cultural familiarity experienced from an inside researcher's perspective gathered from the patterns and stories of individuals should not be underestimated (Aiello & Nero, 2019; Ellis & Bouchner, 2000). Naturally, the insider and outsider perspectives supported the inclusion of the questions and their responses to understand the researcher's cultural positioning (Banks, 1998; Ellis & Bouchner, 2000; Hughes et al., 2012). Indeed, the blurred role of the insider/outsider researcher could have been competing with the cultural dynamics in the situation (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Ellis & Bouchner, 2000), which was not the case.

My continued engagement with the research remained influential for genuine, high-quality social research (Dickinson et al., 2022; Posner, 2009). As an insider researcher, my position in the culture-enabled shared lived experience belonging to the CHE community was integrated within the research (Court & Khair Abbas, 2022). The experiential knowledge of the CHE culture strengthened my connectivity with the insider/outsider role (Aiello & Nero, 2019; Cohen et al., 2018). The research process celebrates the valuable relationship between the researcher and the participants (Grey, 2018; Schneider, 2006). As a member of a collective group (Tummons, 2017) and an insider/outsider researcher, my positioning in the CHE academic community could be beneficial for enabling a deeper exploration. My presence in the community and culture of study enabled me to understand the participants, their narratives and the values of the focused research (Possick, 2009; Vanner, 2015). Like many communities, there are commonalities in the behaviours, expectations and values unifying individuals in a shared practice space, transforming identities emerging in CHE 'communities of praxis' (Gale et al., 2011, p.160). Previously blurred identities in HE necessitates an increased professional acknowledgement (HEA, 2011; Peseta et al., 2017). Nevertheless, within the cursory presence of HE identity in CHE, CHE lecturers need to become, being and known as academics linked to the language adopted in the culture (Ennals et al., 2016; Gravett & Ajjawi, 2021).

3.2.3.1 Research with Colleagues

Research with colleagues often alters workplace practice, which impacts changes within the learning community (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015) when conducting educational research from an insider perspective (Hamdan, 2009; Mercer, 2007). No matter how much preparation is needed to mitigate potential changes within the learning environment, the interaction affects the perspectives of those involved in the research (Robson, 1999). With the potential for negative experiences to impact the FGs, participants benefited by obtaining knowledge about the practice of scholarly activity in the college (McNiff, 2014). For individuals to maximise their outcomes, research interests may benefit from their involvement by raising scholarly awareness in research practice (Simmons & Lea, 2013). However, there is still consideration surrounding the dyadic relationship forged from participants' engagement in the research (Gibson et al., 2010). Upholding ethical parity is perceived as authentic and trustworthy for participants and the insider/outsider researcher to be maintained (Barstow, 2008; Celestina, 2018; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

During research, the relationship between the researcher and the participants plays a crucial role in ensuring the authenticity of data (Attia & Edge, 2017; Hamdan, 2009). Studies have shown that a credible and trustworthy relationship between the two can minimise any negative impact insider dynamics may have on the data (Carter & Little, 2007). Advocating for the beneficial aspects of counselling within FGs, Luke and Goodrich (2019) purport how group dynamics and processes can inform the research. Modelling a cohesive, inclusive environment with clear boundaries establishes expectations of professional communication for signposting participants when required. Fortunately, the requirement to signpost any participants for support outside the FG was unnecessary. However, ignoring participants' potential vulnerability in the workplace could impact issues that may challenge the workload or affect the authenticity of the data (Attia & Edge, 2017). Counselling techniques, such as those advocated by Rogers (1961; 2004), are also crucial for guiding the participants' contribution to the bead collage technique. However, recognition of professional relationships, language and expected behaviours, and power differentials may impact the participants' views and perceptions (Robson, 1999). Therefore, it is essential to respect the potential power dynamic to minimise the negative effect of the research outcomes (Barstow, 2008).

The authenticity of the narrative research proved to be an additional asset to the data gathered (Hamadan, 2009; Huang, 2015), supporting my insider/outsider research positionality. Indeed, the

participant-recorded accounts accurately represented the data generation period. Only later, through the analysis, could the participants' meanings alter evidence of a particular point advantageous for the insider/outsider researcher. However, to the best of my knowledge, this has not been the case during the data analysis phase of the research journey, though it is particularly poignant to acknowledge time as a temporal commodity that generates authenticity during the moment (Braun & Clarke, cited in Clift et al., 2021). After the point of data gathering, even during the analysis and conclusion, the timestamping of the data generation can only be a 'contextually situated practice' (Braun & Clarke, cited in Clift et al., 2021, p.1), present at the time.

3.3 Conceptualising a Creative Methodology

Conceptual thinking or being creative is often viewed as contentious to foster a shared concept and understanding of creativity (Simmons & Daley, 2013). Historically, likened to a creative mindset, an individual engaged creatively, making and mending (Guilford, 1950). In 1997, Csikszentmihalyi interviewed some of the highest-regarded creatives, concluding that diligent individuals often appreciated their creativity through symbolic domains. Rather than setting aside the hobbyists' endeavours to creatively engage in their pursuits to relax and create, the mindset surrounding the activities was discussed. Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) sociological approach to creativity focused on a supportive environment. Whereas Nicholson's (2009) work on 'The Theory of Loose Parts' during the 1970s regarded creativity solely for the gifted few, with most individuals engaged with products designed by the creative few rather than themselves. Creative exploration is often regarded as the domain or activity of children's play rather than embracing creative endeavours to foster innovative ideas and practices (Nicholson, 2009). Around meaning construction to be imaginatively evocative, instead of reserving creative skill development for higher-order critical engagement to support individuals' active participation (Dutton et al., 2019; Simmons & Daley, 2013). Lumsden (1999) defined creativity as the capacity to conceptualise innovative objects that individuals find useful. That may have historically been echoed in society when an object or product becomes a marketable commodity of worth as a saleable asset. Instead, a modicum of originality remains vital for creative conceptualisation but not sufficient as a standalone definition (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). The idea of creativity connects with an element of usefulness (Runco, 1988). Bruner (1986) regarded creativity as having an element of surprise, removing its usefulness. Meaningful creative engagement could focus on a feeling or thought that accompanies creative action (Gauntlett, 2011), suggesting that creativity reveals emotional connections that value the interactive process rather than the product. Jung (1961/1997) acknowledged that playful engagement could stimulate ideas surrounding creativity, suggesting transformational learning enhances pedagogy (Mezirow, 2000; Nicholson, 2009).

Transformational reflective thinking boosts individual confidence and communication skills for metacognitive creative work (Simmons & Daley, 2013). Akin to the learning journey, knowledge development can create a sense of self-worth when assimilating the power of reflexivity. Participation in creative activities enables individuals to become immersed in their thoughts to establish perception and interaction with the world (Clarke, 2019; Loads, 2010; Mannay & Morgan, 2015; Whitchurch, 2008). Creative activities can impact individual interaction and reflections (Bager-Elsbord

& Loads, 2016; Black, 2011; Dutton et al., 2019; Gale et al., 2011; Marshall, 2007; Searle & Shulha, 2016; Spronken-Smith & Walker, 2010), identity (Cunliffe, 2018; Smith et al., 2014), and engagement with culture (Adams & Manning, 2015; Augar, 2019; Clarke, 2004; Dalton, 2001).

Exploration of creative thinking builds internal prompts for identifying academic identity and research (Haywood, 2010; Simmons & Daley, 2013). Creative conceptualisations tacitly explore and establish the unconscious to connect to new thought processes (Higgs & Titchen, 2007; Leitch, 2006). The creative activity embodies meaning for new schematic knowledge structures (Higgs & Titchen, 2007; Leitch, 2006). Individual accessibility to arts-based activities often symbolises the emotional connections of previous experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). Conceptually, space creatively enables the free-flowing inquiry into human emotions, feelings, and thoughts, encompassing unconnected elements represented in life (Gauntlett, 2011; Haywood, 2010; Kapoor & Kaufman, 2020). The freedom individuals experience when playing freely without restrictions promotes creative engagement (Nicholson, 2009). Involvement with creative activities fires the brain differently, generating insights ordinarily unseen in conversation (Gauntlett, 2011) and espousing meaning-making to explore identity. Constraints, when removed, enable individuals to make sense of the cognitive benefits of creative engagement (Groch, 1969). Groch's (1969) model emphasised 'person – process – product' (p. 20) as the three elements of the creative process. Conceptually reducing the creative process to the elemental structure of creativity (Groch, 1969) disregards much of the energic motivation surrounding the action. Reversal of the creative construct, product-process-person, further enables individuals to explore their identity (Simmons & Daley, 2013), either during or after the activity. Loads (2010) supported a similar view. Engagement in creative activity naturally leads individuals to participate in a reflexive creative process. Simmons and Daley (2013) indicated that during the final phase of the construct, individuals reflected on the activity, a practice not easily modelled or performed.

3.3.1 Pedagogical Approaches to Creativity

Pedagogical approaches are vast and varied, often with pedagogues influencing sessions with their teaching and learning preferences and philosophical positions (Trahar, 2011). This section justifies using the bead collage technique to understand how teaching and pedagogical approaches promote students' experiences and lecturers' scholarship and academic identity (Fung, 2017). Incorporating pedagogical knowledge enables thought processes to interact flexibly and amend and adopt concepts through creative engagement (Attia & Edge, 2017). There is often personal investment in pedagogical practices that contributes to the approach. Political and organisational structures and more comprehensive societal frameworks often shape pedagogical approaches (Cunliffe, 2018; Meyerson & Scully, 1995; Sachs, 2016). Often, society requires a creative approach for individuals to deal with the complexity and uncertainty of modern-day living (Brew, 2010, p.4). Indeed, problem-solving techniques in the curricula are a much-needed addition, with a number of educators suggesting students should be encouraged to experiment within the learning environment (Boucharenc, 2006). When the UK Government stripped the art-based curricula from schools, there was a gap in children's provision and educational attainment (Freedman, 2003). The balance of redressing flexibility in curricula and the experimentation of ideas for individuals to be more flexible in their approach to change promotes an unusual way of thinking.

When introduced to the bead collage technique for the first time, the participants may require a unique way of thinking to conceptualise academic identity in bead collage form. Introducing new educational policies or practices alienates some lecturers from incorporating novel ideas into their pedagogy. The political nature of working in education requires an appreciation for the sector's governance (Henkel, 2000; Henkel, 2005; Henkel, 2010). The unsettling nature of change is a regular occurrence in the education sector; however, for some, knowledge of change is more challenging to navigate. Despite changes experienced in the workplace, variations in practice can affect professional confidence (Sommerlad, 2007). Changes in educational settings are sometimes motivated by the businessification of education (Shukry, 2017). The stimulus to explore alternative research approaches, social research, and incorporating creative methods to research enquiry can be more beneficial to practice than traditional approaches (Lavina et al., 2017).

Alternative approaches for engaging research participants can be adapted to explore unique ways of enquiry. Leitch's (2006) study involved six female teachers using creative narratives. Participants

engaged in various creative activities to illustrate their relationships with themselves, the people they worked with, and the organisation. The study demonstrated strong links between using metaphors to explore individual interpretations of feelings related to the participant's environment and relationships with themselves and others (Brown, 2019; Gerstl-Pepin & Patrizion, 2009; Miller & Boist, 2002). Creativity alone encompasses individuals, in reality, shaping interaction with their lived experience (Fitzmaurice, 2008). Indeed, embedding creativity into pedagogical practices enhanced self-reflection, self-awareness, and the ability to communicate in a fair and representative manner in the learning environment. A safe learning environment depends on interactions to nurture individuals when they feel vulnerable or need additional care (Stromquist, 2015; Walker & Gleaves, 2016).

Engagement in a creative activity permits the silenced or quieter members of society to have a voice (Mannay, 2015). Creative interaction with different mediums can free thoughts, release fresh insight, and transform bits and pieces into innovative ideas (Chilton & Scotti, 2014). Individual engagement with reflexivity can embolden new, often abstract, ways to facilitate alternative perspectives with people in pedagogical practice. Doucet's (2008) Gossamer walls conceptualisation establishes three separate relationships with oneself, participants, and readers. Visualisation of the reflexive as three Gossamer walls illustrated the many interrelationships with oneself, including the ghosts of the past buried deep (Doucet, 2008). The multi-layered relationship encapsulates participants in the adopted mediums through verbal, aural, emotional, physical, and textual embodiments of the theoretical and epistemological dimensions (Doucet, 2008). In Rodríguez-Dorans' (2018) sensitive or private research, ten gay men were interviewed about their passionate, sensual interactions and promoted connected attentive listening when engaging with participants. The delicate nature of the research necessitated thoughtful, non-threatening questions to place the participants at ease, valuing the developed awareness of the tensions between 'rationality and intuition' (Rodríguez-Dorans, 2018, p.747). Doucet's (2008) third wall is the formation of the relationship between oneself and the readers, locating the interpretation, reviews, and responses to the written output of the research. Links to the foundation of the research, integrating RQ2: What impact does the bead collage technique have on research about academic identity? The research design incorporated the interpretivist philosophical stance. The choice to explore academic identity from insider/outsider perspectives with the bead collage technique creatively engages the feminist and reflexive lens.

The creative notion of problem-solving generates an outside-the-box thinking mentality. Loads and Campbell (2015) revealed that creative thinking is the ability to engage in fresh thinking and develop innovative ways of conceptualising authentic practice. Problem-solving activities extend the learning process (Simmons & Daley, 2013). The learning by doing adage, first proposed by Kolb in 1984, organises an experiential learning method by integrating knowledge from four perspectives: reflecting, active, pragmatic, and theoretical. An integrated reflective review before completing an action (Krouwel, 2005; Priest & Glass, 1994; Schon, 1991). Students develop problem-solving techniques to support hearing their voices (Barnett, 2000) and to become independent learners (Fitzmaurice, 2008). All participant dialogue shared during the FGs contributed to the research. Individual and group interaction empowered a resolution for representing academic identity.

Occasionally, during challenging learning experiences, individuals feel discomfort with a subject, level, or environment (Dean & Jolly, 2012). However, learning a new skill(s) sometimes requires practice, perseverance, and diligence to become proficient and confident. Any associated learning theories at times can limit the range and scope of holistic opportunities becoming immersive (Thomas, 2017). Engagement and acceptance with creative activities are only sometimes beneficial for all individuals and often require thoughtful, reflective event planning. Individual experience usually represents struggles with problem-solving or creative situations, fostering a negative response to the learning involved. New teachers frequently encounter pedagogical problems as they learn to manage their own and others' expectations (Williams, 2010). In their research, Mansfield et al. (2016) identified five overarching themes linked to a resilience-focused framework with new teachers: understanding resilience, relationships, well-being, motivation, and emotions. Often encountered, new experiences retrospectively bear significance for the individual after the event (Loads, 2010). Importantly, participant recruitment prepared them for attending the event, not necessarily for the bead collage technique.

The concept of 'wicked issues' is not limited to academia but instead connects the real world and research. Blackman et al. (2006) and Rittel & Webber (1973) describe these issues as ones that are not easily solved using a set of algorithms. Problem-solving involves personal interactions that help individuals adapt to their environment and achieve positive outcomes (Simmons & Daley, 2013). Whereas some individuals are comfortable with problem-solving through creative thinking (Haywood,

2010), and a clear right or wrong answer does not account for the ambiguity of creative thinking (De Bono, 1992). Individual perception and previous experiences shape their behaviour and reactions to new situations (Berger, 2015). The CoP work environment also influence individual perceptions and interactions.

Pedagogy significantly transfers knowledge through creativity for academic work (Gornall & Salisbury, 2012). Evans and Kozhevnikova (2011) acknowledge the diverse role of pedagogues in providing sustained motivation and encouraging curiosity in the profession. However, educational reform continues to stifle natural pedagogy, replacing it with a more rigid approach that discourages playful exploration for the sake of learning (Mills, 1989). Daily pedagogical activities require constant negotiation and renegotiation, with pressure leading to removing creative flair. Engagement in creative activities, both physically and mentally, could help lecturers reconnect with their sense of self and others in the community (Taylor, 2017). The bead collage technique, for example, supports participants to slow down (Mäkelä et al., 2011), conceptualise meaning-making, and focus on one task at a time (Koro-Ljungberg, 2019). Facilitating permission to remove creative engagement from the daily workload supports participants to take a welcome break and re-engage with creative pedagogical activities.

The persuasive evidence for the creative method to understand identity (Leitch, 2006) supports the development of the bead collage technique explained in Chapter 3.3.1.4 The Bead Collage Technique : A Method and further in Chapter 3.4.3 The Bead Collage Technique. As part of my research, some participants found the creative interaction of the bead collage technique challenging, but all small or large representations can benefit the research. Even the minute identification of a symbol had the potential to represent a concrete idea to stimulate those who appeared less motivated in the use of bead collage. Loads (2010) suggested that individuals who expect the least to gain from the bead collage technique engagement present a comprehensive reflective representation. For individuals to listen to their internal dialogue, often unheard in the daily diatribe of active educational settings (Greene, 2000), the bead collage technique becomes a vehicle to support self-perception. Sherry (2013) suggests that the space for individual reflexivity remains in individual observations, feelings, and self-awareness. Artful engagement creatively articulates the conceptualisation of internal struggles (Campbell, 2019). The bead collage technique shows how meanings create essential connections to academic identity formation. Lecturers use skills learnt from their research, whether from a book, workplace experience, or firsthand knowledge, to transfer knowledge in the learning

environment (Flecknoe et al., 2017). Suggesting the intrinsic links between pedagogy and academic identity, explored through creative and expressive mediums such as the bead collage technique.

3.3.1.2 Metaphors: Visual Conceptual Imagery

Metaphors as tools for individual reflexive engagement are not limited to the quest for self-knowledge but offer a better understanding of the world (Brown, 2019; Varvantakis & Nolas, 2019). Using metaphors in this way conceptualises the academic identity research linked to RQ1: What, if any, are the unique attributes that contribute to the concept of CHE academic identity? and RQ2: What impact does the bead collage technique have on research about academic identity? Research conducted as part of a 'university challenge' (p.75) enabled nine mature students to explore a Welsh HE undergraduate learning journey (Mannay et al., 2017). Students explored the challenges and barriers they encountered by modelling the conceptualisation of individual learning journeys. The case study incorporated the sandboxing technique (Kara et al., 2021) to elicit students' narrative representations. Participants created a scene by selecting from several miniature figures to convey their subjective experiences. The metaphor was used to elicit a response to the experience, protected against potential researcher assumptions (Kara et al., 2021). Each participant described their completed sandbox, drawing on their use of metaphor to provide a story about their objects relating to their experience (Kara et al., 2021). Fenwick (2000) and Gerstl-Pepin and Patrizion (2009) suggest metaphor can be a powerful tool to promote intuitive insight, otherwise inaccessible in the rational consciousness, revealing the complexity of identity and teaching (Hunt, 2001; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011). Noyes (2006) notes that metaphor usage can support teaching practices by developing meaning-making that could promote additional changes for an in-depth understanding of individual beliefs and values.

In contrast, the understory of the adopted metaphor can help develop knowledge that will benefit the exploration of student experiences with minimal researcher direction. An individual's psychological cognition could bridge the field of social change (Noyes, 2006). The transformational benefit of a good metaphor is to stretch individual knowledge (Varvantakis & Nolas, 2019; Viera, 2009) in a learning environment. Metaphor supports the development of conceptual ideas for forming an individual exploration of identity required as part of the bead collage technique. Using imagery can promote new insight and encourage deepening the analysis of a theory or practice (Hunt, 2001). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) note that metaphor becomes a vehicle for understanding one idea

related to another, adding a fresh perspective to an existing body of knowledge. Extending the 'essence of metaphor' (p.177), drawn from the richness of vocabulary to strengthen the relationship between thought and language (Munby & Russell, 1990). Metaphors enable individuals to illustrate their meanings about experiences in a conceptual form and reflexively reinforce their learning experiences.

In an academic context, metaphor is regarded favourably or adversely depending on the importance of academic relevance for the individual (Mouraz et al., 2013). Vieira (2009) emphasises that metaphor, when used with professional teacher history and professional development, is valued depending on how research pedagogy in the community is viewed. Metaphors can form the beginnings of a new conceptual framework, enabling individuals to review their preferences or arguments about the choice and selection of the imagery. The participants in my research began exploring their CHE academic identity by reviewing their current positionality and conceptualising adopted metaphors. Saban et al.'s (2007) Turkish study examined the use of metaphors to understand pre-teacher and teacher perceptions of teaching and learning. The context confirmed that using a metaphor for exploring reflexive perceptions benefited learning. Yesilbursa's (2012) study, based on Saban et al.'s (2007) research, focused on teacher identity. The study posed metaphoric questions during the two-stage interview, with teachers to answer, 'What metaphor would you use to describe yourself as an English teacher at this time?' (Saban et al., 2007, p.470). Yesilbursa's (2012) construction of the study supported the exploration of teachers' beliefs, values and needs when assisting in professional role development.

3.3.1.3 Visual Thinking Approaches

Visual thinking insightfully contrasts the visual and linguistic experience (Scarles, 2010; Marshall, 2007). A means-making tool, such as the bead collage technique, helps implicit conceptualisations become explicit, leading to avenues of self-reflection and discovery (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). Similarly, the bead collage technique is an opportunity to overcome challenges for articulation and language formation, which links to RQ2: What impact does the bead collage technique have on research about academic identity? Simmons and Daley (2013) assert that the bead collage technique is a catalyst for exploring ideas and thoughts about academic identity. The participants explored their interpretation, meaning, and representation of the relationships between the chosen objects as part of the collage (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010).

The growth of visual methods for individual subjective exploration acts as a response to listening and recording complex situations to gain clarity (Scarles, 2010; Mannay et al., 2017). An amalgamation of the bead collage technique engenders a subjective interpretation of the relationship between CHE academic identity and the individual selection beads in the collage (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010). The extent to which visual thinking could be explored endlessly requires a fair representation of participants (Burge et al., 2016; Culshaw, 2019). Only limited by individual participant imagination, the visual imagery of academic identity becomes represented by an interpretation of meaningful experience (Munday et al., 2017). Munday et al.'s (2017) research conducted with four Australian HE institutions drew on the lecturers experience to support students' eportfolios through webinars. The research concluded that the visual stimuli used to support lecturers' professional development can be beneficial. That there is value in the familiarity of identifying and finding new ways to engage with identity to visual potential aspirations. New pathways of meaning forged from innovative thinking could influence progressive pedagogy (Hatton, 1988). Visual methods reflect the widespread utilisation of imagery in research and beyond.

Artful expression construction can illicit exploration for an individual seeking the deeper meaning of professional self-representation (Lavina et al., 2017). Artful expression is often varied, diverse, and unidentifiable by others, and it becomes symbolically meaningful to the individual participants (Campbell, 2019; Culshaw, 2019; Thomas, 2017). Engagement with the bead collage technique required individual introspection to respond to the task. Participants were given time to explore, reflect, and engage in their artful expression. Participants may experience unfamiliarity with the creative task as a conceptual challenge, as the novelty of the skill could create obstacles for individual participants (Fleming, 2018; Scarles, 2010). The representational activity may stretch participants' natural conceptualisation for concrete form, extending experiential links to frame their academic identity (Bown & Sumsion, 2007). Campbell (2019) suggests daily reflective engagement can enhance practitioners' skills and effectiveness. They justify the impact of engagement on communication and reflective and resourceful practitioners. The amount of choice could also be complex when creating an abstract object, requiring the participants to be too far removed from everyday practices to develop knowledge and understanding (Roberts & Woods, 2018). Interaction and dialogue between participants' academic identity and the presentation of different perspectives can be delineated when responding in words alone (Lomax et al., 2022). Lomax et al. (2022) demonstrated in their research conducted during the pandemic the value of visual-arts-based knowledge generation, collaborating

with children, young people, families and artists. The study generated new knowledge, culminating in various visual artefacts about participant experiences that deepened personal knowledge (Biggs, 2002; Neal, 2013). The resolution of issues is not uncommon in educational practice. The bead selection offered the choice to mount or thread the beads, requiring a more profound thought for the collage presentation. Artful representation can be complex, demanding focus and self-knowledge to articulate the creation of an 'alternative form of data' (Black, 2002, p.77).

Even the abstract nature of the collage could prevent some participants' collages from representing academic identity (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010). The study accessed visual stories as a sensory representation of unexpected encounters to democratise participant experiences. The knowledge generation conveyed the participatory qualities of visual arts-based research to open the possibilities of dialogue between and about people. Whilst there are many examples of conducting research with collage (Bager-elsborg & Loads, 2016; Kay, 2013a; Loads, 2010; Roberts & Woods, 2018), conceptualising academic identity with the bead collage technique adds to the research field. Indeed, collage and bead collage transform consciousness, where previous interpretations of identity are challenged to create new meanings and understanding (Kay, 2013a). Equally, individual discoveries in the bead collage creation could facilitate alternative reflexivity for CHE academic identity.

3.3.1.4 The Bead Collage Technique: A Method

Researching identity encompasses educational challenges of identity, beliefs, and the development of pedagogical approaches (Clarke, 2004; De Hei et al., 2015; Leitch, 2006; McKenzie et al., 1998; Taylor, 2007; Ryan, 2005; Weber & Mitchell, 1996). The following section aligns with RQ1: What, if any, are the unique attributes that contribute to the concept of CHE academic identity? RQ2: What impact does the bead collage technique have on research about academic identity? The combination of conceptualising academic identity with bead collage benefits arts-based research as an asset for challenging tensions identified in professional roles, such as nurses and teachers (Loads, 2009).

Traditionally, collage was adopted in the arts to explore beliefs and ideas and conceptualise understanding (Leavy, 2009). Emulation of this approach was an undercurrent of the personal differences produced by individuals when making collages as a workable tool to represent metaphorical meaning (Mannay et al., 2017; Noyes, 2006). As Bager-elsborg and Loads (2014) state, the undemanding use of collage creation juxtaposes the symbolic artefact for insightful revelation.

The bead collage technique involved participants choosing from assorted sizes, colours, and shapes of beads and then displaying their unstuck bead collage. The creativity to form a new artefact included either threading the beads on a selection of threads such as silk, laces, ribbon, and string or mounting the collage on a selection of coloured cards or paper. Any perceived pressure participants encountered during the completion of the bead collage technique was removed by mounting or presenting the beads rather than creating a static frieze capturing a moment in time (Gale et al., 2013; Musgrave, 2019). The resulting collage stimulated individual perspectives for the creation of a smorgasbord of unique insight, limited only by the participant's imagination.

Exploration of academic identity using the bead collage technique to evoke an emotional response to an individual's persona (Kearney & Hyle, 2004) can be far broader than a standalone conceptualisation, the study offered the originality of a creative project unrelated to the creative process (Barron, 1955). The bead collage technique become the vehicle to explore individual creative action for practice, as Kay (2013a) proved when inviting participants to communicate their reflexive experiences of the bead collage technique. From the French, meaning a glued work (Vaughan, 2005), collage collates objects from various places, piecing them together to make a whole; similarly, it unifies previously unconnected items by creating new significance and symbolism (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010).

The creative formation of the collage required participants to create new meaning and purpose in its design. Lionnet (1989) suggests that meaning is made by mixing up and repurposing meaning, decolonising conventions of knowing and removing the previous perception of understanding. The transformative nature of collage enables individuals to repurpose ideas with a medium they can work with to uncover meaning and discover innovative ideas. The idea of self-discovery is often juxtaposed with a combination of known and unknown, where meanings shift to represent new concepts for self-understanding (Aloni, 2013). The artful engagement with the bead collage technique rendered a unique situation where connectivity between all the participants generated a deeper understanding of each other and themselves. When participants were unfamiliar with one another (working in different departments in the college), they quickly introduced themselves and proceeded with the bead collage technique. The interactions during the BC FGs promoted a comfortable relaxed environment (Grønkjær et al., 2011) that permitted participants to question each other about their collages. Even the reconfiguration of the members included in the 10 CtR FGs supported a interaction

between the participant regroupings (See Table 4, p. 111). As discussed in more detail in section 3.4.1 The Population and Sample.

> 'P2: Just from the group perspective, looking at each other's, um, I quite liked [Person's Name] idea that you're this, this thread running through your bead collage, and you're responsible for managing so many different aspects of it. And I like that somewhat more multi-dimensional than mine.
>
> P3: Well, I think maybe from my perspective, as well, just thinking about it now. And really kind of [Person's Name] is kind of galvanized the whole thought process with what you said because it is a kind of, bone of contention with me generally' (CtR3)

Discussions about the bead collage presented a fresh view for creating tacit knowledge of a visual symbol, problem, issue or dilemma being conceptualised explicitly (Scarles, 2010; Simmons & Daley, 2013). Often prompting unexpected interactions, the bead collage technique aided participants in sharing thoughts about their collages, explaining why and how they had chosen to present their academic identity. Collage has recently been considered a credible tool for identity investigation (Kay, 2008). Self-awareness and self-knowledge are increasingly crucial for individuals, personally and professionally, in society (Whitchurch, 2010). There have always been educational challenges around identity, beliefs and development for teaching, as being areas where strategically placed research methods and tools to explore identity were required (Clarke, 2004; Leitch, 2006; McKenzie et al., 1998; Ryan, 2005; Weber & Mitchell, 1996; Taylor, 2007). The value of art-based research is to challenge identified tensions in professional roles such as nurses and teachers (Loads, 2009).

Despite the abstract nature of collage, active creation often unites unconnected items, varied materials, and textures, and it reforms objects in a new, meaningful representation (Searle & Shulha, 2016). Eco (1996) suggests an art or artful form of 'discourse cannot be but undefinable or infinitely definable' (p.141), exploring the semiotic meaning of words and symbols. Each bead collage is conceptually symbolic, suggesting that interaction draws out a unique, infinitely personal representation (Black, 2011; Haney et al., 2004). Assisting participants to share thoughts while constructing the bead collage, immersing themselves in the activity. Participants were encouraged to participate without having to write down their initial ideas in order to ease them into the creative activity (Nicholson, 2009). However, if participants wanted to jot down ideas, pens and paper were available. Making notes, for some, enabled participants to organise their thoughts and minimised potential barriers to conceptualising thoughts during the activity.

Individual ownership representation, creation, or symbolism is unique to those who have created the form (Black, 2011). Lowenfeld (1979) suggested that in much the same way as a therapist, the symbolic interpretation of an object should not be attempted (Hutton, 2004). Interpretation should only be shared by the creator of the object or collage alone (Mannay et al., 2017). Implementation of the pragmatic approach strengthens the design (Attia & Edge, 2017), empowering participants' voices to explore their academic identity. From a pragmatic approach to avoid misrepresenting the participant's bead collages, individual reflexivity enabled them to share their perceptions of academic identity (Eisner, 2002). Individual selective choice layers the object's symbolic meaning related to the unique experience (Black, 2002). Similarly, Lavina et al. (2017) accept the symbolic significance identified using different artful mediums to explore the positive interaction of teacher identities.

In the FG, participants' engagement with the bead collage technique depicted meaning from creative action that supported self-exploration (Culshaw, 2019). The bead collage technique invited participants to reflect, communicate and construct experience through bead design manipulation (Kay, 2013a). Participants' bead collages were structured, displayed, threaded or placed to represent their unique symbolic interpretation of academic identity. Indeed, the bead collage technique presents the peripheral meanings of academic identity as a principal component of the discussion and analysis of the research. As interpretive 'meaning-making' beings (Cohen et al., 2018, p.288), participants could engage in their musings about the CHE culture and academic identity. Aligned with the intertwining element of the Chrysalis concept (Milner, 2021) (see Appendix 3 - The Chrysalis Concept), the amalgamation of fused elements of self, combined the formation of the insider/outsider researcher. Furthermore, the ontological positioning of the prearranged participant's contribution to the research formed a developed sense of understanding and meaning to be fostered through the bead collage technique. The semantic value of the spoken word, as the power of language draws out hidden meanings, provided insight into individual CHE academic identity.

Perceptions surrounding the contrived scenario unifying a diverse group of lecturers in the FG bead collage remained the focal point (Manion et al., 2011). To reduce any trepidation participants might have experienced during the bead collage technique, they were free to explore (Skelton, 2012); removed from the organisational hierarchies' participants could relax as much as they felt able, as everyone was in the same boat (Black & Halliwell, 2000; Milner & Mills, 2018). Instead, the space was for playfulness (Clandinin et al., 2009; Maxwell, 2011; Sword et al., 2018), experimenting, exploring the meaning of beads, and trialling and testing to see how the collage worked for them. The removal

or reduction of the perceived judgement of self or others created a presence in the mind and the body.

The narrative tool facilitated participant's empowerment to experience their 'I-moment' (Ben-Asher & Roskin, 2018, p.144), presenting different insights or knowledge. The narrative tool gathered new untold stories related to academic identity, with the opportunity to share an additional valid, reliable self-narrative discourse to individual lived experiences (Badenhorst et al., 2020; Ben-Asher & Roskin, 2018). According to Lyotard (1984), the grand narrative is in decline. In contrast, the bead collage technique permits the reformatting of individual idea exploration (Hookway, 2017). A narrative tool, the bead collage technique, supported participants' revealing their hidden feelings and beliefs (Fleming, 2018). Individual transformation challenges previous interpretations of identity, creating new meaning and understanding (Kay, 2013a). Subsequent revelations for voicing feelings and thoughts surrounding self-identity may stimulate reflexivity for change within individual practice/s (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007).

3.4   Methods

The research comprised two stages: the pilot study and the main study. The pilot study consisted of three separate FGs: the first was my exploration of identity, and the second included my three supervisors. The third pilot group included three members of the CHE community (each had the same role title in the college as me). Due to the timing and availability of the participants, the CtR FG took a different form; all CHE participants were at the same time, whereas the supervisor CtR FGs were individual. The rationale for the three pilot FGs was to establish the value of the bead collage technique as an authentic and trustworthy data production method and to evaluate the approach's effectiveness as a research tool. Each pilot ascertained three research attributes: firstly, the feasibility of the bead collage technique as a research tool, secondly to check the proposed questions enabled participants' to respond and answer the research question. Thirdly, the functionality of the FG was for organisational purposes, including identifying appropriate timings for the bead collage technique and how many participants to invite to each FG. Until this stage in the research preparations, the bead collage technique had been a theoretical, creative endeavour awaiting operationalisation within an

actual FG scenario. The pilot study was the perfect platform to practice hosting an FG to ensure appropriate questioning techniques were used (see Appendix 5 - Research Questions).

However, in the main study, participant interactions during the completion of the bead collage technique were not recorded. Each FG followed a similar pattern: completion of the bead collage technique, then questions. A few weeks later (this period depended on participant availability; see Table 1, p. 98) the participants attended a CtR FG to reflect on the interpretation of the original bead collage. However, they formed part of my reflections as an overview following each FG (see Appendix 4 - Reflective Diary Title and Excerpts). Once the participants completed the bead collage technique, the questions (see Appendix 5 - Research Questions) were posed and recorded using an iPad with Otter AI installed; the recordings became the verbatim transcripts of the BC and CtR FG data. As detailed below in Table 1 (p. 98), each FG includes the date, time, and number of transcription words. Retrospectively, this included the subject areas for each participant to provide a clearer perspective of the group dynamics. The difference between the membership in each FG from BC to CtR was due to participant availability, which changed after agreeing on the date and time for the CtR with the group at the end of each BC FG (See 3.4.1 The Population and Sample for more details about the regrouping of the FGs).

Table 1: Focus Group Timings, participants, duration and number of transcript words

Focus Group Number	Date	Number of Participants	Focus Group Duration	Number of words produced
The Bead Collage Technique (BC) Focus Group				
1	13th May 2019	3	9.30 – 10.30 am -1hr	2,425
2	14th May 2019	2	9.00-10.00 am - 1hr	2,716
3	14th May 2019	3	12 – 1 pm – 1hr	3,320
4	15th May 2019	4	1 – 2 pm – 1 hr	3,041
5	15th May 2019	2	2.30 – 3.30 pm – hr	1,370
6	16th May 2019	4	3.30 – 4.30 pm – 1 hr	4,722
7	22nd May 2019	5	2.00-3.00 pm – 1 hr	1,437
8	23rd May 2019	4	2.30 – 3.30 pm – 1 hr	6,599
Chance to Reflect (CtR) Focus Group				
1	24th June 2019	2	9.45 - 10.15 am	1,368
2	24th June 2019	4	10.30-11.30 am	2,689
3	25th June 2019	3	1.00-2.00 pm	1,910
4	27th June 2019	3	9.00-9.30 am	2,948

5	2nd July 2019	4	10.00-11.00 am	5,710
6	4th July 2019	2	1.30-2.00 pm	2,723
7	9th July 2019	3	1.00 -2.00 pm	1,601
8	11th July 2019	3	8.45 - 9.15 am	4,137
9	11th July 2019	3	1.00-1.45 pm	2,954
10	17th July 2019	1	9.30 - 9.45 am	604

3.4.1   The Pilot Study

The pilot study was used to evaluate the bead collage technique method and the questions (see Appendix 6 -The Bead Collage Technique Protocol) to check that both were suitable to respond to RQ1 and RQ2. The pilot study comprised three specific groups selected to fulfil a distinct function. The first pilot group enabled me to complete the bead college technique, trial the approach, and evaluate the method. Undertaking the bead collage technique method gave me insight into conducting the method with other people which supported the insider/outsider research positionality.

My bead collage was created by selecting the beads to represent academic identity. Similarly, I mirrored the same interaction with the beads during my exchange with the bead collage technique. After recording my responses into an audio recorder, I transcribed the data. Later, following the two to six week period between the BC FG and CtR, I returned to reflect on my bead collage photograph (see Appendix 7 - Bead Collages by Focus Group), recording my responses to the questions and adding them to the CHE academic identity narrative in my reflective diary. These questions ascertained and confirmed my initial shared meanings, highlighting any new insight or perspectives gathered from revisiting the visual image of my bead collage. The CtR FG invited participants to revisit, revise, and reconsider whether the bead collage still represented their perception of CHE's academic identity.

For the second pilot FG, three participants were selected from the CHE academic community of about 100 academics to test the language and expectations of the bead collage technique. Opportunity sampling was chosen to model participant autonomy and supported the decisions and choices to be part of the pilot FG (Cresswell, 2014). The third pilot group included my supervisory team, using convenience sampling, as their expertise was a valuable addition to the research's development. All three pilot groups evaluated the bead collage technique's ability to investigate deeper meanings associated with their academic identities (Kay, 2013a). As with any new endeavour, the transition

from theory to practice, figuring out what and how a process works, might be disconcerting the first time (Ainley & Luntley, 2007). Bolstered by the experience, my confidence grew after the initial pilot FG, which served as a helpful stepping stone for the main study. The location of the room chosen to conduct all the pilot FGs was familiar to the participants. Kline (2010) observed that people need to feel appreciated in the physical area for a thinking environment to be enriching. The carefully organised preparations for the pilot study included additional questions to check the feasibility of the research (see Appendix 5 - Research Questions). After receiving developmental feedback, adjustments could be made; for example, the quantity and variety of beads and colours needed to be increased to ensure there were enough to facilitate participant choice. The original plan was for each participant to leave the room to share their bead collages in a one-on-one informal interview. Based on the pilot study experience, all participants chose to stay in the room after completing the bead collage technique; the main study adopted the same approach. Photographs of the bead collages produced visual documentation to support the FG transcriptions. Additionally, the photographs functioned as prompts to stimulate the conversation during the CtR FGs, a focal point as an artefact to refer to when discussing academic identity. The participants' ongoing communication helped establish a bond based on their shared experience, time, and research contribution (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011).

3.4.2   Focus Groups

After completing the pilot study, FGs were considered the most appropriate way to conduct the research in response to RQ1 and RQ2. Krueger and Casey (2009) define FGs as a 'carefully planned series of discussions to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment' (p. 2). The FG as a focused group discussion about one topic (Luke & Goodrich, 2019) enabled rich discussion and debate between participants to build on each other's comments, to share and question ideas to check meanings. The shared space within the FG provided an ideal opportunity for participant to come together, to discuss and explore their academic identity. Designed as a social gathering, FGs value participants' contributions and encourage sharing opinions in a supportive setting while engaging with others, which is beneficial for gaining a valuable outcome for the research (Nicholson & Shrives, 2024). If the moderator fosters an environment where participants feel they are being listened to during the discussions (Harding, 1993) responds to the feminist lens to be listened to. Likewise, minimising any possibility that positive reinforcement may

influence participants if they felt they were saying what I wanted to hear. Organisationally, my skills effectively created an environment for participants to feel relaxed, minimising distractions. Making thorough preparations resulted in the smooth implementation of the FG for all involved. The justification for FGs stemmed from exploring the conceptualisation of CHE academic identity in a social context (Breen, 2006). Moderation of the FGs is a skill set; according to Rogers (1961/2004), the humanistic approach should promote listening and responding, aligned with the counsellor's role. Based on the skills needed to create a valuable FG, the moderator's role is to be with rather than do to, modelling equal role relationships (Burnard, 1998; Harding, 1993). The contribution of my organisational skills to managing situations minimised the possible disruptions, creating a more relaxing environment where all participants felt welcome. Preparations to manage the expectations of the participant's involvement in the FG were considered before the event to reduce any pressure or stressful experience (Franz, 2011).

Naturally, the FG participant community (Vanner, 2015) offers an honest, insightful representation of their experience. Assembling all participants into an FG was based on the practicality of time, space, and numbers in the groupings. Any unintentional pressure for individual responses to questions, reducing the pressure on the participants, was minimised by welcoming all participants to the FGs before interaction with the bead collage technique. The bead collage technique became the participant's focus (Gilmore & Kenny, 2015; Holland, 1999). Enabling the individual gathered groups to develop a shared ethos to consider conceptual changes or opinions based on a shared appreciation of the academic identity. Individual participants can voice their internalised thoughts aloud, potentially motivating others to gain a voice (Keys et al., 2011). Contextually, all the FGs followed a similar setup, including the environment (geographically and mentally) and the facilitation of questions.

The provision of space and time for participants to flourish, grow, and reorient their creative energy for the engagement of the bead collage technique remained central. Research participants were valued (Loads, 2010; Savin-Baden, 2008) despite the FGs unintentionally hosted in the college's HE-designated environment, placing participants at ease during the research was acknowledge. The familiarity of the HE-designated environment aided the easing of the participants in the FGs. Indeed, consideration of the participant's emotional well-being is necessary to receive the best contribution to the data (Lomas, 2016). Initially, the planned time allocated to complete the first FG was two hours. The additional time was not required, with participants taking roughly twenty minutes to

engage with the bead collage technique and a further twenty minutes to half an hour for the discussion and response to the FG questions (see Appendix 6 - Focus Group Questions). Therefore, based on the pilot study, the initial timings were reduced to reflect the time change. Reducing time was not detrimental to the environment because it gave participants adequate time and space for self-reflection (Barbour, 2007). The time to complete the bead college values the participant's contribution to the cultural community (Banks, 1998; Greene, 2014).

The shared dialogue between participants in the FGs generated a rapport about academic identity. There were occasions where the individual participants were known to each other in some FGs, though this was not the case for all. The college's smaller community of CHE lecturers is familiar with regular contact during meetings (Orr, 2013; Young, 2002), particularly among the participants who had been long-serving staff members or held significant CHE-focused responsibilities. Where this was the case, there was a tendency for individual participants to overshare their experiences and thoughts. A safe environment promotes acceptance of shared personal narratives (Grønkjær et al., 2011; Walker & Gleaves, 2016). Even when the participants were initially unfamiliar with each other, the common aim of the task removed any discomfort. Participants' ethical awareness of confidentiality during FGs enabled shared opinions and views. Discussions were monitored, with any intimate details signposted to any ongoing support, as necessary, but they were minimal. The inclusion of the insider/outsider researcher fulfilled the observer/moderator role (Qutoshi, 2015), overseeing the process during the bead collage technique FG.

Once the photographs of each bead collage were taken to make an artefact. The photographs then served as a prompt for the participants in the CtR FG conversations, to promote participants to reflect on their bead collages (see Appendix 8 - Ethics Form, Appendix 9 - Gatekeeper Consent and Appendix 10 - Participant Consent Form). Verbatim transcriptions were prepared and recorded following the authorised ethics and participant consent. Data generation supported the sociocultural space of the FGs (Qutoshi, 2015). Using individual markers to anonymise the transcriptions after the data was compiled.

3.4.3 The Bead Collage Technique

The bead collage technique facilitated the exploration of CHE lecturers academic identity perceptions. Participants were invited to engage with the bead collage technique which facilitated communicative

creative visualisation about themselves (See sections 3.2.1.3: Visual Thinking and 3.2.1.2: Metaphors: Visual Concept Imagery). When invited participants created a narrative enshrouded in their interpretation of CHE academic identity as a semiotic activity, which steered their exploration of the individual bead selection and rationale (Kay, 2013a). Individually, symbolic meaning for each selected bead contained a significant sign demarcated position in orientation for a distinctly novel interpretation of CHE academic identity. Richly diverse, each bead collage was bound conceptually by individual journeys for discovery, reflection, and narrative (Kay, 2013a). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) recognised the benefit of a rhizomatic establishment of new thoughts mirrored in participant's interaction with the bead collage technique. Clegg (2008) suggested that the complexity of identity links to as individual's lived experience. Personal life experience, choice, and opportunity remained distinctly aligned with participants' conceptualisation of the professional CHE academic environment (Munday et al., 2017).

Representations of meanings of each bead contained a significant sign or symbol in its placement position, or a selection of individual beads symbolised academic identity unique to each participant. The placement of each selected bead became an individual journey of representation, reflection, and narrative (Kay, 2013a). Each bead collage creation represented an individual and shared experience, unique in part as a reflection of the experiences and exposure to individuals in the various FGs. Every FG is a unique study that offers an individual contribution to the research (Luke & Goodrich, 2019) to assess dispositions, attitudes, ideas, and experiences (Pearson & Vossler, 2016). Individual's thoughts and practices support diverse reflexivity about CHE academic identity unified by the experience within each FG (Luke & Goodrich, 2019). The bead collage technique highlighted the significance of capturing the complexity of individual perspectives in a group situation aligned with the collective narrative of their lived experience (Clegg, 2008).

Integral for successful interaction, the bead collage technique promoted a creative reflexive developmental process (Buckner, 2015; Blaxter et al., 2006; D'Cruz et al., 2007; Gerstl-Pepin & Patrizion, 2009). Fundamentally linked to the complexity of creative engagement (De Bono, 1992), each participant could broker new frontiers to creatively motivate, enthuse and inspire themselves and others to improve individual self-understanding (Lavina et al., 2017). Raising questions about engagement and creativity generated different ideas (Munday et al., 2017). Often, encouraging therapeutic encounters removes seen and unseen barriers associated with conceptual solutions (Scarles, 2010; Simmons & Daley, 2013). Participants ideologically, contributed to reforming objects

adding new connectivity requiring alternative thoughts and feelings to be evoke creative reflections (Macleod & Holdridge, 2006). Each participant worked with the beads, tacitly holding and touching them to seek conceptual frameworks to form or reform their CHE academic identity.

All participants created a bead collage modelling their conceptual understanding of CHE academic identity. The bead collage technique is a uniquely personal process. Participants were invited to contribute as little or more as they felt able. As discussed in Section 3.2.1.2 The Bead Collage Technique. The reflexive consideration required when selecting the beads and apportioning thoughts and emotions is a complex process. An overarching guide to Bead Collage Technique was drawn up to support the process (See Appendix 6 - A Guide to Bead Collage Technique). The guide presents individual questions for the participants to aid their thoughts for the selection and choice of bead, colour, type, size and shape. Not to limit the process, some participants require minimal prompts, while others require some stimuli to consider when they are creatively engaging with the bead collage technique. The bead selection was indicative of the variety of bead choice available and was dependent on individual preference for the beads. Placement, bead selection and choice signifying the importance placed on the meaning attached to the beads was completely individual. During the bead collage technique activity participants were able to interact with the other participants in their FG, if they chose to. The process, for some participants was a creative overload, whilst others relished the opportunity to be playful with the beads. Kay (2010) supports the playful aspect of the bead collage to move beads around, to play with ideas. The artistry, imagination and creativity generates a playful aspect to the selection and deselection of the beads (Bruner, 1986; Burge et al., 2016; Marmé et al., 2013). Reciprocity in the playful engagement opened side discussions between the participants when they made their collages (see Appendix 6 - A Guide to Bead Collage Technique). This promoted a shared camaraderie among the participants, often fostering a unique, familiar insight, stimulating interaction and eliciting ideas between them. Discussions between the participants provoked curiosity about their actions as they gathered individual beads. The bead collage technique facilitated participants' engagement on various levels, depending on the group's familiarity with being open to further interaction. This response was not completely surprising, given that my experience of the pilot study reflected a similar response to the bead collage technique: once the individuals felt at ease with each other, they continued to discuss and share their ideas. Despite the personal narratives, the interaction reassured participants that they needed to be more confident or able to create a bead collage to openly voice their concerns about their academic identity within the group.

The subjective insight gathered from the interaction with the bead collage technique can enhance individual narratives of academic identity. The symbiotic fusion of self-reflection aligns with scholarship modelled in CHE and signifies the importance of interpretations and meanings identified in the data (Punch & Oancea, 2014). Gauntlett (2018) states that making enables individuals to connect and conceptualise innovative ideas whenever there is an occasion for creative activities. Nevertheless, the relationship between individual participants during the FG could potentially enhance the symbolism represented in the bead collages whilst supporting the 'metaphor of mobilisation' (Stronach et al., 2007, p.99) toward personal development. Given the focus on metaphor, the creative essence of the research represents the participant's contribution to their understanding of academic identity. The reflective meditation created during the bead collage technique aided individual thoughtfulness that was shared in a community (Holt et al., 2019). Including personal reflections as part of the participants and my narrative symbolically links to creative action. In much the same way, the insider/outsider perspectives linked the individual voices distinctly heard rather than presenting them as a generalised record (Adaira & Pastorib, 2011). Creative engagement in whatever chosen individual pursuit supports the development of more significant connections to selfhood, including confidence and breaking down barriers (Hough & Harkin, 2013). Beneficial for group activities, the bead collage technique fostered collaborative discussions, which will be explored further in the response to RQ2: What impact does the bead collage technique have on research about academic identity?

Integral for participant interaction, the bead collage technique encouraged individual reflexivity for a unique understanding of the development process (Buckner, 2015; Blaxter et al., 2006; D'Cruz et al., 2007; Gerstl-Pepin & Patrizion, 2009). Fundamentally linked to the complexity of creative engagement (De Bono, 1992), the participants could broker new frontiers to creatively motivate, enthuse and inspire others to improve individual self-understanding (Lavina et al., 2017). Creativity can generate ideas, promote therapeutic engagement and remove seen and often unseen barriers associated with conceptual solutions (Scarles, 2010; Simmons & Daley, 2013). The bead collage technique promoted visual ideas to develop self-understanding (Munday et al., 2017). Potentially, the reformation of ideas prompted reflection to encourage different thoughts and feelings connected to art creations (Macleod & Holdridge, 2006). The tacit activity can vary as participants engage with the beads, forming and reforming the conceptual frameworks of the CHE academic identity experience shared with others at the end of the FG.

3.4.4 Research Design

The main study was conducted in two stages, stage one was the initial FGs that included the bead collage technique method. Stage two invited the participants to be regrouped into the CtR FGs to gather their reflections about the bead collages photos. The justification for the CtR FG was aligned with the development of learning that often takes place after the event. When on reflection individuals can pause and think about the importance significance of the learning that has occurred. In Loads' (2010) research, participants attended FG/workshop-based around their research experiences to engage lecturers. Not only does this approach support the justification for including FGs in my research but opportunity to reflexively revisit was also considered a beneficial addition. Loads (2010) staff workshop research explored 'ways of being' to build skills to flourish when presented with uncertainty (p.1). The reflective arts-based activity supported student nurse explorations of metaphor over three months. Retrospective reflexive understanding from the gathered artefacts could be revisited during or after the three months (Loads, 2010). Loads (2010) acknowledged the importance of self-awareness for student nurses, which could heighten resilience development when unsure of a situation. Criticisms identified the research validity at the time as there were no perceived measurable outcomes, and impact changes came later. However, social research is about the lived experience. Crotty (2015, p.145) noted two dimensions to the learning process: moral-practical and empirical-analytical knowledge. The pedagogical practice-based learning activity invited participants to engage with the artefact as a lived learning experience.

Communication can have beneficial effects stemming from social evolution adapted from learning development for social change, but these effects slow down replication in research due to the limited time available (Black, 2011; Mäkelä et al., 2011; Roberts & Woods, 2018). This could result in individual adaptions linked to their experiences, which would be equally beneficial (Habermas, 1976; Loads, 2010). Some participants experienced a delay in recognising the reflexive benefits of the bead collage technique. Even following the bead collage technique, participants could reflectively think about the event and communicate their thoughts to the community later. Interaction with the bead collage technique facilitated reflexive thinking to embed different pedagogical practice/s. As with every new experience, the opportunity to gain experience from the interaction could become a memorable event to incorporate into life. An underlying aim of pedagogues is to instil the benefits of learning for the holistic development of people (Korthagen, 2004). The Buffer-fly concept (Milner,

2017) (see Appendix 2 - The Buffer-fly Concept) discussed in the Introduction (1.0) is the model that underpins the exploration of my personal and professional CHE identity. The value placed on identity can squash the Buffer-fly's flourishing nature as it flies forth to the next challenge or overcoming obstacles to be achieved (Milner, 2017) (see Appendix 2 - The Buffer-fly Concept). Professional and personal attributes contribute to the unique interplay of academic professional identity. As professionals continue individual learning journeys, forging deeper connections with themselves (De Weerdt et al., 2006; Peel, 2005). Aspects of the professional self, the development and formative processes play a part in identity formation (Clarke et al., 2013; Sommerlad, 2007).

Changes to the main study were implemented which included FG size groupings to have a maximum of five to support interaction, I also needed to buy more beads to ensure the range of choice and selection was increased (there needed to be more to go around). The timings were reduced for the overall FG (two hours to one hour), and the FG questions (see Appendix 5 - Focus Groups Questions) were amended slightly to maximise the responses once the following iterations from the pilot study and the research were ready to be conducted. Despite this deviation from the original plan for a smaller number of FGs with more significant numbers, the pilot study illustrated the importance of smaller groupings. McNiff et al. (1996, p.52) state, 'keep it small, focused and manageable', promoting the FGs becoming an opportunity for the participants to get to know each other, to feel safe and secure, and ready to share their feelings and experiences (Burnard, 1998). Despite the connections between some of the participants, BC FG7 was comprised of my team and was facilitated by the moderator as stipulated by the ethics committee's stipulation. To ensure a rich body of data based on the experience enabling the participants to be reflexive, the appointment of an alternative moderator was well placed to serve the research (Attia & Edge, 2017; Fleming, 2018).

3.5 Participants

As discussed earlier in the previous 3.3: Methods section, the participants were chosen from approximately 100 CHE lecturers in the college. As can be seen from Table 2 (p. 108): Breakdown of Gender and Participants Subject Area and Table 3 (p. 108): Breakdown of Management in the Focus Groups, the participants were made up from a range of cognate subject areas. The participants comprised of 15 females and 12 males. I chose to represent the breakdown of the participants in

Table 2 (p. 108) to illustrate how the groups were made up. Four members from the senior management team were identified in the FG again to illustrate the range and breadth of roles evidenced during the research.

Table 2: Breakdown of Gender and Participants' Subject Area

Bead Collage (BC FG)	Gender	Subject area
1	Male - 2 Female – 1	Science and Education
2	Male - 1 Female – 1	English and Education
3	Male - 2 Female – 1	Law, Construction and Education
4	Male - 3 Female – 1	Computing, Construction and Education
5	Male - 1 Female – 1	History and Media
6	Male - 3 Female – 1	Education Law and Health
7	Male - 0 Female – 5	Education
8	Male - 0 Female - 4	Law, health and Land-based studies
Chance to Reflect (CtR)		
1	Male - 1 Female – 1	Science and Education
2	Male - 0 Female – 3	Law, Land-based Studies and Health
3	Male - 2 Female – 1	Construction, Law and Education
4	Male - 2 Female -1	Education, History and Science
5	Male - 0 Female – 4	Education
6	Male - 0 Female – 2	Education and Media
7	Male - 2 Female – 1	Computing and Education
8	Male - 2 Female – 1	Education, Construction and English
9	Male – 2 Female – 1	Health, Education and Law
10	Male - 1 Female - 0	Education

Table 3 – Breakdown of Management in the Focus Groups

Bead Collage (BCFG)	Gender	Subject area	No. In Management Roles
1	Male - 2 Female – 1	Science and Education	
2	Male - 1 Female – 1	English and Education	1
3	Male - 2 Female – 1	Law, Construction and Education	

4	Male - 3 Female – 1	Computing, Construction and Education	1
5	Male - 1 Female – 1	History and Media	
6	Male - 3 Female – 1	Education Law and Health	
7	Male - 0 Female – 5	Education	
8	Male - 0 Female - 4	Law, health and Land-based studies	2
Chance to Reflect (CtR)			
1	Male - 1 Female – 1	Science and Education	
2	Male - 0 Female – 3	Law, Land-based Studies and Health	1
3	Male - 2 Female – 1	Construction, Law and Education	
4	Male - 2 Female -1	Education, History and Science	1
5	Male - 0 Female – 4	Education	
6	Male - 0 Female – 2	Education and Media	1
7	Male - 2 Female – 1	Computing and Education	1
8	Male - 2 Female – 1	Education, Construction and English	
9	Male – 2 Female – 1	Health, Education and Law	
10	Male - 1 Female - 0	Education	

3.5.1   The Population and Sample

Population choice should be from the most representative sample to increase authenticity and trustworthiness (Gray, 2018). In this case, the target population was from an FE college in Southwest England. Purposive sampling was chosen to collect a sample from the total population of HE academic staff (approximately one hundred). The choice and selection of the sample at the FEC in Southwest England were to conduct research at my workplace. The decision supported the insider/outsider approach. Morgan (1997) acknowledged the importance of selecting knowledgeable individuals to enhance the information gathered through sampling to contribute to similar knowledge and language usage in the FG. The selected sample of CHE lecturers comprised part-time and full-time staff. All the participants have HE commitment in their role, varying from supporting a couple of dissertation students to one or two modules or the whole of their teaching in HE. The sample comprised 15 females and 12 males. They ranged in age from early twenties to mid-sixties and had various teaching experiences. Some participants were previously university lecturers before working at the college.

As such, the pilot selected CHE lecturers who also have the Programme Coordinator role. I selected two males and one female, and the female became the external moderator (See 3.4.2: Ethical Considerations). The individuals are full-time staff members, which may affect the responses to the data; however, few academic staff members in the college hold the same job title/role. Employing an external moderator (BERA, 2024) maintained and initiated a representative into the process of the bead collage technique. For more details about the moderator, please see 3.4.1: The Population and Sample.

3.5.1.1 Choosing A Sample Group

Initial participant recruitment was via an email invitation that included a brief explanation of the research (see Appendix 11 - Participant Email Invitation). I followed up with personal contact for the consenting lecturers to organise and agree on an allotted date and time for the FG groupings. This back-to-basics approach offered responses from the participants communicating their consent or reason for not participating to me. Therefore, as an insider researcher, I had to recognise the impact of the power differential between colleagues. Data authentication was supported by removing any apparent bias or potential lies to promote a rigorous study (Greene, 2014). The same questions were used during all the FGs with minimal interaction from the moderator to avoid favouring or offering bias during the interactions. The participants discussed their experiences of CHE academic identity, and there were no apparent occasions when this information seemed false. Tolich (2009) distinguishes between internal and external confidentiality in the context of FGs. Internal confidentiality relates to information that group members may choose to reveal, while external confidentiality deals with the researcher's potential exposure of information (Sim & Wakefield, 2019). Respect for ground rules and specific components of the permission process are necessary for maintaining internal confidentiality; the researcher has far less influence over these. Participants sampled from CHE lecturers chose to participate in the FGs, suggesting their contribution was part of their individual CHE identity development (Murray et al., 2011). Similarly, this did not negate the impact that some participants may have made untruthful comments; I relied on what I believed to be honest comments from the FGs.

Cooperative contribution from lecturers to gift their time in the research modelled the value of CoP focused on transformation (Agrifoglio, 2015; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). There was an overwhelming willingness to support the research with participants from the CHE population in the college.

Although the study involved the opportunity for pragmatic participant sampling, ultimately, the CHE community was self-selecting (Murray et al., 2011). The sampling did not detract from the study but could have provided additional experience to transform lecturers' engagement with scholarly activity (Boyer, 1990; Boyd & Smith, 2016; Cordingley, 2015). Any potential bias in the data may have resulted from the shared contribution in group scenarios, which was particularly evident in the regrouping of the participants during the CtR FG.

The sampling in the CtRs after completing the BC FGs differed from the original groupings. At the end of each BC FG, participants agreed on a suitable date and time to reconvene and discuss their bead collage photographs. However, due to some participants' last-minute availability or time commitments, I created three CtR FGs comprising different participant groupings from the original BC FGs, see Table 4 (p. 111): 'Chance to Reflect' – Participant Regroupings and Table 5 (p. 112): Participant Regrouping. Given the research's timing and participants' availability before the end of the term, I decided to conduct the CtRs with different participants using purpose sampling in line with the agreed ethics form (see Appendix 8 - Ethics Form) to ensure the study continued. There was a possibility that due to the regroupings in these three CtRs, participants shared slightly different perspectives; I cannot confirm that this amendment influenced participants shared perspectives. McNiff (2014) suggest participants often benefit from sharing an experience together. Therefore, irrespective of different groupings the participants chose to be part of the research opting for different timings and fitting themselves into alternative groupings to ensure their research involvement.

Table 4: 'Chance to Reflect' – Participant Regroupings

CtR FG	No.s	Regrouping Configuration
CtR1	2	Participants remained the same
CtR2	3	Participants remained the same
CtR3	3	Participants remained the same
CtR4	3	Different participants, all known to each other from the roles in the college
CtR5	4	Participants remained the same
CtR6	2	Different participants, known to each other, previously worked in the same section
CtR7	3	Participants remained the same
CtR8	3	Different participants, 2 from the same section, 1 unknown to the others
CtR9	3	Participants remained the same
CtR10	1	

Table 5: Participant Focus Group Codes

No.s	Focus Group (FG) and Participant No.	'Chance to Reflect' (CtR) and Participant No.
1	FG1,1	CtR1,1
2	FG1,2	CtR1,2
3	FG1,3	CtR4,1
4	FG2,1	CtR6,1
5	FG2,2	CtR8,1
6	FG3,1	CtR3,1
7	FG3,2	CtR3,2
8	FG3,3	CtR3,3
9	FG4,1	CtR7,1
10	FG4,2	CtR7,2
11	FG4,3	CtR7,3
12	FG4,4	CtR8,2
13	FG5,1	CtR4,2
14	FG5,2	CtR6,2
15	FG6,1	CtR10,1
16	FG6,2	CtR9,1
17	FG6,3	CtR9,2
18	FG6,4	CtR9,3
19	FG7,1	CtR5,1
20	FG7,2	CtR5,2
21	FG7,3	CtR5,3
22	FG7,4	CtR5,4
23	FG7,5	CtR8,3
24	FG8,1	CtR2,1
25	FG8,2	CtR4,3
26	FG8,3	CtR2,2
27	FG8,4	CtR2,3

However, given the introduction of new members in three of the CtRs, the robustness of the findings was an issue (Leatherdale, 2019). While participants were respectful in their conduct, it would have potentially created undue stress and pressure on the participants and compromised the data collected due to participants not wanting to discuss and share their thoughts authentically. As the moderator for the CtR groups with the regrouped FGs, I would suggest that there were no apparent alteration to participant behaviours or their contribution to the research. Though, I cannot say for certain that this was the case.

3.5.2   Ethical Considerations

Establishing ethical governance scaffolds the expectations and appropriateness towards all participants during the research (Emmerich, 2013). As a moderator, unnecessary risks to the participants are outlined in the ethical submission to support all involved in the research (see Appendix 8 - Ethics Form). Workplace research presents the challenge of minimising potential bias (Hurdley, 2010), particularly for overcoming challenges for the research outcome through inferred knowledge related to the workplace could be ignored or imply coercion (Fleming, 2018). According to Breen (2006), the following guidelines could help overcome typical ethical dilemmas while using FGs. These include putting interviewees at ease by maintaining confidentiality and building rapport, explaining the format of the FG and your role as moderator, rephrasing questions when necessary, avoiding bias, and being timely, and, if necessary, signposting participants if they require further assistance or advice following the FG.

Research with colleagues tempered with thoughtful strategies to navigate potential power differentials remained challenging (Barstow, 2008; Lindsey et al., 2011). One way to overcome the overt bias of the insider researcher role was to introduce a moderator so that my team could engage in the research. In my role as a programme coordinator, I am responsible for the oversight of quality assurance of teaching for the courses in the area. My role could subliminally enhance further power inaccuracies in the research, impacting participant contributions during the FG discussions (French & Raven, 1959). Additionally, Punch and Oancea (2014) assert that the moderator role should model balance in facilitating group interactions. This includes using non-threatening questions to introduce the task's requirements, with questions that could minimise participant concerns or discomfort felt from the environment (Barbour, 2007). Any obvious power differential could impact the interaction between the participants and the research (Barstow, 2008).

In any CoP (Wenger, 2010), professional and personal relationships are often formed, affecting insider knowledge (Hamdan, 2009; Huang, 2015). The perceived role of power in the hierarchy was not necessarily harmful; there were occasions when power could be positively experienced (Barstow, 2008). Lindsey et al. (2011) proposed that organisations have power differentials. An appreciation of the role of power in personal and professional relationships demonstrates reflexive accountability for individuals to model the behaviour expected in CoP (Ntim et al., 2017; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Remembering the impact of friendships and alliances between the participants and

me could complicate honest interactions in the FGs (Robson, 1999). However, being cognisant of this information enhanced the research's realism (Foust & Lair, 2012). Only some aspects of the research can be minimised with the organisation, structure, and facilitation, as some pre-existing relationships and power differentials were unavoidable. Any personal relationships between colleagues and differences in character or opinions within the working environment (Mercer, 2007) are acknowledged as part of a normal CoP (Wenger, 1998). To remove potential power indifference with my team, I identified an external moderator who conformed to the ethical recommendations for the research. Within all the remaining FGs, I remained professional with an awareness of Barstows' (2008) four dimensions to reduce the power differential in my moderation of the FGs. These were 'Self (Be Compassionate), Guidance (Be Informed), Relationship (Be Connected) and Wisdom (Be Skillful)' (p.61). In combination with humanistic qualities to ensure participants felt at ease in the FG, I maintained the inclusion of the four dimensions to alleviate any potential power imbalance I may cause in my conduct. I did my best to limit the possibility of imbalance in my interactions with the participants; given my position within the CHE community, I cannot confirm that the power difference was removed or that any of the participants experienced it.

3.4.2.1 Confidentiality

Data protection protocols established by the Data Protection Act 1998 and General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR) maintain confidentiality and adherence to appropriate data storage and retention. Anonymised participant information included coded transcriptions. Gray (2018) suggested ensuring confidentiality by describing individual participant roles or responsibilities from becoming inadvertently known (Cresswell, 2014). Confidential maintenance in research is a prerequisite in the workplace when participants share sensitive information (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). If participants shared personal information due to feeling at ease in the FG, this was followed up afterwards. Participants were requested to maintain confidentiality following the group's discussion (Cresswell, 2014) as a collaboratively shared experience (Whitehead & McNiff, 2011). The humanistic approach led to the research focused on the contribution of people to people (Heron & Reason, 2001) from a collegial, thoughtful lived experience leading to the formation of academic identity (Berry & Clair, 2011; Cousin, 2008; Delamont, 2009; Duncan, 2004). Participants' confidentiality is to remain considerate of the discussions during and after the FGs, as outlined in the consent form (see Appendix 10 - Participant Consent Form). Even with the unplanned reconfiguration of the CtR groupings, the participants remained respectful to the individuals they were initially grouped with during the BC FG.

At the beginning of the CtR FGs, the participants were reminded about the confidentiality of the discussions. The rearrangements of the group participants, whilst not planned for, did not appear to hamper the discussions or impact confidentiality. Changes to the membership of the various FGs were responsive to the participant's requirements to attend and contribute to the research. Therefore, revisiting the importance of confidentiality in reflexively discussing participants' bead collages became even more of a focus during the CtR FGs.

3.5.3   Authenticity and Trustworthiness

As with any new research, the justification for the chosen approach, methods, and tools all have a part to play (Gray, 2018). Incorporating a balanced research design that raises awareness of any potential contraindicating factors for the methodology could strengthen authenticity and trustworthiness (Gray, 2018). Ethical judgement aligned to BERA guidelines (2024) further constructed transparent governance of fairness in the research study, thoughtfully considered in the humanistic reflexive research inquiry (Walsh et al., 2017). Participants interactions with the researcher, were a shared mutually respectful reflexive environment (Kitchen, 2005a; Kitchen, 2005b). Inclusive language (Koro-Ljungberg, 2019) enhanced the CoP. Recording participants' richly diverse shared descriptions of the bead collages represented the words spoken to gather authentic interpretations (Gray, 2018). These descriptive words would later form the valuable basis for reflexive participant engagement during the CtR FGs that fed into the conclusions of the findings. Accurate transcription of the participants' responses valued the use of chosen words, language and words spoken, with the utmost mindfulness to articulate questions appropriately and minimise misinterpretation (Grant et al., 2013). Reflexively, verification of interpretations sought validity in recording the comments made during the FGs, supporting the accuracy of the spoken words and behaviours exhibited. The moderator's introduction minimised any known power differential for listening unencumbered to participant voices (Attia & Edge, 2017). Reflexive observations were recorded during the FGs (noted in my reflective diary) (see Appendix 4 - Reflective Diary Title and Excerpts). There remained a dependency on the validity of the recorded explanations linked to theoretical conceptualised interpretations (Whitehead & McNiff, 2011), and interactions underpinned the accounts of the voices reflected from the insider/outsider researcher perspective (Hamdan, 2009).

A human-centric approach to data generation involves the removal of any perceived processes that could hinder the acknowledgement of the participants (Ravetz & Gregory, 2018). Participant confidentiality and anonymity followed the ethics committee requirements and fostered honest participant narrative data to emerge without pretence during analysis (Wright, 2016). The data remained accessible throughout the research, deleting the audio recording after transcription. Qualitative research explored a representative cohort of CHE in a Southwest of England FE college, providing a good practice case study. While the findings could inform CHE's academic identity and work culture, the research aimed to adopt an iterative approach to limiting reliability claims (Manion et al., 2018). The maintenance of integrity-rich data generated an accurately recorded participant understanding of the central perspective of the research (Rodríguez-Dorans, 2018). Respect for all participant contributions as accurately valid statements shared at the time of the FGs reflected the importance of authenticity. During the follow-up CtR FGs, every individual confirmed that their bead collage accurately represented their interpretation of CHE academic identity. However, there remained a reliance on participant honesty during the interactions about academic identity with the bead collage technique. Participants' authenticity in their shared words, feelings, and thoughts during the FG could be a consequence of the environment (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2019).

Authenticity, as suggested by Ademolu (2023), is reflected in reflexive research as the insider is closer to the community. The CHE environment continues to be appropriate for gathering evidence about CHE lecturers' lived experiences (Bagley, 2009). Cohen et al. (2018) suggest that the validity of participant meanings derived from the interpretations shared in the discussion protects the research. Validity, Kvale (1996) suggests, should encompass the seven stages[11] of the research process. The identified themes aligned with the theoretical validity encompassed by the research design (Kvale,

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[11]

1. Basing the research on themes soundly constituted within the theory.
2. The validity of the research design ensuring the trustworthiness of the participants' responses through careful questioning.
3. Sensitive questioning (for example, avoiding rhetorical or leading questions).
4. Transcription accuracy.
5. Achieving validity in analysis.
6. Checking and rechecking the validity of the questions to establish the logic of any interpretations were assured.
7. Reflexive validating interpretations.
8. Accurately reporting participant voices.
Kvale (1996)

1996). Questions selected from the schedule encouraged the participant to model trustworthiness (Celestina, 2018). The open discussion with few participant interruptions modelled humanistic counselling techniques (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011; Luke & Goodrich, 2019). Any clarification of questions from the participants with a non-leading open approach mirrored the sensitivity of the topics discussed.

3.6   Identification of Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) was used to engage with and analyse the research data. Initially, I found data generation and analysis challenging to conceptualise, but the effective planned gathering of relevant information enabled familiarity to be developed. The amount of data collected from the FGs and reflexive accounts was large (Rabiee, 2004), which required careful consideration to ensure authentically represented data. Organisation became a central part of the process, as I navigated the data to make sense of the themes. There is no correct analysis method, so my decision depended on several broad principles (Cohen et al., 2018). I needed to understand the processes I was following and turned again to read about the phases Braun and Clarke (2006) outlined to understand how to adopt the RTA approach (Braun & Clarke, 2019) to engage with the analysis of data. The four distinct domains overlap to make sense of the data: the orientation of the data, focused meanings, and qualitative and theoretical frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The initial orientation of the data is less reductive, drawing an understanding from the themes in their purest form to represent them fairly without the interference of subjectivity. However, given the subjectivity in this research, my insider/outsider researcher positionality cannot avoid the connectivity of meaning derived from the data. The second of the four domains is the focus of meaning, the close relationship between the researcher and the research, and hearing the participant's voices required closer introspection. The theory that has conceptually guided the research inevitably steers the meanings identified from the data; there are no surprises in this phase or should not be. The third domain is the qualitative framework that advocates the experiential perspectives found and the narrative in the participant's voices. The criticality of participant narrative supposes that the language, authentically spoken, reflects the lived experience that can be organised and categorised to identify meanings in the data. The fourth of the four domains relies on the theoretical underpinnings found in the research and essentially endeavours to express the realities in the data. Fostered in the constructionist approach,

articulating participants' interpretation of the world they inhabit to make sense of their experience and engagement with their reality.

Braun and Clarke (2016) suggest organising the data to identify codes soon after data generation. The sooner, the better, particularly as the familiarity with the data is still relatively fresh in the researcher's mind (Rabiee, 2004). Early engagement enabled the categorisation of data groupings. At the same time, the experience remained relatively unencumbered by any prescinding influences to remain authentic (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2022a; 2022b). The thematic analysis approach has often been scrutinised for being too open for new researchers because researchers need more flexibility and choice around the theme selection (Braun & Clarke, 2019), which could promote a lack of consistency. Epistemological positioning remains key to the success of RTA; awareness of how theoretical and conceptual frameworks have impacted the research process authentically informs decisions. Silverman (2005) outlined the importance of rigour in supporting a valid interpretation following the data-gathering research stage. However, consideration of these central tenets of decision-making could ground and limit my experience and knowledge of analysis techniques. Therefore, my reflexive self-knowledge verifies the theoretical realisation of the theme identification.

Initially, the overarching data analysis approaches demonstrated the importance of systematic reporting on the data to produce robust findings. Indeed, creating an interconnected symmetry of patterns in the data conceptualised my embodiment of the analysis (Kara et al., 2021). Acquaintance and reacquaintance with the data cultivated a flourishing relationship with the findings (Harris, 2005; Trahar, 2011). Following the six phases of Braun and Clarke's (2019) RTA, I systematically engaged in the data analysis phase of the research. Beginning with phase 1: initial familiarisation with the data, I revisited my written notes from the FGs, reviewing the comments and words I had made during the discussions. As Braun and Clarke (2019) illustrate, the subjectivity of the research brings an inductive quality to the analysis process. Phase 2 of the process took slightly longer as I listened to the recordings, rereading the transcription to gain an in-depth knowledge of the data.

Nowell et al. (2017) acknowledge that without total engagement with the data, the analysis could be flat and fail to represent the participant's voices truthfully. Systematically listening to each recording, I began to identify initial codes from the data. Initial coding aligned with the research questions, informed by the literature I had reviewed in preparation for the research design. Trainor and Bundon's (2020) approach to this phase of RTA echoed the process I worked through with each FG

transcript, noting the ideas and significant meanings shared by the participants. These initial annotated notes formed the fledgling themes categorised in the findings (see Appendix 12 - Theme Document). It was during this RTA stage that I began to identify similarities in the recurring codes that would become my initial themes. The reviewing and developing the themes in Phase 4 formulated the collective narrative from the participants' stories (Braun & Clarke, 2024). I found giving appropriate names to the themes I had identified difficult to define during the fifth phase. As Nowell et al. (2017) illustrated, the coding stages often reveal unforeseen insights into the participant's perspectives. As the researcher, I ensured I authentically reflected my participant's contribution without my interpretation obscuring the view. The participants shared their thoughts and feelings about being CHE lecturers' academic identities, and I needed to represent them accordingly. Finally, during phase 6 of the RTA process, I identified and located individual participant quotes that appropriately illustrate the voices found in the data. The quote selection was a significant process, and the participants shared many significant poignant phrases in the research. McMullin (2023) acknowledged that the researcher's positionality impacts the selection and representation of the quote to illustrate the participant's voices in the data. Ignoring the researcher's presence in selecting quotes and excerpts would be remiss when subjectively engaging in qualitative research. Therefore, as the researcher, I recognise my role as the insider, selecting quotes indicative of the participant's voices to evoke impact about the voices in the transcripts. However, it was important to include quotes representing meaningful knowledge of the individual participant voices as best as possible (Braun & Clarke, 2022a; 2022b).

The preparatory stage enabled me to reflexively identify the themes representative of the collective perceptions, experiences, and thoughts surrounding CHE lecturers' academic identity. Interconnected with the insider/outsider researcher perspective (Berger, 2015), the continued relational aspect of the data analysis was strengthened. The opportunity to discuss my evolving ideas confidentially, reread, and share thoughts with friends and colleagues was a valuable aspect of practicing ideas aloud rather than mulling them over internally. Stebick et al. (2022) suggest that the benefits of articulating ideas in a safe space can be developmental, promoting trust to self-solve and process ideas together. In the same way, the insider/outsider positionality maintained during this stage scaffolded my reflexivity to engage with the data analysis, muse, ponder, and develop informed knowledge (Aiello & Nero, 2019) that at the time was proving difficult to pin down. At the time, the formulation of an equally innovative approach to data analysis was becoming distinctly more

challenging to locate. During this period, a friend suggested I read Braun and Clarke's (2019) article, which was to become pivotal to the data analysis phase. The article exposed unique insight surrounding the techniques a researcher could adopt to maintain a connection with the data in a reflexively perceptive way. At the time, this afforded an active engagement with layering the analysis while embodying the vision for a continued connection with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). As the insider/outsider researcher, I continued to gather insight and meaning, nurturing the development of a holistic relationship with the research (Braun & Clarke, 2019). My engagement with the alternative approach for the data analysis presented a reassuringly appropriate attitude towards the data, which epistemologically aligns with my feminist, reflexive research positionality. My nuanced, evidence-informed reflexivity would provide an opportunity for a knowledgeable, insightful response to the data analysis often overlooked in more traditional approaches (Trainor & Bundon, 2020).

Comprehensive reflective qualitative data analysis recommend I/researchers should experience the situation alongside their participants (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). Whilst this could be perceived as subjectively skewing the authenticity of the research, Braun and Clarke (2019) and Fleming (2018) advocate for the researcher's positionality that enables closer understanding of the data analysis that has been influential in the research process. However, Pillow (2003) indicated that for the data to be visible as the insider researcher, sharing the experience with my participants remained influential. Whereas the criticisms of insider research can be regarded as biased, there are benefits for the approach, namely, the connection to the data, participants and analysis (Fleming, 2018). Establishing an openness for relational reflexive analysis between the researcher and the data is individually embodied (Kara et al., 2021). Reflective of my insider/outsider researcher role, I chose to be in and with my data to experience the struggles of making sense of the messiness of my analysis (Graham & Buckley, 2014). If I had chosen not to adopt a reflexive analytical approach, I would have potentially matched the conventions already established in the objective domains of quantifiable data analysis. Whereas my insider/outsider positionality reinforced the intuitive connectedness established during the reflective journeying. Therefore, the happiness and freedom (to a point) to be at one with the data deepened the insider positionality acting as a confidence boost to energise and strengthen the awareness of the researcher's role (Pillow, 2003). The reflexive journeying during this period captured the insider/outsider researcher's perspective of the dilemmas encountered when bucking the trend to refresh traditional approaches to data analysis production (Fleming, 2018). Consequentially, the decision to code the interview transcripts and bead collage photographs ensured that participants'

voices were heard in the collated data (Keys Adair & Pastori, 2011). Advocating the benefits of a RTA to analyse the transcripts (Roberts & Woods, 2018).

3.6.1 What is Reflexive Thematic Analysis?

Reflexive Thematic Analysis is an approach by Braun and Clarke (2019) that outlined for domains for outlining how to engage with the analysis of data. The four domains though distinct overlap to make sense of the data, the orientation of data, focused meanings, qualitative and theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The initial orientation of the data is less reductive, drawing an understanding from the themes in there purest form, to fairly represent without the interference of subjectivity. However, given the subjectivity in this research, my insider/outsider researcher positionality cannot avoid the connectivity of meaning derived from the data. The second of the four domains is the focus of meaning, whilst initial surface meaning has been identified, the close relationship between the researcher and the research from the participant voices. The theory that has conceptually guided the research inevitably steers the meanings identified from the data, there are no surprises in this phase, or there should not be. The third domain is the qualitative framework that advocates the experiential perspectives found and narrative in the participant voices. The criticality of participant narrative, supposes that the language, authentically spoken, is and remains a reflection of the lived experience that can be organised and categories to identify meanings in the data. The fourth of the four domains relies on the theoretical underpinnings found in the research, essentially endeavours to express the realties in the data. Fostered in the constructionist approach, articulating participants interpretation of the world they inhabit to make sense of their experience and engagement with their reality.

3.6.2 Justification for the Reflexive Thematic Approach

The best way to approach the RQs was to be dynamic, to illustrate how the data's impact on the participants engagement with scholarship could be understood. The adopted choice of Braun and Clarke's (2019) RTA sustained the scrutiny of data required to uphold the reflective research. Active engagement in a commensurate approach for a flexible, responsive, and meaningful way for the data to evolve became paramount (Braun & Clarke, 2019). I was reflexively drawn to the insider/outsider researcher positionality, immersed in data analysis. As such, the research journey aided periods of

pause to reflexively appreciate the data whilst focusing on the impact on me as a CHE pracademic. Though not intended, the benefits of this meandering positively impacted the research; these musings generated a continuous reflexive research attitude (Pillow, 2003).

Naturally, gravitation towards RTA required an active presence during the research (McNiff, 2014). Research from within again fostered a perspective of attention rather than a distance from the research (Gergen, 2015). Noticeably being integral in the research as it unfolded as an insider/outsider provided a lived experience (Cousin, 2008; Delamont, 2009; Duncan, 2004). My tacit connection to the research at each developmental stage reinforced the relationship in accord with and through the data, informed by the insider/outsider strand, via a direct link to the presence of the insider/outsider researcher role (Rodríguez-Dorans, 2018). RTA emphasised the researcher's interpretive engagement with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Inductive analysis involved directly situated themes in the data to appreciate unexpected emergent themes. RTA supported reflective, analytical responses and ethical awareness (Kara, 2018). As an insider/outsider, I learned valuable lessons from this approach.

3.6.3 Identification of Themes in the Data

Initially, the themes were identified during and after the data production cycle aligned with Braun and Clarke's (2019) first RTA domain, followed up with a thoughtful, robust approach to check and recheck the meaning derived from the data. The completion of time after the data production became a reflexive development of my understanding of the initially identified themes. Reflexive processing could be likened to meditation, steering the onward insider research journey (Sword et al., 2018) as a reminder of the natural exploration of new knowledge (Trainor & Bundon, 2020). Gilmore and Kenny (2015), Holland (1999), and Aiello and Nero (2019) advocate the importance of reflexivity as a component of insider/outsider research to ensure a consistent presence during the research journey. A shift in perception gleaned from the different approaches to interpreting and understanding the data permitted the space to think through the various telling and retelling of the data (Trainor & Bundon, 2020). These related perspectives highlighted the focus on my professional interactions in the immediate CHE community and the connected wider academic arena. The conceptualisation of each theme created a reflexive engagement with the data, leading to a developed understanding of the RQ/s and focus of the research. Conceptually, selfhood (Hunt, 2001)

reveals the explorative strand of CHE academic identity as a definitive picture that becomes more about individual perception than a collective, inclusive understanding of cultural community (Wenger, 2010). HE organisational cultures present variations of difference and comparison, raising the question of the habitus (Swartz, 2002), a situational factor engendered by individuals.

The chapter has presented the justification for the qualitative approach, providing an overview of the researcher's positionality and feminist and reflexive lenses. The opening sections addressed the adoption of the insider/outsider researcher approach which discussed the impact that this may or not have had on colleagues in the college. A discussion was presented about the theoretical basis for the adopted application of the bead collage technique to support participants conceptualisation of their CHE lecturer academic identity. Creative methodologies have been found to enable the unencumbered interaction of conceptual frameworks linked to personal perspectives (Loads, 2009; Leitch, 2006; Barron et al., 2008). Gauntlett (2007; 2018) identified that engagement with creative activities such as the bead collage technique encourage thoughtful consideration which give space to the reflection. Often these internal dialogue envisaged through visual stimuli accompanied by metaphorical thought processes promote an unmitigated response to reflexivity (Stronach et al., 2007). Munday et al. (2017) suggest visual thinking approaches, whilst conceptually complicated for some, have successfully enabled individuals to consider aspects of self that would ordinarily be difficult to express without visual imagery.

Participant choice, sampling and groupings were highlighted as a beneficial approach for exploration of CHE academic identity within the college CoP. That even with the potential conflicts surrounding confidentiality, the shared engagement in the research supported the shared knowledge transformation for scholarly activities to be undertaken. This promoted a shared experience of research process incorporated a transparent engagement with the research strategy in detail, summarising the population choice, sampling, ethical issues, authenticity, and reliability. The chapter closed with a description and justification of reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) and theme identification.

4. Reflexive Thematic Analysis of Data and Discussion

The forthcoming chapter presents an analysis of the findings from the Bead Collage (BC FG) and Chance to Reflect (CtR FG) focus groups with the inclusion of excepts from my Reflective Diary Entries (RD) (see Appendix 4 - Reflective Diary Title and Excerpts). From which themes are identified and discussed with reference to the literature presented in chapter two. Braun and Clarke's (2019) Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) was used for analysing the primary data collected and was considered the most appropriate approach to understand participants' thoughts, feelings, and responses to College Higher Education (CHE) lecturers' academic identity (see section 3.6: Identification of Reflexive Thematic Analysis). The data analysis discussion and themes have been viewed holistically rather than creating a compartmentalised response to the findings and the two research questions:

RQ1: What, if any, are the unique attributes that contribute to the concept of CHE academic identity?
RQ2: What impact does the bead collage technique have on research about academic identity?

As such the RQs informed the literature review and the development of the methodology which resulted in the identification of the following three themes:

- Theme One: CHE Role Expectations and Requirements
- Theme Two: Being a Professional College Higher Education Lecturer
- Theme Three: The Creative Benefits of the Bead Collage Technique

Subheadings are provided in this chapter to divide the into smaller sections to highlight the nuances identified in the analysis of the themes. Direct quotations from individual participants are used to highlight the authenticity of data analysis rather than an overreliance on interpreting meaning derived from my perceptions. Photographs of the participants' bead collages are used to support the quotes from the data, these pictures represent the visual aspect of the research, that the participants were able to discuss their CHE academic identity. All the bead collages can be viewed in Appendix 7 - Bead Collages by Focus Group, as required to generate a picture of the representations from the participants in the research.

4.1 Identification of Themes Aligned to Reflexive Thematic Analysis

The RTA flows from three themes identified from the data. The significance placed on CHE lecturers' academic identity within thematic discussions developed a conceptualised understanding of a lecturer's experience in the sector. The interwoven themes appeared throughout the data analysis, fading, only to be revealed later during another discussion. Each thread weaves a pathway through every theme and sub-theme enveloping the whole analysis, appearing and disappearing at intervals. This approach reflects Burr's (2015) 'subtle interweaving of many threads' (p.123) and the way identity changes depending on individual experience. The justification for each interwoven thread relates to the individual RQs align to the three themes in the same way. Clandinin et al. (2009) recognised how the interwoven teaching role has many threads and directions that are required. To hear participants' authentic voices, the interpretative analysis includes direct quotes used to illustrate their words. Adopting the Kaleidoscope theory (Milner, 2022) (see Appendix 1 - The Kaleidoscope Theory) resonates with the inquiry, so the individual elements of the research present a new picture of the data analysis. Theme exploration, at times, overlaps to create a vista of ideas, concepts and thoughts from the participant's voices in the data, interconnecting the research journey with the analysis as one whole visual representation (Kay, 2013b; Munday et al., 2017).

The impact of the research is attached to the snapshot of its creation, which was written up as a result of any revelatory ideas or conceptualised thoughts that emerged (Sehn, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2019) acknowledge that research captures the thinking time incorporated into the writing process. Insightful knowledge from individual research captures a rich, knowledgeable tapestry at a specific time, date-stamping the period and interpretation contextualising future researchers' knowledge (Sehn, 2013). Contextualised in the temporal research, findings can only be limited by the constraints at the time (Braun & Clarke, 2022a). As such, any attached meaning/s considerably influences a person's lifetime. Conceptual and theoretical frameworks convey the historical significance of the researcher's data gathered and analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Kay, 2016). Conventions attached to the naming of each theme signify the underlying context impacting the researchers' positionality at the time (Sehn, 2013). Therefore, the identification of the themes was linked to my feminist and reflexive lens, listening to the participants' voices as they considered the role, influences and how this impacted their CHE lecturers' academic identity.

4.1.1 The Themes

All the themes identified in the data analysis are illuminated in response to the literature. Therefore, the selection of each theme has evolved from my engagement with the data through the feminist, reflexive and humanist lenses. Theme one: CHE Role Expectations and Requirements connects the impact of CHE lecturers' professional practices on the surrounding scholarly activity within the sector. Internal and external factors affect the perception and reality of CHE academic identities, including staff teams, management, organisational structure, and curriculum requirements (Smith & Walker, 2022), often disparate in presentation. Identity formation becomes impactful when connected with professionals and their organisations, which explicitly account for both the stakeholder and quality needs required for the foundation degree delivery process. Given the interplay between how influential aspects of practice recognition for the assimilated leadership directives are and the CHE lecturers' role, the synergistic powerplay between the awarding bodies, practice and integrated pedagogy instils the maintenance of the organisational requirements for CHE. Often at the behest of the political environment surrounding the pedagogical, academic engagement within the CHE environment ensures that careful quality assured approaches are maintained for the benefit of students and CHE lecturers alike.

The second theme, Being a Professional College Higher Education Lecturer, explores how the role integrates the intellectual and practical space for scholarly endeavour in the FE college environment. Professional's engagement with academic practices shapes how academic identities and scholarship is viewed by CHE lecturers in and around the college environment. The theme highlights how pedagogy reflects how professional identity often focuses on student interaction, with the space to acknowledge the required attributes for being and becoming a CHE academic lecturer regarded in and across the college environment. The professionals often compromise values and attributes apportioned to the CHE lecturer role to the detriment of the humanist approaches for educational integrity promotion in the pedagogical aspirations. The neo-liberal aspirations of the business of education counter the promise and individual achievements of students and CHE lecturers which are attributed to self-perception and self-worth.

The third theme, The Creative Benefits of the Bead Collage Technique, focuses on the collective reflexive engagement for CHE lecturers' academic identity exploration. The creative benefits of the bead collage theme explore the impact of artful research on developing self-knowledge. The

promotion of personal reflexivity and interaction generates integrated approaches for theoretical knowledge acquisition. Participants' application of the bead college technique enhanced metaphorical, visual, and imaginative creativity to reflect on their CHE lecturer academic identities, which can be influential for continued reflexive practices.

The interconnected themes often enable a chance to revisit nuanced interpretations that have previously been addressed at various points in the research, reflecting on the many aspects of the transition between the functions and responsibilities of a CHE lecturer (Barrow et al., 2020; Bourdieu, 1977; Whitchurch, 2012). The insider/outsider researcher's academic identity promotes the interwoven themes described in the Chrysalis concept (Milner, 2021) (see Appendix 3 - The Chrysalis Concept) as the data reflects the interconnectedness of scholarly work, teaching, professional and personal practice, and academic identity. The dominant pedagogy discourse focused on CHE academic practice, which emerged as a strong theme.

4.1.2 Context of Analysis

As a reminder, Bead Collage Focus Group (BC FG)s 1-8 include the bead collage technique. The Chance to Reflect (CtR) 1–10 illustrate participant reflections about how their bead collage represents their CHE academic identity. The reflective diary entries (see Appendix 4 - Reflective Diary Title and Excerpts) are called RD entries, and each entry has a date stamp, which establishes a context for the creation and emergence of ideas and thoughts connected to the inquiry topic (Sehn, 2013). Participants' voices are interspersed in the CHE academic identity data to show the communal reflexive engagement shared during the FGs. As a result, where appropriate, the exact words from each participant's contribution are represented in a direct citation that includes a reference to the data's BC FG, CtR, or RD context. The creative investigation highlighted the CHE lecturers' academic identity through recollections and reflexive consideration fostered when using the bead collage technique method. According to Agrifoglio (2015), this meant that the Communities of Practice (CoP) within each FG had a say in sharing discussions and information. Each FG membership affected how the groups functioned, with instances where information was freely and occasionally unintentionally exchanged between the members (Barbour, 2007). The two RQs are signposted during the analysis.

4.2   Theme One: CHE Role Expectations and Requirements

The following section focuses on the first theme CHE Role Expectations and Requirements which acknowledges how the impact of lecturers is experienced interplays through the sectors' and colleges policy and pedagogy directives. As student-facing professionals in the organisation, lecturers are responsible for student learning, understanding and success (Lamont & Nordberg, 2014; Murray et al., 2011; Simmons & Lea, 2013). Despite the myriad requirements of educational policy, CHE lecturers are influential figures as their roles encompass significant remnants of power and agency from the overarching structure of CHE in HE (Gleeson et al., 2015). Concerns around pressures to meet HE scholarship requirements in the sector, six participants shared their thoughts about college continued professional development (CPD). Participants voiced their disquiet surrounding the disparity of expectation in contrast to FE colleagues, not a view expressed by the majority. One participant shared,

> '…the stars on the outside …. represent the pressures…… each colour represents a different pressure, in terms of green was HE pressure, red was FE pressure…' (BC FG8,1)

8.1   Bead Collage Focus Group 8: Participant 2

A dynamic poetic representation of the imagery created from the description of the bead collage stimulates thoughts about the pressure perceived to be part of the CHE lecturer's role. CHE lecturers often experience different stresses in their role, juggling the FE college commitments connected with having an academic identity (Child, 2009; Feather, 2016). Evidence of the disquiet experienced by the participants around the justifiable means to resolutely meet all the obligations of CHE lecturing.

4.2.1 Continued Professional Development and Scholarly Activity

Introducing a standardised approach to the delivery and quality teaching and learning of HE in England altered student and lecturer's interaction with the sector (Wilkinson, 2020; Tomlinson, 2016). Annual reporting to monitor the HE academic role in universities and CHE has become a requirement, irrespective of the size of the HEP (OfS, 2020). Indeed, the acknowledged incorporation from regulatory bodies bore significant insight into the professional journey undertaken to gain awarding powers. The QAA (2018) specifies that the continued assurance is based on three fundamental principles: 'Expectations, practices, common and core, and advice and guidance' (p.2). Maintenance of these outlined principles is a prerequisite for lecturers to deliver quality teaching and management of students' learning, with a commitment to uphold and maintain quality processes. The data from the BC and CtR FGs suggests academic engagement in relevant CPD in the sector was understood, as one participant shared how their bead collage,

> '…represents my sort of currency and CPD my own, sort of, like, developing kind of our current knowledge and understanding…' (BC FG1,3)
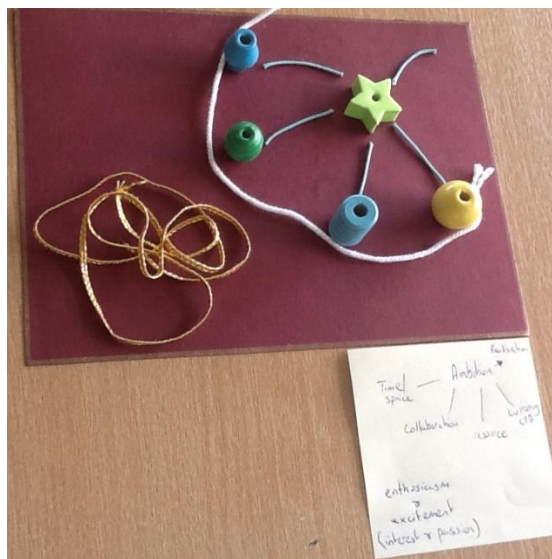
1.3   Bead Collage Focus Group 1: Participant 3

Aligned with Boyer's (1990) view of scholarship, academic staff should be undertaking the relevant scholarly activity. Nevertheless, the inclusion of scholarship activity as part of a lecturer's role, whether through choice or requirement, remains to be seen by all participants as a positive incentive. Reflective of Trede et al. (2012) assertion that the interpretation of scholarship is personal, what and how lecturers engage with the process is in the main unique. Whilst CPD enables the maintenance of currency in practice which to support students, it also upholds professionalism in conveying knowledge in the sector and the college. The data provided evidence that participants felt pressured to continue learning and provide professional and personal integrity for their agency (Moore & Clarke, 2016). Comparing university and CHE teaching, timetable and research expectations with one participant who had recently attended a local university, a participant said they:

> '… heard them [lecturers] moaning that they've got to teach 10 hours next week, you know because that's eating into the research time and their ability to contribute to that academic knowledge and that and all that side of things.' (CtR4,3)

However, the different perceptions between FE and HE curriculum requirements continued to create confusion among the participants. The different experiences shared by the participants illustrated that often completing CPD was considered to be irrelevant or unnecessary for their roles in HE, not an uncommon view within the sector (Buckley & Husband, 2020; Smith & Walker, 2022). As scholarship is an expected requirement of the HE sector. In the college, academic engagement remains pivotal for professional development upholding the endorsement of FDAP. As one participant shared,

> '….I think it needs to be on, an accelerated bigger process of how we are allowing staff opportunities to research…' (CtR7,3)

That whilst a requirement that is generally apparent from the BC and CtR FG data, there was an awareness of the overarching mechanisms that determine the motivational direction of pedagogical focus. Organisational development for Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP) (DfBIS, 2015; QAA, 2019) ensures requirements are met to progress the college in the right direction. As such, awareness of the conditions of scholarship was apparent when,

> '… we've got FDAP and working towards taught level six, …. university status, I think … we're on a journey, and … probably still slightly towards the beginning of…' (CtR7,3)

Of the emergent discourse towards a more informed academic scholarship for research. As previously discussed, all participants acknowledged the movement within the CHE environment to fulfil the

scholarship requirements outlined by the QAA (2018) principles. However, not all participants were engaged in research for several reasons, with data from the BC and CtR FGs demonstrating the influence based on the college's CPD. The participants indicated that a keen interest in scholarship should not go unrecognised, as 27 participants gave their time to be involved. The BC and CtR FGs data suggest that CHE lecturers meet the QAA (2018) expectations to fulfil the scholarship requirements. Some participants expressed a different viewpoint.

> '… the research time, you know, I think the support for that is continually improving. But I think, you know, in the scheme of things looking forward to where we are going to be so the next 10 years, you know, we're still at the, kind of, the infancy of that, but we've come a long way…' (CtR7,2)

Individual scholarship approaches in the college encourage CHE lecturers, although currently there are no overarching academic guidelines to support the collective development. Unfortunately, the varied messages about the culture of research and scholarship is not as developed in HE as FE which could impact individuals CHE lecturers engagement with research (Gray et al., 2014). One participant summed up the dichotomy of the situation,

> '… my professional development as a researcher… the limitations put on me from the system and I think I put more beads because, I think I can accomplish more in this sector, than in teaching...' (BC FG1,1)

1.1   Bead Collage Focus Group 1: Participant 1

Variations surrounding the expectations of scholarship for the role were paramount for individual professional updating (Antunes Scartezini and Monereo, 2018; MEG, 2012). In contrast, another participant recognised engagement with external conferences as,

'… monumental for maintaining our professional development…' (BC FG8,2).

Overall, the BC and CtR FG data suggested a more transparent approach to address the expectation for fulfilling scholarship requirements, citing financial or time-dependent factors as an issue. Opportunities for research-related activities every day in universities highlighted the limitations of CHE. Child (2009) suggests that the relationship between scholarship and research continually shifts, potentially compromising CHE lecturers' professionalism. As one participant shared,

> '… when students are a little bit ahead of the game, from me, I'm like. Rather than congratulate them, I have got to the point now where I've kind of accepted that fact that I haven't got the time, and I'm only human, and I can't absorb every single bit of information possible.' (CtR4,3)

Perhaps indicating that an improving perception of pedagogical theory and practice is often needed. Whilst CHE lecturers endeavour to be the best informed, there are potential challenges to upholding scholarship in its many forms for influencing practice (Antunes Scartezini and Monereo, 2018; Smith & Walker, 2022).

Increasingly, CHE lecturers experience pressure from teaching observation on their practice whilst remaining research-active (Child, 2009; Feather, 2016). The FG discussions highlighted lecturers' role in fulfilling the myriads of tasks that placed unnecessary pressure and strain on them. One participant expressed frustration about the amount of administration required in their role:

> 'I think that I am chasing my tail, chasing my tail. I meant to be teaching, and I haven't got time because I know that I've got to; there's all these tasks in my inbox that I've got to fulfil before I do anything else.' (BC FG8,1)

Constantly juggling the CHE lecturer role with meeting the demands of HE in FE was expressed by four of the six participants,

> '… with FE and HE and juggling to the fact that the induction week is on for FE and HE in the same week is, definitely, this time, trying to be in two places at once.' (CtR7,1)

One participant found it was tiring to meet the personal and professional requirements of the role as a CHE lecturer, and that:

> '… you might drop one of those balls. And whether that is personally or professionally, that is really true to life that sometimes you might as hard as you try, you might drop for those balls, juggling…' (BC FG1,2)

1.2   Bead Collage Focus Group 1: Participant 2

It remains a challenge to ensure the boundaries between personal and professional work when taking work home to meet deadlines is often necessary.

> '… loads of different subjects and topic areas, because I teach across so many different programmes, so it's like juggling all of those. The bow, and the beads together are me and my students' (BC FG4,1)

4.1   Bead Collage Focus Group 4: Participant 1

CHE lecturers' role requires prioritising tasks to ensure they remain on top of their role, as described by a participant when they shared their bead collage:

> 'I'm although there is a knot at the top that holds us all together, which is like the college, I do feel that I am juggling way too much at the moment. Um, so for instance, I don't have

students going through degrees, but I have them about said that first endpoint assessment we don't know what this looks like …' (BC FG8,4)

Similarly, the Buffer-fly concept (Milner, 2017) (see Appendix 2 - The Buffer-fly Concept) illustrates the impact on an individual's identity when the thorax narrows, affecting the ability to innovate and flourish. Demonstrating that participants' responses in the BC and CtR FG felt there were unclear expectations with the CHE culture for scholarly activity from. There was acknowledgement by the participants for the continued updating to remain current in the subject area did support students' learning. The inconsistent financial support provided by college leadership resulted in

fewer participants engaging in research, reflected by the smaller number of responses. Perhaps this was, in part, due to the fledgling relationship following FDAP (Esmond, 2021) for the implementation for scholarship to be integrated fully into practice. The incorporation of a standard approach for scholarship funding to be available across the college was suggested to be a much-needed process to support CHE lecturers' in their research. Some suggestions for monitoring scholarship, which was integral to the appraisal process, included time constraints as a more important barrier than financial support not being in place.

'It is that whole work-life balance. I feel it. It's more work and no life. I feel that way, and I've said it in my appraisal.' (BC FG8,4)

Some individuals mentioned that, despite being involved in research like me, they found the amount of time needed during work hours to be 'overwhelming' (RD: 29). However, lecturers continued to feel internal pressure to meet sector requirements, whether self-imposed or due to the CHE culture. Irrespective of the perceived positive or negative relationship with scholarly activity (Boyd & Smith, 2016; Boyer, 1990; Buckley & Husband, 2020; Smith & Walker, 2022), participants shared their varied experience in the college for fulfilling CPD. Gray et al. (2014) purport that professional development could be and remains a personal matter.

'… your own personal development, which I think is also what scholarly activity is about.' (CtR3,3)

The participant observed that CPD can be for research and scholarship, emphasising self-development. In contrast, Cunliffe's (2018) opinion is that 'scholarship has been—and still is—viewed as the disembodied, dispassionate, intellectual pursuit of an expert enlightening those who need enlightening' (p.49). Nevertheless, even with a heightened awareness of scholarship, this remains an unsustainable practice for CHE lecturers (Archer, 2008; Gleeson et al., 2015). A CHE lecturer's role

remains distinctly different from that held within universities in the main surrounding research and scholarship engagement (Harwood & Harwood, 2004; Kreber, 2013). College leadership are keen to achieve FDAP with the kudos and financial benefits by there still remains ambiguity regarding the term scholarship. As one participant shared about scholarship and research endeavours potentially hampered by college systems.

> 'I think having the right mindset is important because I think, of course, there are limitations. And we all know the limitations, and if you just accept that, that's not the right place. That's it. You know, your development is finished' (CtR1,1)

Interpretation of scholarship is further complicated when CHE CPD is synonymous with the colleges' updating, reskilling requirements for all lecturers. Scholarship and CPD are provisions that resonate with the college's professional training requirements rather than the passion-inducing activities associated with self-discovery (Gray et al., 2014). Professional enhancement, individual agency or not, remains central to the continued CHE scholarship development (Smith & Walker, 2022; FETL, 2018). Perhaps suggesting that CHE lecturer's academic identity is linked to the relevance and engagement with scholarship activity by the college and lecturers.

The continual debate resounds with CHE lecturers often confused about their relationship with scholarship. The BC and CtR FG data presented a mixed response about the need for research engagement as part of their role. Perhaps, to maintain professionalism and relieve personal and professional pressures to fulfil college-directed CPD, lecturers could be renumerated with additional time for CHE scholarship activities in their contracts (Widdowson and King, 2018)

4.2.2   Influences on Practice

Frequently discussed in the FGs was the influence policy had on practice. CHE lecturers' role was regarded positively in relation to the FE lecturer role, due mainly to the freedom around the curriculum. Recognition of policy's impact on practice enabled 23 participants to acknowledge their significant role in the CHE environment. The overarching sentiment of the advantage of teaching in HE provides a sense of pride towards the role. When one participant compared their experience of another HEP their daughter attended,

'… her degree at ▮▮▮▮ last year, and some of the things that she's told me about the support […] made me seethe with rage, and I think you one of the universities that has a really good reputation, yet you are utterly letting down some of your students. We would not do that, so I feel quite proud about that aspect of it.'(BC FG6,4)

Perceptions about the CHE lecturer role varied in contrast to the expectations of university lecturers.

'To be honest, but I think these are maybe the people around and this with the different teams that we work in and across and then this is some boundaries potentially that we find within the way that we work and how we are situated in the wider world as well because college HE is quite unique because that's how we are perhaps perceived outside, by lecturers at other universities.' (BC FG7,1)

7.1   Bead Collage Focus Group 7: Participant 1

Despite the continued professional integrity measured through educational regulatory bodies, CHE professionals face increasing demands to meet sector directives (Feather, 2016; Smith & Walker, 2022). Particularly with the additional external associated tasks conflicting with the pedagogical needs, time and funding priorities create obstacles to meeting college and sector-designated scholarly engagement (Smith & Walker, 2022). The BC and CtR FG data suggested that the differentiated lecturer role perceptions demonstrated little comparison with the role of lecturers in universities. However, the BC and CtR FG data identified a common perspective about the unique position of CHE lecturers. In contrast to perceptions of university lecturers, surrounding workload and detachment from students in some cases due to larger class sizes combined with the commitment to research. One participant highlighted,

'Yeah… If they haven't got quite enough time to do their research activity, they're like, what's going on? What? We teach at least 15 hours a week, and they teach about five to six hours a week. We don't quite get the full HE experience, do we?' (CtR9,2)

Comparisons identified that the lecturing experience between CHE and the university exemplified in the BC and CtR FGs, suggesting the focus on student success displayed a contrast. Turner et al. (2009) indicated that focusing on student success provided a wider observable remit as crucial to a lecturer's role, noting that CHE teaching commitments can span FE and HE, as reflected in the BC and CtR FGs. Pedagogy-focused practice used a range of skills highlighted by seven participants as a positive endorsement, demonstrating their involvement perceived as two disciplines (Flavell et al., 2018). Smith and Walker (2011; 2022) emphasised the transition of scholarship between a lecturer and student in the learning environment as a natural development for HE students. All participants did not reflect this sentiment, with nine out of 27 acknowledging that they often struggle to meet the administrative requirements for both curriculum areas, using different pedagogical approaches (Burge et al., 2017). As displayed by a few participants below:

'We've also got 14 to 16, where you, you know, I think that FE mentality pervades everything….The HE conference was the day before. You know, not even remotely relevant to FE teaching, it just don't crop up, you know.' (CtR9,3)

The benefits of HE pedagogy include introducing engagement with scholarship, reading journal articles, and debating theory related to practice to enhance the student experience (Hökkä et al., 2012; Simmons et al., 2021). As one participant shared:

'… it can be quite difficult to focus on that particular part of the role.' (CtR5,4)

Scholarly engagement was regarded as a requirement to inform student discourse to maintain currency in their teaching but were not enjoyed by all participants. Eight participants cited the difficulties surrounding the FE-focused culture of the college. CHE lecturers experienced challenges when required to fulfil opposing tasks in their roles.

The BC and CtR FG data suggested a disparity in participants' expectations to assist a colleague in FE by all pulling together when required to meet the various deadlines for FE. However, there was little support from FE lecturers when there was a similar necessity in the HE curriculum area. One participant shared,

'I just think it's quite a complicated thing when you're working across different […] levels.' (BC FG4,2)

Illustrated their BC explaining how the colours represent the differences between the courses and levels,

'…, we have people that were definitely on the right course and set to go where they started off going and then there were people that might have been on the wrong course or on a slightly different course to what they should have been. So that's why we've got colours that mismatch with the courses and colours that go with the courses.' (BC FG3,2)

The BC and CtR FG data suggested that the expectation to teach both FE and HE programmes presented a strain for lecturers when students were not necessarily on the right path or course for them. Participants were frustrated with the dualism of lecturing in FE and HE as there was an expectation to meet the quality processes for both curriculum areas. Deem (2006) proposes that the combined curriculum challenges the CHE environment. It also suggested that the college's communication about the perceived workload imbalance was inconsistent. Commitment to scholarship for academic knowledge gained for the CHE lecturers' role was not always recognised.

'…the frustration for me is I know people working in universities, one of them in three papers that he's published was paid an additional amount of money from that University, of a significant sum, like thousands of pounds per paper that they're publishing because they recognise and value.' (BC FG8,4)

In contrast, the BC and CtR FG data suggested that participants were responsibly engaged in the HE curriculum. The autonomy of curriculum decisions, design and delivery were central aspects highlighted in the BC and CtR FG data. However, Healey et al. (2014b) suggest that CHE autonomy remains essential for establishing professional agencies to foster well-rounded, supportive scholarship that leads to a quality HE curriculum. Discussions about a pervading sense of independence in the FGs surrounded curriculum development. As one participant said,

'… we have more freedom and autonomy within our roles in terms of what we write, how we do it, our own research focus, and not having prescribed outcomes like research outputs, etc.' (BC FG2,1)
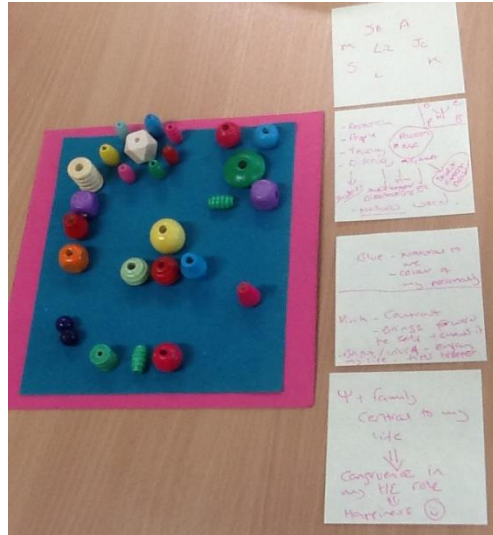
2.1   Bead Collage Focus Group 2: Participant 1

This sentiment was further endorsed by another participant who recognised that.

> 'The difference between being a lecturer in college and in, like, a university, is that I see
> myself more as a support network and obviously a lecturer, but it's more of a supportive
> atmosphere here than I think it is elsewhere.' (BC FG4,1)

Trust was highlighted as being valued around the decisions for module learning outcomes and

assessment. The CHE lecturers' expertise afforded them the knowledge to develop programmes over

several years whilst also earn the trust of leadership. In my experience the knowledgeable, reliable

CHE lecturers where often called on for their consideration for strategic development to sit on

committees. Capability to support learning procedures aligns with the ethical practices professionals

embed in their work, suggesting the autonomous decision-making develops the collective and the

individual (Benner, 1984; 1991). Participants directly involved in curriculum development felt trusted

to complete the role confidently which resonated in their pedagogy. As college systems offer a secure

environment, as one participant shared,

> 'I suppose the college or the college infrastructure includes lecturers and senior managers
> and the whole kind of support things and everything. (BC FG4,3)

Nevertheless, it could be argued that the knowledge gained before and during programme

development, either at module, course level or both, has been a helpful experience. The experience

gained from curriculum development benefits lecturers and students, establishing active learning for

all pedagogy involvement (Fung, 2017). Additionally, ensuring lecturers feel worthy (Gale et al., 2011)

and gain recognition for their work in creating a tangible product beneficial for the college. One participant shared,

> 'It's a little bit privileged. In the sense that, not that I've worked in FE or lower, but I guess that we have more freedom to do our own kind of thing in our own interpretation of the lessons in HE than what we would have in high school.' (BC FG6,4)

Contentment and a sense of pride surrounding HE curriculum development offer, a different feeling from organising the awarding body-specific FE curriculum and further demonstrating the individual professionalism associated with HE curriculum development, processes and management of course design (Sachs, 2016).

> 'I really enjoy my life; I feel that they all fit together well, and I love teaching the students.' (BC FG2,2)

The colleges' HE leadership's support for the quality processes in CHE was acknowledged even though not all participants viewed them favourably. The policies that HE structures had a beneficial influence on the HE curriculum design procedures. Positive views for the established systems, even in cases where CHE auditable quality processes were considered valuable and cognisant. However, participants shared an awareness of the accountability to the OfS (2020) to ensure the quality processes were in place. With one student sharing,

> 'Russell group universities have the same spread of responsibilities and the same impossible targets and the same, same nonsense that goes on…' (CtR8,1)

While the curriculum is identical, the accountable metrics are considered out of place within CHE. Contentment of being part of the CHE community was expressed when working on quality processes and policy highlighted factors associated for identity formation. As a participant shared about their contribution to the CHE community with research,

> '..it gives us immense freedom as well, you know, I can. I did something that was completely different to everybody else. But I feel that that's my role to do that, not to do a local history lesson like everybody else. But to do something entirely different..' (BC FG2,2)

The idea of freedom affording privilege, time and space for autonomous professional practice was an expected proviso for generating a sense of worth. Questioning the hierarchical (management/leadership framework) systems predominant in universities was regarded by five

participants out of 27 as being out of date. Instead, they preferred the way the college operates with less formal hierarchies, enabling lecturers to meet with leadership to discuss strategies for improvement. FETL (2018) highlights the beneficial impact of 'flexible hierarchies and informal structures developed within social spaces' (p.12). Indeed, the BC and CtR FG data suggested that most CHE leadership roles fostered a team-working environment conducive to challenging traditional approaches. The collegial team working environment in the CoP (Wenger, 1998) supported the connectivity expressed by 15 of the 27 participants. In addition, creative approaches for problem-solving are more likely to occur in settings where staff can challenge traditional methods without fear of sanction (FETL, 2018, p.13). Perhaps suggesting where there is an opportunity to engage in autonomous actions aids practice, as one participant described,

> 'Whereas I don't feel that we have that here. I feel that we have more freedom in terms of our role, and I feel like our opinions are valued regardless of our position.' (CtR6,1)

Strengthening the belief that freedom and autonomy bring about an indicative CoP empowers lecturers, students and curriculum (Cannizzo, 2018); the necessary personal and professional confidence flows into wider practices. As one participant described, because a,

> '… student develops, they succeed, they do what they need to do, and they, they become a whole, but not necessarily a whole in academia, because that's just one element, I think, of what we deliver in college HE because they achieve academically, but by doing so, they achieve on a very personal level, as well. And I think that's one of our key strengths. You know, we give them that confidence, that autonomy, you know, if you think about the students who joined us in September, they're not the same people who leave us at the end of the year and certainly not two years, and that's, that's affecting.' (BC FG3,3)

3.3   Bead Collage Focus Group 3: Participant 3

The values aligned to a smaller community ethos often sustain the supportive culture engendered in CHE, modelling student expectations in the organisation (Orr, 2013; Young, 2002). Indeed, the unique placement of CHE fosters an opportunity in local colleges to support students' Widening Perception (WP) agenda (DfE, 2019) and fulfil their potential.

4.2.3   Synergy of Practice

In CHE, there are times that require lecturers to reconcile their roles between and within HE and FE. Synergistically, CHE lecturers are compromised in their focus on the students, themselves and the organisation. Often the disparate focus experienced by CHE lecturers generates a wicked issue. Continually problem solving, adapting practices to ensure positive outcomes are achieved for students and the lecturers themselves (Simmons & Daley, 2013). Human interaction remains central for the WP agenda (Thompson, 2019) to be addressed. Often requiring CHE lecturers to adapt their practice creatively to meet student needs (Haywood, 2010). Rather than relying on the processes that drive the college, thinking beyond the mechanistic processes to remain humanistic (Blackman et al., 2006; Rittel & Webber, 1973). The CoP environment impact individual, practices, perceptions and interactions professionally and personally. Yet, despite offering a supportive student experience and the varying identified needs within the learning environment, nine of the 27 participants cited the debate around the dualized offer of both FE and HE curriculums in one organisation as problematic to navigate. One participant said,

> '... if we were split from FE, the focus would just be on our skills and what we do. And, how far do we go that extra mile continually for our students and our knowledge?' (CtR5,4)

However, the debate surrounding the benefits of CHE provision is an ongoing discussion that requires a working knowledge of the challenges experienced in the administration of diverse curricula (MEG, 2018; Parry et al., 2012). Kettley (2007) suggests that CHE in the community unites the inadequacy experienced by students with the introduction of WP. Pedagogical support in CHE provision is often negated within other educational settings (Parry, 2012), especially regarding the breadth of impact students experience. All the participants shared a keen focus on supporting students in academic development, individually making a difference to build confidence for empowering personal growth. This was expressed in the BCs, with seven participants representing students at the centre of their collages. One participant used beads to represent a tree, illustrating how nurturing students could build confidence and development academic success.

'… this is meant to be the planet Earth, or me as mother earth… nurturing this plant or this flower or tree or whatever, which are the students …, they bud and hopefully, with what I give them with what I input them if they go on and they … pursue the career that they want to…' (BC FG8,2)

8.1 Bead Collage Focus Group 8: Participant 1

Impactfully demonstrating how the BC and CtR FG data connected CHE lecturers' roles with the curriculum learning environment illustrated in this collage. Foremost, teaching is to understand pedagogy with a clear plan of the delivery of the subject that supports the modes of assessment for measuring learning (Coffield & Edward, 2009; Donovan, 2019). Suggestions that interpretations for curriculum be a valuable element aligned to a lecturer's experience, researcher or not, should be derived from the knowledge of underpinning principles of pedagogy (Fung, 2017). Therefore, the art of teaching with the pedagogical sessional delivery must be appropriate for the level and curriculum (Wilson & Wilson, 2011). QAA (2018) and Ofsted (2019) support the delivery and content of sessions and lecturer and student interaction throughout the learning process. The disunity of pedagogical subject knowledge can foster problems, especially when combined with curriculum content central to all lecturer's lived experiences (Gravett & Ajjawi, 2021). As Newman (1854/1982) suggested, the idea of a university is to spread and extend knowledge rather than personally advance. Newman (1854/1982) did not see why a university should have students if its sole purpose was for scientific and philosophical discovery. Removing barriers to learning, perceived or otherwise, is significant in developing the HE curriculum since the Foster Review of the FE college landscape (2005) reinforce the participants' views about the learning opportunities.

Supportive curriculum design ensures students develop a critical appreciation of the subject knowledge (Coffield & Edward, 2009; Donovan, 2019). The BC and CtR FG data recognised the

importance of maintaining the learning environment, including engagement with the students' academic curriculum. Nevertheless, an appreciation of the perspectives surrounding student expectations for teaching a curriculum to feel the importance of the role can be underpinned theoretically by appropriate research with practical application of pedagogy (Kim et al., 2021). As one participant considered,

> '... you've got your scheme of work; you've got your curriculum. But you never quite know how things are going to go and how things are going to work. I like that kind of challenge and the way things develop. And also, that kind of influence that you can have the sharing of knowledge and passion, for me is massive.' (BC FG6,4)

The human connection to the CHE curriculum is not unique. Connection to a curriculum is evident in all teaching, contributing to the pedagogical advancement of human beings (Rogers, 1961/2004). Widdowson and King (2018) acknowledged the difficulty of conveying a completely distinctive pedagogy for teaching HE in FE. Reconciling the two different approaches in FE colleges does often present challenges as illustrated by one participant when they describe their role in collage form.

> '…the line and the two squares, represents me and, actually, me in FE and HE and, the difficulty between the two…'(BC FG4,1)

All the participants believed how impactful their actions were when teaching their students, as evident from the data displayed during the shared reflections. One participant considered that,

> '… generally, you know, we're the curriculum experts; we're the ones who teach and develop and keep this place going.' (CtR3,3)

As a standalone comment from the BC and CtR FG data, there was a general sentiment about the impact lecturers had on their students, pedagogy and engagement with research. Despite the apparent challenges surrounding the transference from pedagogy to research and vice versa, there was a consensus from the BC CtR FG and RD data about the value of the CHE lecturing role. As Healey et al. (2014b) contend, the link between research-informed lecturers indicates that research leads to students becoming researchers. Integrating knowledgeable lecturers teaching from their own experience reinforces scholarship in pedagogy (Smith & Walker, 2021; 2022), leading to evidence-informed teaching and learning.

QAA (2019) insists that a lecturer's currency should be informed in/by their subject through regular industry activity or scholarship. Together, the annual module guide revision or updating for schemes

of learning and reading lists are all forms of scholarship (Boyer, 1990; Smith & Walker, 2022). Indeed, updating module guides facilitates the maintenance of knowledge on behalf of lecturers, outlining a plan for scheduled module delivery (Smith & Walker, 2022). Unfortunately, not all lecturers regard the annual amendment of module guides as a scholarly activity. From the BC and CtR FG and RD data, participants provided their thoughts about completing module guide writing as an impactful action to engage students. However, the BC and CtR FG data did suggest that module guide completion was not deemed distinct from their engagement of academic scholarship; instead, it is a lecturer's job. Alternatively, participants discussed the revision of module guides as a requirement for module development rather than an incorporation of scholarship informing the development of new reading lists. Smith and Walker (2021; 2022) highlight that activities surrounding scholarship are often interpreted subjectively by lecturers as they establish varied responsibilities for the delivery of their modules. Whilst not the case for all the participants, one shared their connectivity with the preparation of pedagogical materials outlined that,

> 'The stars in these circles are modules if you like. They get components. I've got for these little blocks here, which is the base of the tower. So those are the main pillars really of knowledge, understanding and application.' (BC FG3,1)

3.1   Bead Collage Focus Group 3: Participant 1

Again, this represents the importance placed on the delivery of the module as a supportive construct for CHE learning. Alongside the necessary skills and knowledge required, the designation of lecturers can and does have political implications (Gleeson et al., 2015). Indeed, fulfilling the job role requirements is vital for maintaining the individual's sense of worth and value as an employee (Bathmaker et al., 2003; Bathmaker & Avis, 2005).

The appointment of qualified lecturers to deliver a particular module is only sometimes pedagogically appropriate for the subject delivery and students. The BC CtR FG and RD data suggested that there was a proficient level of knowledge and understanding about the processes in place to support the appointment of lecturers; one participant voiced,

> 'You have to be approved to be module leader, and we keep the same, the same modules; that's not even close. I've had about six or eight different modules in the last four or five years. And I got a masters in sociology, and the next best-qualified person below that is someone who has a sociology minor on their degree and next level down has A levels.' (CtR9,2)

There is no formal module leader approval process in the college. The decision is made based on their experience, first degree and possibly, if applicable, their master's degree will be considered. The lecturer's previous experience also supports the decision-making process to assign modules to the individual. Decisions about the contentious module allocation for lecturers impact a lecturer's sense of self, confidence, and commitment to the college (Walker & Gleaves, 2016). Indeed, in conjunction with a CHE lecturer's commitment to developmentally increasing subject specialism annually, they are also supporting their students. The BC CtR, FG, and RD data demonstrated the importance of module and programme development on lecturers' relationship with their module teaching. There is an expectation that individual ownership will be formed when there is a personal and professional investment in an activity (Billett & Pavlova, 2005). The selection of individuals for the role of leading a module was in alignment with their subject knowledge. Inevitably leads to increasing a lecturer's motivation for the subject and module, as outlined by the following participant,

> 'I wrote that module... it's central to all my beliefs' (BC FG2,2)

Participants' personal and professional connection to the pedagogical content and delivery maintained the importance of their unique relationship with students. With a developed professional sense of self, drawing on the innate personal sensibilities and expertise required for programme development, lecturers can remain true to themselves (De Hei et al., 2015). These insightful links between student and curriculum design instil agency in students in their more expansive programme of study, with the credibility of lecturers (Smith & Walker, 2022). Pedagogical practices could be evidence of the differences between universities and CHE.

Traditionally, university research has been perceived to be of higher importance than teaching (Healey et al., 2014b). The current drive for CHE to have their foundation degree and TDAP (DfBIS,

2015; QAA, 2019) directly contradicts a pedagogy-based appraisal evidenced in the FGs. Organisations need to enter the realm of academic credibility, with little consideration or ramifications of the ethos, culture and development required to pursue an avenue of practice (Orr, 2013). Beath et al. (2012) suggest that considering the current CHE environment stresses a lecturer's professional identity. When addressing pedagogical changes in universities, the perception of teaching, instead of research, is regarded as having a lower status (Beath et al., 2012; Smith & Walker, 2022). However, TEF's (2018) role for the assessment of quality teaching and learning in HEPs, refocused the importance of pedagogy. Therefore, to remain grounded in the processes whilst also maintaining student support for their success required effort, as explained one participant,

> 'I have a student flying a kite, holding onto the kite string off in the sky to their chosen occupation… held and grounded in the structures and processes of the college.' (BC FG7,2)
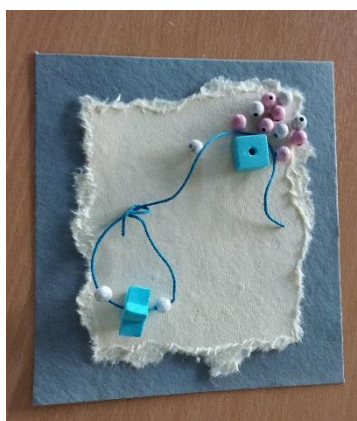
7.2   Bead Collage Focus Group 7: Participant 2

Although knowledge and expectations for a lecturer's engagement with academic activity are present, incorporating scholarship into everyday practices remains to be seen as habitually accepted by all.

The BC CtR, FG, and RD data suggested a clear distinction about how expectations of scholarship are incorporated into the participant's daily tasks. Similarly, mixed views were shared about the leadership's understanding of how scholarship-informed research was relevant for CHE. As one participant,

'… found to an extent, that the management […], promoted scholarly activity, but haven't really put in a framework for any recognition or to facilitate the actual doing of it.' (CtR3,3)

There will always be tensions between leadership decisions and how the decisions impact teaching and learning in education. However, questions must be asked when there is a lack of understanding about the link between scholarship and pedagogical development. Regulatory cuts often impede how money is spent to improve business (Auger, 2019). Therefore, how lecturers are supported to conduct scholarly activities is further affected.

The sector faces budgetary restrictions when it comes to providing funds for the professional development of individual staff members (Cordingley, 2015). These restrictions are specific to professional development for CHE, and as a result, many requests for CPD are declined due to budget constraints. This can hinder research efforts (Healey et al., 2014b). It is recognised that a lecturer's willingness to engage in CPD can significantly contribute to the institution's growth (Gray et al., 2014). However, acknowledging CPD is often subject to internal processes and procedures (Buckley & Husband, 2020). This presents a difficulty in understanding the process and prioritises experienced. One participant said that,

'I think that in terms of a HE, that's the significance, you know, because I think a lot of HE staff would you like to do the research would like to really kind of motivate themselves and their students' (CtR3,3)

Nevertheless, the empowerment of a lecturer's academic pursuits often overcomes policy constraints with innovative ways to engage in research. Echoed in the same CtR3 FG by another participant who shared,

'.., I'm involved in some research at the moment, which isn't resulting in any qualifications, or even really enhancing my academic identity in the college, because it's a random area that I I'm not teaching at all. But I still feel that that's a really valuable process. And it's still contributing to my professional identity.' (CtR3,2)

The desire to pursue knowledge to enhance individual curiosity often motivates research engagement even when the organisation does not support it. However, not all scholarship is research, reflected in Boyer's (1990) concept of scholarship, CHE lecturers' engagement is often connected to individual knowledge development aligned to student centred pedagogy. Acknowledging the benefits of

research outside of the college demonstrates the impact on the individual participant to be engaged in scholarship for themselves (Gray et al., 2014).

4.2.4   The Politics of College Higher Education

Internal politics are rife in the professional working environment (Gleeson et al., 2015). The BC, CtR FG, and RD data suggested a strong narrative surrounding the development of some curriculum areas and the management and restructuring of departments. Indeed, 12 of the 27 participants acknowledged that the CHE lecturer role accorded a heightened awareness of processes and politics within the college. Appreciation varied around understanding the differences in management styles for leadership to inform the curriculum development around the college (Gale et al., 2011). Any organisational change for curriculum design and development emphasises links to individual departments, with a distinct identification for individual professional development.

The transparency of the aspiration for HE in the college was acknowledged in the BC and CtR FGs and RD data. Affirmation of a lecturer's roles and responsibilities has evolved over the years, drawing on the sector's experience and modelling the role of lecturers in HEPs (Simmons & Lea, 2013). Separate buildings to distinguish the teaching focus between FE and HE have been introduced to maintain good CHE practices. The participants' perceptions of the physical place of HE sessional delivery were acknowledged during the FGs. As participants openly discussed the situation of HE within the college as an environmental distinction. Since building the university centre, the change distinguished HE and FE teaching environments, demarcating a difference in attitude, focus and curriculum (Healey et al., 2014a). CHE presents a supportive environment for HE students to gain university experience in a smaller setting (Parry, 2012). Due to the student numbers (approximately 600) in CHE at the college, the environment is more conducive to smaller class sizes to reflect the provision, leading to more significant support. As suggested below by a couple of the participants, the CHE environment is,

> '... a university but maintains support for students, which is quite nice.' (BC FG3,3)

and that

> '... the students that I did talk to wanted the different style community; they didn't want it to be a traditional University. They wanted the support we offer.' (BC FG6,4)

England's CHE environment is unique, with only 170 FE colleges providing undergraduate courses registered with OfS (AOC, 2024). This contrasts with 285 UK universities registered with the OfS in 2022 (OfS, 2024a). Suggesting that the inclusive CHE environment at the college contributed to students' learning, one participant shared,

> '... there's quite a lot of people say mature students, that's quite instrumental about their learning.' (BC FG6,4)

However, ten participants of 27 did not communicate positive thoughts about the FE and HE's association in the college, with one participant suggesting that,

> '...., we are in an FE situation, environment, but we are teaching HE that's the problem you've got because you're going to if you have still have to deal with the FE side of things, which I think takes up more of my time than my HE because I've, the students are more demanding. So, it's quite difficult, I think because we are, HE, HE, but in an FE environment.' (BC FG8,4)

Depiction of CHE adopting vibrant imagery created during the bead collage technique represented elements of the teaching environment. A positive picture was shared and reflected on; the participant was not the only one to view CHE positively. The conflicting narrative about HE in FE was situationally complex, as highlighted below,

> 'Just because out of the colours that's the most vibrant and I think that represents the environment, I think, the learning environment that we, kind of, operate within, because I think there are lots of opportunities and lots of different areas are covered in different ways. And the outer scatterings if you like. Those are, again, those represent all the different curriculums and the different specialisms and the different career opportunities, all the different possibilities outside of the college environment, which our learners progress on to.' (BC FG4,3)

4.3   Bead Collage Focus Group 4: Participant 3

HE Perceptions arose in the BC, CtR FG and RD data demonstrating the position of CHE in the wider
nationwide remit of HEPs. Despite the geographical difference in the location of sessional delivery,
there was still awareness of the displacement of CHE. One participant shared that at the college,

> 'HE in FE is kind of at the beginning of gaining credibility within academia, and we are
> perceived by some places as neither one thing nor the other, no fish no foe.' (BC FG6,4)

This signifies how misunderstanding about the environmental/social positionality of HE in FE on the
wider community, in the locality, or nationally links to government representation and acknowledged
CHE within the sector (157 Group, 2012). Feather (2011) accepts that the miscommunication has led
to the hybrid HE curriculum in FE being unknown in the community. Further, the misconception of HE
in FE, in the local community, has been acknowledged as being the norm rather than an odd fit.
Suggesting that change and altering attitudes within education have always been and will continue to
challenge CHE in local communities (Simmons & Lea, 2013). One participant reflected,

> '… for me, this is the unique nature for me, of HE in FE because we don't come necessarily
> to such specialist backgrounds, so we are a bit broader in that sense, and slightly more
> skilled in that respect.' (CtR4,3)

Again, the data collected from BC and CtR BCs and RD reflected CHE with a pedagogical focus on
aspects of the learning environment. Indeed, the impact of teaching is dominant, including the skills
acquired to inform practical subject knowledge outlined by the WP agenda (DfE, 2019). CHE offers

students who would only sometimes envisage themselves working towards or gaining a foundation or honours degree. Recognition of the position of lecturers has been acknowledged with pride when considering individual students' struggles, achievements, and completion of their degrees (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005). Distinctively positioned as an observer, moderator, and collaborator could enrich CHE lecturers' role in their pedagogy (Simmons & Lea, 2013). The BC and CtR BCs and RD data suggested the importance of the nurture lecturers give in the CHE environment to empower students to fulfil their potential, simultaneously enabling lecturers to model their experiences as lifelong learners. While not reflected by all participants in the data, there is the suggestion that the CHE culture does necessitate support and empowerment to for all students to thrive. As these individual participants voice some of the mechanisms that enable this to happen:

> 'I think it's exciting because we are progressing and going towards that university status and things like that. So, it is exciting when you have all these things, and you can see where they are going. It's quite a good place to work.' (CtR7,3)

Participants echoed positive feelings about the environment,

> 'You don't get that feeling of being in an academic place. I get that but I think you are always trying to have. They try to have some sort of, you know, kind of feeling, and I get that.' (CtR9,3)

Whereas the overarching team ethos cultivated perhaps through the CoP at the college resonates,

> '… we develop our identity as a team, and then as a college and a university…' (CtR6,1)

The support students experience in their engagement whilst learning as part of the WP agenda is much more than just academic (Thompson, 2019; DfE, 2019). The BC, CtR FG and RD data indicated that the college's journey of travel to gain more extraordinary awarding powers to support students in their course choices was positive. However, the BC, CtR FG, and RD data revealed that the importance of student progress in reaching their learning aspirations is often combined with a confident approach to seeking new learning opportunities. As Esmond and Wood (2017) suggest, CHE offers vocational expertise to develop contextual knowledge for wider society. Therefore, the role of CHE has a far greater reach than possible, as conceived with the evolving curriculum students offer to undertake the following steps on the learning journey.

The close-knit college environment resonated with the CoP purported by Wenger (1998) as a shared community ethos. Based on leadership expectations, the BC, CtR FG, and RD data suggested a mixed understanding of the CHE lecturing role. Conflict can occur between senior leadership decisions about the pedagogical practices and the autonomy of lecturers to manage their learning environment (Briggs, 2017). The BC, CtR FG and RD data highlighted the divisive aspect of the leadership team when there is often limited contemporary pedagogical practice to inform lecturer guidance. At times, the management or the learning environment conflicts with the pedagogical direction of lecturers (Wilson & Wilson, 2011).

Perceptions abound about how management decisions deal with many requests, tasks, and requirements to be fulfilled by lecturers (Gleeson et al., 2015). The BC, CtR FG and RD data revealed perceptions about interactions with management. The views encapsulated directives towards CHE curriculum design and pedagogy beyond departmental requirements for management/leadership. The contextual structure of college governance raised challenges for CHE lecturers managed by separate departments (Simmons & Lea, 2013). Therefore, the interpretations of strategic leadership from one department to another can and does differ, even though all should be united in their commitment to HE procedures.

Nevertheless, it is not a unique presentation of CHE. Lecturers in FE are managed departmentally based on curriculum (Briggs, 2017). Given the pressures of lecturer allocation, recruitment, and daily business, lecturers often experience tensions when they are accountable for the perceptions between the two leadership strands (Feather, 2011). One such point highlighted from the BC and CtR FG data was the allocation and retention of lecturers with the required knowledge base recruited to support the pedagogical development of curricula. Leadership decisions impacted the delivery and development of the curriculum; participants revealed their experiences with lecturer recruitment in their areas. Difficulties faced by leadership acknowledged in BC and CtR FGs data when there was a lack of consideration for specialists to cover sessions. Limited staff members in a team resulted in cover requirements for sessions falling to non-experts due to timetable restrictions.

The overall CHE management in any college is about the flow of monies in each area, where the resource is required for quality processes to ensure the curriculum matches the awarding body specification (QAA, 2019). Controversially, the different CHE roles and titles, like in all organisations,

and decision-making requirements at all levels of management can feel restrictive (FETL, 2018). Requirements for ensuring the quality of provision from one perspective can differ from another. As such, some participants highlighted staff allocation for specific module content as problematic. The contentious issue was acknowledged to be around the money and expertise of a given member of the staff team. Difficulties arose when the management structures were obligated to complete timetabling based on their specific needs, isolated from the requirements of the given curriculum. Staff members,

> 'I had a chat yesterday so looking at things and I've approached one of our partner organisations to source some staff. Could you let us know if you have any staff to potentially teach this one module? Could you come back to me with the price? And I mentioned it to a senior manager and the response was, you don't ask that question, you tell them we will pay £28 an hour because this is what we pay an hourly lecturer.' (BC FG8,4)

Without the oversight of a designated CHE management system in place, the allocation of staffing, monies and timetabling can encumber the administration of quality processes being correct (QAA, 2018). Narratives surrounding the clarity of leadership decision-making processes acknowledged how often the budget disparity is spent across departments. Some of the points raised by the participants included budgeting for the coming year, staffing, overtime fees, and utilities to cover overheads (Kok & McDonald, 2017), communication issues when the overall message from leadership was about maintaining quality student experiences. Therefore, when presented with the information about limited funding available for individual scholarship activities, there was confusion. Often, questioning the CHE leadership decisions to meet business needs and negate lecturers' values, beliefs, and knowledge to facilitate and deliver a quality curriculum (Feather, 2011). The mismatched curriculum design and implementation approach highlighted the disparity between management overheads and lecturer knowledge and skills being fully utilised efficiently. Challenging business decisions regarding curriculum management choices for timetabling lecturers with appropriate expertise overshadowed (Kok & McDonald, 2017). The participants often expressed that timetabling, without consideration of the required expertise, could have a detrimental impact on quality provisions outlined by regulators and awarding bodies, such as the QAA (2024) and OfS (2020).

Disparity around the CHE lecturer role was questioned as there was a general feeling of disingenuous decision-making about the individuals chosen to lecture HE. Distinctions were drawn between lecturers qualified to focus on HE in the college and those allocated an FE timetable or both. A sense

of distance has been created between FE and HE curriculum delivery in CHE, leading to a noticeable difference (Feather, 2010). As one participant's response sums up the feeling,

> 'When we were in the office, three quarters of an hour ago, talking about something that looked like a mermaid. So that must of triggered that off in my mind, and I was thinking, academic identity, HE in FE, sort of, between two worlds.' (BC FG6,1)
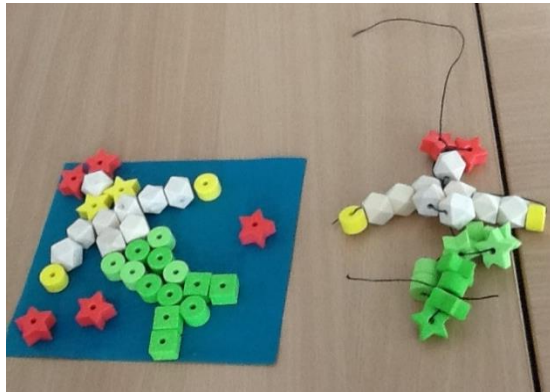
6.1   Bead Collage Focus Group 6: Participant 1

In addition, physical and perceived divisions between the FE and HE courses were found to contribute to cultural disorientation, the sense of separation throughout the college promoted distinct ideals, goals, and agendas frequently operated in CHE (Feather, 2011). Influential for lecturer's identity is personal interpretation of the differences within the college's CHE culture. With minimal differentiation, CHE lecturers perceive their roles to be more than delivering instruction and learning (Feather, 2016; Skelton, 2012) contributing to the college system. Nevertheless, the confusion creates difficulty for CHE lecturers to confidently equate the expectations of their role with the pedagogical requirements to be scholarly active without financial support (King & Widdowson, 2013b).

4.2.4.2 Contractual agreements

The BC, CtR FG, and RD data revealed that participants had the opportunity for regular research and scholarly engagement, finding the balance to be more consistent with their CHE lecturer role. Two aspects highlighted the contractual obligations of lecturers to focus on pedagogy and scholarship, whether in FE, HE or a mixture of both. The current structures make it challenging to incorporate research management into the CHE lecturer's role (MEG, 2012; Wilson & Wilson, 2011). Many participants voiced concerns about college lecturer contracts, stating that the perceived discrepancy between the FE and HE obligations was often unclear. Embedded in CHE provision in a culture of FE

(Young, 2002), the HE scholarship requirements are more complicated. 12 participants of 27 viewed lecturer contracts as not commensurate with the HE pedagogical focus of their workload. However, universities are expanding their teaching-focused roles to meet the improved advancement of student experience and quality teaching (Simmons et al., 2021; Tierney et al., 2020), moving closer to the CHE pedagogical model. Smith and Walker (2022) recognise the disparity between expectations of CHE lecturers' time for scholarship and teaching from their research in traditional universities also being problematic. Alternatively, one participant articulated a positive outlook on the current contractual obligations,

> 'But there needs to be recognition that the job roles are different. And you could have two contracts; they need to look different. But not necessarily but try not to create one where there isn't a power imbalance because otherwise, you start creating the hierarchy within typical universities. And I think that's our strength, that we have here.' (CtR6,1)

Perceived challenges with the mechanisation of the college system were openly discussed, but this created minimal discontent. Young (2002) identified an apparent organisational deficit in CHE's management of the HE workload-associated activities. The relaying of messages to lecturers is often problematic. These perceived inequalities of expectation were shared, suggesting a blurring of the role,

> '... that's one of the things... I put that the challenge in roles and the expectations of both and meeting both and flitting between both quite rapidly.' (CtR5,4)

Highlighting confusion from the clarity of a CHE lecturer's role becomes stymied in recognition of the development to establish roles and responsibilities for professional identities (Kensington-Miller et al., 2015; Wood et al., 2016). Due to the misinterpretation of roles and responsibilities being at the behest of leadership depending on a lecturer's skills, knowledge, and acumen, the perceived division between HE and FE workload was discussed among the participants.

The need for balance and equilibrium in educational arenas is increasingly vital, considering the growing power imbalance experienced between teachers and FE lecturers in the current UK education system (Berger, 2011). To support a power balance, minimum apparent, real or imagined barriers to equality must be addressed within education. The BC, CtR FG and RD data suggest a perceived deficit of power when participants were requested to fulfil timetabled sessions with little or no prior knowledge of the subject. However, they expressed feelings of being compromised. The juxtaposition of organisational culture in CHE surrounds the challenge of timetabling for a curriculum

with the skillset of lecturers (FETL, 2018; Simmons & Lea, 2013). Seven participants of 27 highlighted their concerns about the expectation to cover absent lecturers. Participants cited the difficulties for subject specialists to cover modules or delivery, coupled with the challenge of 'time out' of teaching for lecturers to conduct research for scholarship (OfS, 2020; QAA, 2018). The remitted hours/roles were agreed upon individually with line managers. Participants cited an irregularity in practice as some teaching remittances for research requests were refused.

Additional tasks are undocumented on contracts within all job roles. All the participants expressed disquiet about the additional time, energy, and effort spent on fulfilling additional tasks without recognising their contribution to the college. Fourteen participants rationalised their career perceptions as they expressed the pressures to progress their role with the given workload (Smith & Walker, 2022). The BC, CtR FG and RD data suggest the range and volume of teaching involved in HE-focused curriculum responsibilities versus FE contracts were disproportionately unmanageable, particularly with lecturers' contractual teaching hours being approximately 800 per academic year, depending on remitted roles. Remitted roles are contracted, which include additional responsibilities tagged onto existing contracts (Widdowson & King, 2018). In some cases, these roles enabled lecturers to gain a sense of appreciation for their professional development. Engagement in college-wide initiatives or contracted roles reduced the number of teaching hours based on the accrued responsibilities for a given role.

Eight participants of 27 shared that their engagement with scholarship activities evolved around the funding received to undertake higher-level qualifications. These included financial support for masters, External Examiner roles within the Advance HE and other associated qualifications. The BC and CtR FGs data suggested a need for more consistency with the offer to undertake additional qualifications. Engagement with associated scholarship in academic research contributed to additional pressure; participants cited a link between the expectation for completing associated academic research and outputs in their own time. The BC and CtR FG data suggest that continued tensions around the role of a CHE lecturer equates to the whole college, especially when FE lecturers are expected to engage in different scholarly activities. Whereas the need to remain relevant is central to all teaching, professional updating required for diverse levels of teaching differs accordingly and is particularly relevant for lecturing vocational courses (Foster, 2005; MEG, 2012). The contradictory point considers the engagement for research-focused activities to be undertaken individually for professional development. Given the BC and CtR FG and RD, data present that a

lecturer's CPD output has not always been equitable for encompassing professional skills updating scholarship, whether linked to industry or college updates.

The concept of CHE lecturing differs from the contractual agreement outlined in the job description. The BC, CtR FG and RD data indicated an awareness of other FE colleges; none were cited directly, and separate contracts were introduced to reflect lecturers' distinct roles in their organisation. Eight participants of 27 cited that the variation of duties required for the CHE lecturing role made them consider working in a university to have less diverse responsibilities. However, as one participant suggested,

> 'We're lecturers but expected to do academicy type stuff and it's not recognised within our titles and like you say our paperwork or our contracts. So, where does that come from within us where we feel that we should do that or does, or it is the pressures from outside?' (CtR5,1)

This implies that the difficulties experienced when reconciling CHE's academic identity to meet the research scholarship activities are often limited to individual engagement. Indeed, the contractual angle to determine a lecturer's position does not currently indicate research engagement as a necessity but rather an additional extra to enhance the role. However, given the pressure to fulfil the research quota in universities, CHE does not adhere to performativity based on output. Reflected in one participant's comment,

> '... we're not going to have our contracts reneged for not producing research, because, and because I don't feel that there's the hierarchy that exists within universities and around professional identity.' (CtR6,1)

A unique perspective demonstrated an undefined response to the value of either demarcating the CHE lecturing role with the recognition of those engaged solely in HE pedagogy versus those who do a small amount of both or only FE.

Unfortunately, the impact of CPD requirements is communicated by HE lecturers' actions, language, and CPD-related activities, which are not fully considered (King & Widdowson, 2009). 14 participants of the 27 suggested feeling undervalued by leadership in the college.

> '... so, the expectation is that we're going to behave and perform as HE staff, but in a very much a FE environment where there isn't any funding, and you've got a sort of scribble and scrape, and there's no additional time.' (CtR5,4)

And

> '… organisationally, I'm not sure that we're valued as academic staff.' (CtR3,3)

All CHE lecturers, irrespective of teaching level or responsibility, must have a workable knowledge of the college systems and continually monitor, record and flag student progress, as necessary. The fulfilment of CPD targets is reviewed annually, with lecturers responsible for recording CPD activity throughout the academic year. Twenty-one CPD days are allotted annually for each full-time lecturer, with seven of the days outlined with college-focused activities. Compared with other CHEs, the CPD time/days allocation is considered generous. One participant shared,

> 'I don't always feel like that, but this week, I feel like that as well, with CPD week when everything is FE apart from one day. Where we have to cram everything into five hours.' (CtR8,3)

However, attitudes towards CPD were not considered positively by all participants.

> 'It's also the expectation on the study side of things' (BC FG8,4).

When considered in the wider CoP, there was some dissatisfaction, with one participant revealing,

> 'So, our salaries are all the same, but I think perhaps expectations on us, as HE teachers, to do more HE type stuff, be researchers, but it's really difficult because I love that I find that that adds to my identity, that adds to my job role if someone took that away from me said please don't do that.' (CtR5,1)

Again, in the same FG, the direction of the discussion can be seen to spiral from the positive outlook above to an opportunity to share the disgruntled view of another participant in the FG,

> 'There must be the student expectation there as well because the expectation is when you're standing in front of a class, and a new class, that they have a new module that you want to do new stuff and I suppose that's just a pride thing as well, isn't it?' (CtR5,4)

Continued discussion within the same FG with another participant voiced their perception of the CHE lecturer role. Expectations of the role combined with the responsibilities to fulfil CPD remit of scholarship continued to be a contentious topic with participants.

In 2012, in Shaping the Future: Opportunities for HE provisions, FE colleges (MEG) reported a mixed response from CHE about contractual changes for staff only to deliver HE. Two perspectives about

lecturers' roles and expectations are linked to their contracts. Some participants discussed the role disparity, as highlighted earlier in the above section. However, insight shared about any potential changes to lecturer contracts,

> 'It is interesting, just in my section, noticing how many other colleges are starting to go towards having separate contracts with people that start in FE.' (BC FG8,4)

Whereas within the discussion, one participant acknowledged:

> '…. we first started doing HE, the point at the time was people, they didn't want people to have different contracts, whether they taught FE or HE, so there wasn't, kind of, like that, again, that creating an imbalance of power of one over another, etc…' (BC FG2,2)

Identifying the benefits and negatives surrounding the contractual obligations of CHE lecturers is challenging (Widdowson & King, 2018), considering there are such varied perspectives about entitlement, responsibilities and CHE lecturer contracts. The only constant in the discussion was the opportunity to openly voice concerns or celebrate CHE lecturers' opportunities, whatever the current political agenda.

4.2.4.3 The Business needs of CHE

The increased businessification of education generates additional pressure for lecturers to have greater awareness of the organisation's business needs (Shukry, 2017). Despite a lecturer's pedagogical focus, there remains frustration with the ongoing administration of their courses. The participants directly accountable for student outcomes expressed exasperation towards the required monitoring of student numbers, retention, attainment and success. However, 21 participants of 27 shared their desire to continue to have a pedagogical focus rather than be accountable for the business. However, there was an overarching recognition from the participants surrounding the business administration required to support students from behind the scenes. The four participants in management roles (indicated in Table 3, p. 108) acknowledged the complexity of the administrative role,

> 'I have to carry more admin and rules and regulations.' (CtR2,3)

Hökkä et al. (2012) suggest that an adaptive change to maintain quality student experiences has become increasingly difficult for lecturers to manage. The internal and external policies demand the lecturer's attentiveness to the changes in practice for pedagogy, and administration processes are

more challenging to meet. Many participants viewed the added challenge of meeting the increased tasks as a compromise to the time allotted for the responsibilities. Lamont and Nordberg (2014) argue that a lecturer's professional role becomes less distinct with the continual shift of responsibilities allocated to them. Requiring lecturers to navigate a distinct perspective towards their role and additional tasks decreases autonomy to be professionally accountable.

Trouble ensues when the workload expectations conflict with the individual ethics. Given the organisation's business requirements, individuals often address negotiables and non-negotiables to maintain continued services (Downey et al., 2014). Expressed eloquently by one participant when discussing the FE and HE curriculum,

> '.. that just takes a different psyche. I think that's why I sometimes struggle. In an ideal world we'd just be immersed in one or the other.' (CtR9,3)

This participant's dissatisfaction was a sentiment expressed by the majority of the participants in consideration of meeting all the requirements of a CHE academic role. Although the participant's scholarship is difficult to achieve, overloaded timetabled events are considered challenging. Participants with roles primarily focused on pedagogy, rather than those in management positions, expressed dissatisfaction with the divisiveness of the role.

> 'If you're going to overload the timetables, we will all achieve great teaching because we work flipping hard to do that, we are all doing research in terms of our methods, and we are doing in our teaching.' (CtR5,4)

Gale et al. (2011) and Smith and Walker (2022) acknowledge that differences between timetable allocations were perceived to be vastly diverse between lecturers. The BC and CtR data demonstrated the perceived challenge of working between FE and HE. Most participants voiced difficulties reconciling work commitments for both practice areas, with little acknowledgement from senior leadership as a continual challenge. Seven participants expressed dissatisfaction about the timetable remittance for teaching HE, expectations to engage in research, and time constraints for locating evidence-informed resources. Eight participants expressed that the research supported their pedagogy positively,

> 'I like carrying out [research] and for that to be in itself,…what I'm learning to give my learner's…' (CtR3,2)

Timetabled sessions often require new groups/lessons to begin when students require additional support or are waiting for a quiet moment to speak privately to a lecturer, adding additional pressure to meet everyone's needs (Lomas, 2007). Seven participants acknowledged feeling tensions to remain current in their roles. Demands from the industry required lecturers in some areas to update their skills regularly, perhaps students are impacted by the amount of research or scholarship in CHE,

> '… perhaps not on enough on currency of research or, and maybe that means, the students, possibly lose out a little.' (BC FG1,3)

Individual HE providers struggle to navigate the structural obstacles to reconciling pedagogy and research-focused activities in education (Fowler et al., 2024). The demand remains to ensure that the correct CHE lecturers are responsible for HE delivery in the college. The combination of knowledge and practice elements of foundation degrees in the traditional sense is tantamount to the QAA (2018) guidance.

The inner conflict undermines academic's professional practice, generating unease in the decision-making processes required for academics in their job role (Walker & Gleaves, 2016). One discussion led to a participants' representation of their struggle,

> 'And finally, I've got a knotted rope in there, which is representing, kind of, problem-solving and trying to resolve issues, trying to kind of manage, you know job role, kind of across different subject levels as well and that's, kind of, the knotted rope I suppose, represents not all issues can always be completely resolved so you know that can be challenging, but you know it's still something that we're aware of and really, you know, try and work our way through it.' (BC FG3,2)

3.2   Bead Collage Focus Group 3: Participant 2

Pedagogical adaptation in practice can stimulate the development of confidence in teaching students in new situations (Campbell, 2019; Fraser, 2019). Recognition of the impact of opposing challenges does need to be acknowledged, as personal confidence can be affected (Milner, 2017; Wilkinson, 2020). When behaviours reinforce adverse reactions, the knock-on effect can be detrimental to individuals' ability to deal with challenges when they occur confidently (Larcombe et al., 2021). The additional challenges towards professional and personal conflict affect lecturers' inability to gain a sense of worth they feel should be given due to their commitment to the role. Raised by one participant of the organisation acknowledged that,

> '… you need to be doing this or that, or we're going to take away from you, you know, that's where the disruption comes in, so being able to have your structure, symmetry and repetition. When things in the business change, that's the difficult bit.' (BC FG5,1)

5.1   Bead Collage Focus Group 5: Participant 2

Another participant shared views about students with clear expectations of their rights as consumers paying for education.

'What their expectations are of us is shifting, isn't it? It's more of a consumer.' (CtR5,4).

Whether representing a clear view of all CHE lecturers or not, the cultural shift towards student expectations has grown in recent years (Ingleby, 2015). All documentation shared with students before and during the course must comply with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) (2015). The shift in the accessibility of information models the transparent approach to the service or

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education provision for each HEP. Overall, this increases the pressure, perceived or otherwise, to provide the correct information before the course commences. Quality processes play a significant role in delivering and maintaining pedagogical practices (Campbell, 2019). CHE lecturers are complicit in completing handbooks for students before commencing their courses.

4.3   Theme Two: Being a Professional College Higher Education Lecturer

The theme of Being a Professional College Higher Education Lecturer is explored in the following section. The overarching perceptions of participants' identities are that they feel valued for teaching, researching, and engaging in various scholarship activities supported by the college. Discussions about the barriers to CHE lecturers' engagement in scholarly activities can be challenging. However, participants shared many positive attributes about CHE, including their motivation to teach and meet student needs. Recognising individual student achievements is a success from the CHE lecturer's perspective, demonstrating a supportive and nurturing teaching approach. The diverse role assumed by CHE lecturers was explored in the BC FG and CtR FG, and perceptions of their role as CHE lecturers contrasted with those of university lecturers. There were different perceptions of the comparisons between the two, with one example being shared,

> 'P3: Yeah, absolutely. It's the classroom. So, there is an element for that academic absolutely there is, there is that area for research, one of the things HE is important of actually being able to bring those experiences, as well to those students, to be able to talk about things that you have had experience of to be able to give them those real-life cases.
> P4: Linking them into.
> P3: Linking it into that kind of theory and research is, as equally important, um.
> P1: I think it is vital in our degrees isn't it?
> P3: Yeah.
> P2: There's something you said about the expectation of standing up in front of students and being seen as a lecturer. What a lecturer should do, what constitutes lecturing?' (CtR5,4)

The contrast between the two aspects of the role highlighted involvement with FE and HE as a positive endorsement of CHE. However, this was only the case for ten participants who experienced pressures to meet the quality requirements for both curriculum areas. Often, the expectations of the dual role were felt to need clarification as CHE lecturers experienced pressure to meet the ever-increasing demands for both curriculum areas (Feather, 2010). Many CHE lecturers have noticed a noticeable shift towards the businessification of education (Shukry, 2017). Accountability for college metrics, including student retention, attainment and success, has seeped into a lecturer's daily practice. The combination of management structures focussed on making money at times has overridden the lecturers teaching passion (Ntim et al., 2017). One participant shared that lecturing for them was a,

> '... multifaceted role suddenly becomes hugely demanding' (BC FG3,3)

Perhaps, considering the transition from pedagogy focused roles in CHE, the incorporation of research poses an additional strain on the resources that support CHE lecturers. The current drive for CHE to acquire foundation degree and bachelor's awarding powers directly conflicts with the pedagogy-based approach, as evidenced within the BC and CtR FGs. Indeed, as organisations strive to become academically credible, there often needs to be more consideration of the ramifications of the ethos, culture and development required to pursue practically demanding (Orr, 2013). Beath et al. (2012) suggest tensions persist in professional identity when there is an emphasis towards pedagogy instead of research, with the latter perceived as having a lower status. However, with the introduction of the TEF (2018), the focus on pedagogy could be suggested to mark a shift in the educational arena.

The introduction of TEF and REF (2018) endorsed the quality ranking processes of academic practice for all HEPs. However, as one participant suggested,

> '… with budgets and things, … there are lots of conferences you could go to, and I've been very lucky. I have to say I have worked in quite a few colleges where there is HE in FE, and I have to say the CPD opportunities here far exceed' (BC FG8,4)

Many CHE structural processes restrict budgets like traditional universities. As Cordingley (2015) suggests, budget allocation is a recurring problem inhibiting scholarly activity. The importance of CPD also increases the benefit for CHE lecturers to continue to develop their knowledge and subject expertise to foster professional development (Buckley & Husband, 2020; Fung, 2017). One participant shared that following a visit to another local college in the area, they,

> '… noticed how self-assured lecturers are in their academic, […] status…' (BC FG5,2)

Exploring identity compared to other professions can be beneficial for offering alternative perspectives enables self-reflection to consider positionality and experience (Vanner, 2015). However, if perceptions limit reflection, they slow the development of self-assurance (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). Comparing CHE lecturers' professional reflective self-development in the wider academic community could be of interest when considering academic achievements recorded for HE Fellowships (AdvanceHE, 2023) to promote personal self-perception. The development of self-worth nurtures the growth of professional confidence, forging an alignment with the professional body and accrediting expertise in unison with the wider academic community (Peseta et al., 2017). Knowledge about self-identity can only be a positive development for the individual, organisation and HEPs.

Lewis (2014) suggests that as professionals have multiple identities, how the participants in the BC and CtR FGs debated their varied conceptualisation of academic identity is reflective of identity formation. They presented a level of uncertainty attached to academic identity, possibly linked to the diverse and varied role responsibilities (Lewis, 2014). Linked to the different terminology, titles, and roles adopted within HEPs, narrowing concepts of being an academic can take time (Bathmaker, 2016). Untangling conceptual ideas surrounding academic identity transpired in the BC and CtR FGs within the discussions. Yet, as professional identity is assumed when working with/in the HEP, organisational conformity (Lamont & Nordberg, 2014) becomes adopted, as illustrated with the bead collage technique; when one participant considered their understanding of the organisational impact of CHE academic identity to be,

> '…difficult, but it depends on what the college wants our identity to be. Where other participants shared that their bead collage represented their development, with acknowledgement of the system's limitations, '...like EV, IV, marking and remarking, assessing. And that, I think affects my ability to develop as a teacher...' (BC FG1,3)

Meanwhile, Bathmaker (2005) acknowledges that the roles assumed by professionals working in FE colleges are diverse, much like the provision offered. Instrumental for FE college culture and pedagogic practices is often understanding the numerous professional roles (Orr, 2013). Indeed, the CHE lecturers' role job description was evident in the BC and CtR data. Participants voiced that the role included professional coach, counsellor, and administrator, to name a few. Participants identified the myriad roles embedded in the sector as diverse, including the contractual role to be wide-ranging for CHE lecturers. The tasks for some were felt to inhibit their ability to see beyond the roles' possibilities, with one participant commenting that they were,

> '… indifferent…' (BC FG6,4)

To teach HE and be an academic, focusing on FE teaching instead. However, later, the same participant described how they,

> '… took about 20 journal articles […], and a couple of books to read…' (BC FG6,4)

To ensure they felt suitably equipped to teach a new module. The comments suggest that academic scholarship was considered an action removed from their daily CHE lecturer role. Perhaps the range, breadth, and confusion surrounding CHE lecturers' academic identities remain blurred (Barrow et al., 2020) because no clear obligations are outlined beyond pedagogical focus activities. Initiatives such as

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HEA Fellowships (HEA, 2011) perhaps have offered a structured framework for lecturers to work through to consolidate their professional academic identity. Exploration of CHE academic identity conceptualisation validates perceptions of the role of the bead collage technique. They were again presenting the opportunity to recognise the benefits of the Kaleidoscope theory (Milner, 2022) (see Appendix 1 - The Kaleidoscope Theory) so that participants could acknowledge their lens of vision to support their CHE academic identity in the college culture.

4.3.1   A Space to Think About Being a Professional in College Higher Education

The FG's safe environment promoted participants' reflections about the CHE academic identity using the bead collage technique, as a vehicle to support individuals in group interactions. Freedman (2003) proposes that 'the creation of art forms can make life more meaningful, as a reflection of liberty' (p.314). Participants were given the choice of beads from the selection, and they could also reflect, attaching significance to the beads and their placement, to either thread or mount the bead collage on the chosen coloured paper or card, see Appendix 6 – A Guide to Bead Collage Technique. All decisions were individual to the participants. There may have been the opportunity to look at other bead collages. However, given the range and scope of the bead collages in Appendix 7 - Bead Collages by Focus Group, a great deal of originality was employed in the bead collages created. The bead collage technique became the reflective tool that enabled participants to reflection on the individual elements of the college. Often detailed reflection is overlooked as a luxury, in an already busy role, there is little time to stop, think and reflect on every detail throughout the day. Whereas the inclusion of playful enquiry supports a possible development of understanding for 'everyday thinking and profound insights' (Loads, 2010, p.411) to be fostered. The BC and CtR FGs data suggested that shared communication, as evidenced in the FGs, promoted open dialogue. Orchestrating a physically or mentally safe space to think is essential for assembling common thoughts to be professionally shared (Flecknoe et al., 2017). Community activities can help individuals feel less isolated and promote comradeship (Cox, 2013). Nevertheless, finding spaces for CoP to congregate when needed can be therapeutic for well-being and encourage collegiate working (Greenaway et al., 2015). Clandinin et al. (2009) identify two spaces where teachers are often sustained: relational spaces intended for relationships between teachers, children, families, topics, settings, culture and curriculums and temporal spaces: spaces engaged in over, considering the time spent in these spaces.

Whether the space is physical or not impacts the ability of CHE lecturers to fulfil the role requirements of being an academic. As previously mentioned, the time to dedicate to studies is often personal, with limited time to engage in additional learning other than the college's 21 CPD days, seven of which are allocated mainly to college system updating and combined with many participants residing between FE and HE commitments. Professional academic updating is often achieved by going back into industry rather than scholarship in academic writing or research, which aligns with Boyer's (1990) scholarship model.

Nevertheless, with the increasing requirement to fit into the college's CHE culture, participants expressed tensions,

> 'I used the smaller beads just to represent the kind of the crossover from FE to other kind of work commitments.' (CtR7,2)

Often, these spaces combine to promote the representation of lecturers and new teachers to learn their craft and understand the profession's nuances, techniques, and challenges (Antunes Scartezini and Monereo, 2018). Indeed, the space to feel nurtured in CPD offers an opportunity to gain experience and develop in the culture with the organisation's expectations (Gleeson et al., 2015). The congregation of self-elected participants/lecturers in a physical space suggests that meeting in a trusted place can support relationship formation. Therefore, the location of the FGs enabled participants to feel comfortable in their surroundings. The familiarity with the environment allowed participants to share their conversations/communication to generate thoughts unconnected to the research and supportive of a CoP (Wenger, 1998).

Establishing a space for the participants to share their views whilst contributing to the research academic identity conceptualised the bead collage technique, which could have facilitated a mindset of trust because of the metaphorical and physical space. Moreover, the experience of being in a safe environment generated a bond between the participants and the place (Seamon, 2014). Most participants were comfortable expressing their views during the FGs. Despite the contribution to the data, participants were willing to share their perspectives about academic identity agentically (Biesta et al., 2015). Five participants considered themselves academics; the rich dialogue from the BC, CtR FG, and RD data showed that CHE professional identity links to student-centric engagement. Madikizela-Madiya (2014) suggests that physical spaces created in and around the learning environment can benefit academic identity formation. Space utilisation assists individuals in meeting

their expectations within the environment and the ideal culture of the place (Madikizela-Madiya, 2014).

The evidence was captured during one of the FGs when the participants discussed the HE building being used to host the FG. It was not an intentional addition to the research as an insider/outsider researcher; it was about convenience rather than getting the participants into the mindset to share their perceptions of CHE academic identity within the HE building. Open discussions about the physical space contributed to the participant's revelations. Gravett and Ajjawi (2021) suggest that a sense of belonging can be developed in a space, adding to the contribution of individuals at that time. Combined with the physical space, participants' familiarity with the HE teaching environment, HE meetings, and general interactions about scholarship could be another factor that promotes participants' positive engagement in the FGs.

Time was a contentious factor that arose as a discussion point in many of the FGs. Citing time commitments as critical, whether there was enough time to complete the job role and relevant academic scholarship CPD for CHE lecturers. Participants questioned the expectations of time spent on regular tasks required in CHE, drawing comparisons with professionals fulfilling other college roles. A recurring theme in the data highlighted the myriad expected responsibilities CHE lecturers must fulfil compared to those solely teaching FE. The impact of the time for the participants could be linked to the influence this may have on their well-being (Larcombe et al., 2021; Mansfield et al., 2016). The additional pressures to complete all the requirements of the role continue to impact perceptions of the time to complete tasks. Additional pressure to fulfil scholarship responsibilities were apparent in the data, particularly around CHE lecturers completion of research and scholarly activity (RSA). The BC and CtR FG data demonstrated perceptions around the fulfilment of RSA aligned to FDAP (Esmond, 2021), with discussions about their involvement in RSA contrasting with colleagues with only FE commitments. The BC and CtR data revealed knowledge of the collective agreement, but at no point was the collective agreement specifically named.

However, only a few participants outwardly acknowledged the benefits of research-informed teaching. The consensus of being current in practice, whether through engagement in CPD college-based activities or by reading around the subject area, to conducting research as part of higher-level qualifications or otherwise benefiting them, was evident. Feasibly suggesting that evidence-based teaching, whatever the source of the evidence, can impact lecturers' academic identity (Feather,

2010) when there is not enough time given to the scholarship or preparations. The difficulty is providing a vehicle for lecturers to visualise the reality of their position in a community of academics rather than in a CHE provision. Whilst 11 participants of 27 engaged in external sources of research or study in scholarly activity, as Boyer (1990) outlined, there are always alternative ideas surrounding scholarship. The emphasis on action for improved development of evidence-informed practice in pedagogy as a central tenet of an individual's positionality was not the case for all.

> '.., all mine is a HE and we're moving into an era, and kind of, a field of very, um, HE specialism now with regards to approved education, institution, accreditation, so and it feels that its much bigger than we are,' (BC FG8,4)

Expanding the lecturer's expertise in the sector for more significant impactful research and practice within pedagogical delivery of subject areas is linked to HEA (2011). Indeed, developing an academic mindset governs subsequent bids for the college to be recognised in UK educational spheres of teaching degree awarding powers (HEA, 2011). As CHE lecturers confidently acquire the necessary skills and research practice for the college to grant a teaching degree award when the time is right.

Most participants openly acknowledged that the perception of the teacher's role in the media differed from reality. Bathmaker (2005) agrees that the reality of teaching is often misleading for trainee teachers when they enter the profession as FE lecturers. A trainee's perception of an FE lecturer as a facilitator, another role of responsibility to facilitate learning again gives the impression of a professional not actively involved in student pedagogy. Whereas 24 participants expressed their leading role as teachers and not so much as facilitators of learning, dichotomous expressions were shared about the different pedagogical requirements between FE and HE teaching responsibilities. All the participants expressed genuine responsibility for their students to succeed in life or the course, acknowledging their role as student guardians. The varied roles and responsibilities within CHE identity, perceived or otherwise, add to the complexity of the CHE lecturer's identity (Turner et al., 2009). The BC and CtR FG data revealed feelings of resentment about meeting expectations, reflecting on the professional role as person-centred. For one participant, the representation of these roles was outlined within the bead collage,

> '... the students, for the smaller beads around which, you know, I provide support in both these roles.' (BC FG4,4).

The person-centred connectivity of the role was about student or colleague relationships and remained a significant part of their perceived role as a CHE lecturer. Traditionally regarded as person-centred, teaching offers personal support aligned with the pedagogical roles within the education sector (Pataraia, 2015). Demonstrates the collegiate team working around the student, as one participant shared,

> 'The pink braid or cord, whatever it is, represents my program team if you like that we're all intertwined with the student's relationship.' (BC FG4,4)
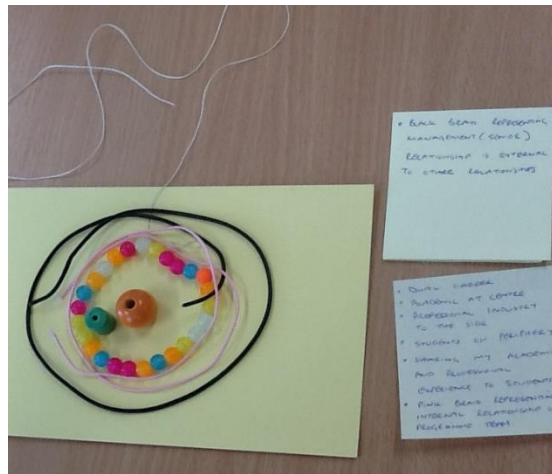
4.4   Bead Collage Focus Group 4: Participant 4

With another sharing a similar thought expressed that,

> '… trustworthiness, working as a team, being respectful, student being in the heart.' (BC FG7,3)
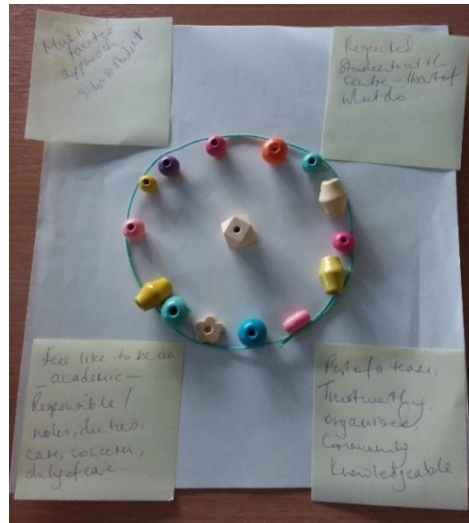
7.3   Bead Collage Focus Group 7: Participant 3

Teamworking supports the formation of identity, reinforcing the importance of CoP (Ennals et al., 2016). Relationships ensure a collegial approach that benefits individual students and lecturers (Jackson, 2016). Indeed, the shared aims collectively promote a vision for community development, leading individuals to succeed and reach their potential. Kwaitek et al. (2005) highlighted the importance of team members having self-awareness to recognise the benefits of working as part of a team. All participants highlighted their positive views of the working environment, and students and colleagues resonated with the CHE community.

4.3.2   College Higher Education Lecturer's Attributes

The presence of self-perception impacts interaction in relationships personally and professionally, mainly when working as a CHE lecturer. The teaching role is psychologically demanding; sometimes, there needs to be more recognition within society or in the organisation of the strain experienced by new teachers (Williams, 2010). Often, the value placed on a professional in an organisation can and does regularly make or break self-worth (Delanty, 2008; Lamont & Nordberg, 2014). Rather than succumbing to the limitations outlined by functionalist perspectives within society, the education system aids individual self-identity (Quigley, 2011). Whereas a humanistic educational approach recognises the benefits of education to develop individuals' self-worth and self-actualisation (Maslow,

1987)[12]. Indeed, with much evidence to support the contrary, functionalism is prevalent in professional educational settings (Gale et al., 2013). There is often a requirement for educational settings to foster a sense of value towards educating the workforce in organisations promoting a question of being responsible about oneself as a human being.' (Reindal, 2013, p.537).

Often, there is individual accountability to fulfil the business requirements in education (Ntim et al., 2017). Organisations are placing strain on CHE lecturers to manage, when the business relies on increasing student numbers, retention, attainment, and success, deemed more valuable than pedagogical practice (Turner et al., 2009). Willingness to change, often adapting practices and principles based on the organisation's requirements, can be complicated. Problems arise when ethical compromise is at odds with the natural process of individual practices or results from the workload demands at that given time (Archer, 2008). There may be an unwillingness to complete a given task, only that the time allotted for completing the task is unattainable by the assigned deadline, and yet even with the pressures, CHE lecturers still complete the job. A sentiment expressed by one participant,

> 'I've got jumping through hoops. I've got continuous frustration so that just goes upon, on this kind of hill of never-ending targets, never-ending, things that you've got to do and accomplish, some of it feels wasted.' (BC FG5,1)

5.1   Bead Collage Focus Group 5: Participant 1

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[12] Maslow's (1987) Hierarchy of Needs is a theory developed to explain that human motivation can be understood by five categories: Physiological, Safety, Love, Esteem and finally with Self – Actualisation. Maslow (1987) believed that by fulfilling the two first basic humans needs, to eat, drink and be sheltered, felt safe and had money to live. Once these basic needs are met then humans can begin to entertain love, a sense of worth which leads to being able to fulfil a person's true potential.

Dissatisfaction surrounding the myriad tasks echoed within the BC, CtR FGs and RD data. Later, during the CtR FGs, participants shared unease about the situation lecturers were experiencing (connected to the timing of the CtR FGs during the summer term). The inner conflict can begin to undermine the professional practices of academics, generating unease about the decision-making processes for academics in their job role (Walker & Gleaves, 2016). Individual empowerment presents a far better alternative within the learning environment (Stromquist, 2015) than regularly adhering to business requirements. During the completion of the bead collage technique, one participant stated that the college had,

> '... come along way, 'you need to be doing this or that, or we're going to take away from you', you know, that's where the disruption comes in so being able to have your structure, symmetry and repetition. When, things in the business, change, that's the difficult bit.' (BC FG5,2)

Given the circumstances, importance is placed on lecturers gaining a sense of worth and value in the college. Supporting lecturers in fulfilling all the tasks internally and externally will help them begin to recognise themselves as academics. As Fung (2017) acknowledges,

> 'Learning, like research, is about paying attention to where the edges of knowledge are... the core of scholarship.' (p.46).

Regretfully, 20 participants of the 27 did not appreciate the excellent impact of scholarship promotion in the college. The BC and CtR FG data consistently showed a sense of dissatisfaction with the institution's perceived lack of time for scholarly activities; these limitations, real or imagined, persisted. Participants' opinions about working at CHE were compromised, but there was a general feeling that they did not entirely fit into the idealised culture that the leadership held. One of the biggest obstacles CHE lecturers faced was the college's contradictory beliefs and objectives, incredibly when fulfilling their duties appropriately.

> '...so I like the spirals so again the kind of layered obstacles that you face and then, and then these ones. So no, I don't think it was the colour, now that you've spotted that I would rather change the colour, I'm a little bit annoyed so will change it back to the same colour. It was the, it was the shapes, um more and I wanted these ones just to match. And then one that kind of stood out a little bit more.' (BC FG6,2)
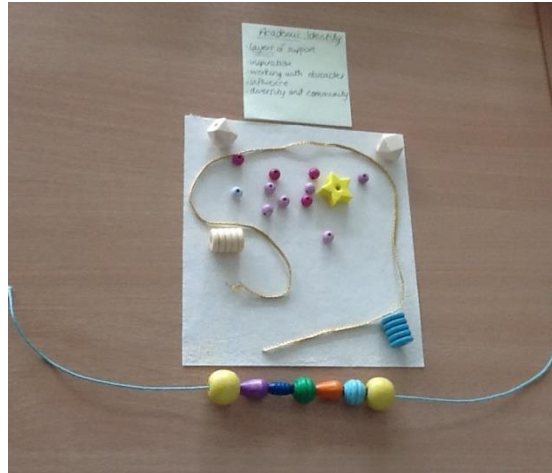
6.2   Bead Collage Focus Group 6: Participant 2

The discord conveyed in the BC and CtR FG data displayed an incongruence, as seven participants expressed their roles and expectations without a resolution between the two. One participant from the FG6 (4) highlighted the difference between their perceived expectations of the role and their reality,

> 'I think that the difference between University Lecturer in college HE lecturing is that it is almost like a lifestyle. Where I would say, it is the expectation that you work x, y, z hours and that, that's isolated in your own time.' (BC FG8,4)

The disconnect between university and CHE lecturers' responsibilities and expectations became evident in the BC and CtR FGs data. Whitchurch (2012) recognises that managing CHE expectations is often challenged, albeit not limited to FE. The disconnect between academic identity embracing research and pedagogy in equal measure needs to be fully integrated into CHE practices (Gale et al., 2011). Participant perceptions of lecturers immersed in academic practice differed from their experience, as seen in the BC and CtR data. One participant articulated their perception of being an academic as,

> '… somebody who does do research, they are at the top of their field and try to remain current.' (BC FG8,2)

A perceived representative view of academic identity given the personal engagement linked to any purveying professional HEP culture (Lamont & Norberg, 2014). It suggests that the misconception of CHE academic balance should be removed from HEP practices.

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Being a CHE tutor to CHE student's links to the aspiration to be a nurturing individual (Daniel, 2021). Student-focused pedagogy represented the multi-dimensional CHE lecturing role in their bead collage. One participant shared that compared to their own university experience, where they did not like to bother a lecturer or ask for a reference, acknowledging that,

> 'I never really spoke to them. You would never get that here; we know our students well.' (BC FG6,3)

Partly linked to the smaller CHE group sizes, lecturers have more time with students individually. Another participant shared their student experience of CHE progressing to a more prominent university,

> '... it was such a unique experience, and that was a massive shock.' (BC FG6,2)

The class sizes, as cited in CHE compared to the lectures in HE, resonate with the differences in the relationships formed through the supportive CHE learning environment. The 18 participants cited challenges to their roles, physical or otherwise, between university students and lecturers, often when reflecting on their university experience. Some examples shared were never seeing their tutor or knowing who they were during their studies. Four participants shared that there was often a difference from the learning they experienced themselves when they were at university due to the large class sizes or course delivery.

As custodians of students' learning, welfare, and overall holistic development, the vital role of tutors in all HEPS is to foster a nurturing environment (Walker & Gleaves, 2016). The tutor's role offers transferability to keep individuals safe, as reflected in BERA's (2024) ethical research guidelines. Whereas individuals in the education sector recognise the importance of nurture but are regularly compromised when the organisational requirements limit resources such as time impact individual care (Colley et al., 2007; Walker & Gleaves, 2016). As shared by a participant drawing all the parts of CHE academic identity together (BC FG7,4),

> 'FE at the bottom and HE at the top, and it is about all of these fitting together, and where I am in terms of fitting together as a team and part of the community, it could be teachers it could be children, it is about sort of, the positivity in being part of the team.'

7.4   Bead Collage Focus Group 7: Participant 4

Perhaps, suggesting the compassionate side of education can often be lost. The CHE student body is comprised of those without the traditional student caricature (Simmons & Lea, 2013) that is often associated with in traditional universities. The transformative power of education for mature students (Webber, 2015) who do not fall within the traditional student body is acknowledged in CHE CoP. Therefore, promoting the WP agenda (DfE, 2019) enabled students from less represented social groups to access HE education, presenting additional challenges for lecturers in nurturing academic and personal matters beyond their own experience.

CHE student's academic skills development is significant when nurturing HEness (Simmons & Lea, 2013). It is a throwback to the FE ethos that universities ingrained to empower students to be autonomous learners when they propose student-centred approaches. According to Biesta et al. (2015), a student-centred approach is not exclusive to FE; it is also consistent with teacher agency. It is advantageous for lecturers to get to know their students using small-scale instructional practices used in CHE (Opacic, 1996; QAA, 2018; Wilson & Wilson, 2011). Smaller groups frequently help mature students and those who struggle with their identities (Gallacher et al., 2002). These individuals would otherwise be discouraged from pursuing a degree at a university.

Guardianship for students and courses was evident in the data as participants perceived themselves as guardians, nurturing students in their learning and supporting progress, personally and academically. The lecturer's role was highlighted as a critical factor of pedagogical nurturing practice within the data, with many participants illustrating their focus on the care of the students, often beyond the requirements of professional attainment measures. As one participant cited,

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'And you feel you nurtured them…' (BC FG8,3)

Significantly essential for lecturers' student support, highlighting one of the many tasks undertaken in the role. Whitchurch (2012) makes a comparison with a university structure about the importance of interrelationships with students, supported by another participant,

'And that would, that would never happen here we would nurture people, and sometimes our lectures are half an hour over and that's okay.' (CtR5,4)

The learning environment nurtures students and lecturers to feel safe (Walker & Gleaves, 2016), and strengthening positive relationships across the organised tutorial framework to meet student needs sustains some CHE lecturer's natural inclination to nurture and thrive. All the participants enjoyed how the smaller learning community in the CHE environment was fostered (Orr, 2013; Young, 2002). Notably, it illustrated how CHE lecturers nurture students with the necessary time and energy, which is beneficial to improving the HE learning experience. As one participant said,

'What's quite interesting is students that progress to other universities often come back to us and say they were much luckier here with us than they realised because they get a lot more time with us than they do once they progress to a bigger University for all they may have more time to do research and so on. It does not necessarily benefit the learners.' (CtR6,2)

Due to smaller numbers of students studying in CHE, the community allows focused time and responsiveness to student needs that can be difficult to manage in more prominent universities. Many positive interrelationships occur in universities because of individual lecturers' nurturing styles and personalities (Stronach et al., 2022); the natural propensity to nurture is not a human trait possessed by all. Nevertheless, not all lecturers nurture their students while embedded in CHE pedagogical practices. Some lecturers remain focused on the processes required to do the job. The BC and CtR FGs data revealed that 22 participants of 27 only sometimes valued the process side of the college, expressing frustration with recording auditable statistics rather than focusing on the pastoral needs of the students. A few participants mentioned the threat to their pedagogy. For example,

'I don't know how ominous that is, that threat is at the moment, you know, always at this time of year you are thinking how many students' (BC FG2,2)

Still, the role and focus of universities have a place in our wider sociological culture, enabling academia to thrive and develop, fostering career opportunities for many graduates, for some within

their aspirations and beyond (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). On the other hand, CHE enables the personal nurturing of individuals, students, and lecturers alike, becoming normalised in HEPs and acknowledging that taking care of individuals often enables them to thrive. The vision of education is to integrate values-based educational perspectives more readily into practice (Wilkinson, 2020).

23 of the 27 participants suggested their focus should be on pedagogy rather than the directive to complete RSA regularly during the academic year. However, 12 participants of 27 acknowledged how research enhanced the connectivity with their teaching. Research-informed pedagogy has become and remains a central aspect of CHE's professional identity (Creasy, 2013). It is important to model what and why research is conducted for currency to remain relevant and energised in practice (Fowler et al., 2024). The difficulty arises when lecturers model research paradigms in their pedagogy that could enhance students' appreciation of research. However, it was apparent in the data that management did not perceive the expectations for RSA-focused activity to be of equal worth in CHE. A consistent message surrounding the shared responsibility of valuable, authentic sources to demonstrate the importance of research-engaged activities is reinforced for academic and professional practice (King & Widdowson, 2012a).

Good teaching is underpinned by knowledge, whether from textbooks or experience, and the conveyance of knowledge should be more straightforward (King & Widdowson, 2012a). As such, four participants out of 27 shared their unhappiness at teaching from a textbook, acknowledging their limited knowledge in the field when asked to either cover a lecture or were timetabled for a whole module. Whilst FE leadership do not regard covering sessions as challenging from a timetabling aspect, there remains a challenge for a lecturer and their knowledge base (FETL, 2018). As one participant who has previously experienced a comparable situation shared,

> 'I hate walking into a room when I don't know what I am talking about, I hate that feeling and I would have done as I didn't have a clue. I had to get a basic book about penal theory.' (BC FG6,4)

Nevertheless, whilst there was a willingness to learn current information to complete and fulfil the lecturing role, these actions compromised the lecturers' professionalism (Wood et al., 2016). The responsiveness to a challenge for many lecturers was unsurmountable, acting as a driving force to improving their knowledge base.

'As teacher, because you're invested in those students whether you like it or not, there is part of you that wants them to do well.' (BC FG3,2)

'So, I have the one I am most confident in at the moment, on the top, and so on. More there at the bottom, because of the fact that we can have to do subjects that aren't necessarily in our specialism. This is like a prospective thing in the future, that I might do so such as a PhD, so kind of furthering on from the knowledge of the subjects.' (BC FG6,3)

6.3   Bead Collage Focus Group 6: Participant 3

Delanty (2008) acknowledges the unsettling nature of present-day academic work, with the erosion of academic professionalism for robust pedagogical practice. Hökkä et al. (2012) suggest that a shared understanding of research knowledge supports implementing quality educational practices. However, whilst some participants acknowledged that research engagement was cognisant of their expectations, many were not so generous in their communication. Throughout most BC and CtR FG discussions, there was a sense of discontent towards the structures or perceived limitation of time to engage in scholarship. The focus of the discussions was not solely on academic identity; however, when questioned about academic identity, the participants shared their emotions. Whether the constraints discussed were real or imagined, the participants still chose to express their thoughts. In FG8 (4), one participant discussed their identity in direct comparison with how they perceived the academic role in a university,

'I think it's almost like an imposter... Because you are told you should be all these things... and you can't be...' (BC FG8,2)

Feelings of imposter syndrome are ever present for professionals navigating their journey as academics (Wilkinson, 2020). Perhaps linked to the constraints of the CHE lecturer role, 14 participants out of the 27 concurred with their challenges with imposter syndrome.

When asked about being an academic, many shared the perception of being a fraud. The word or moment of doubt occurred a few times during both the BC and CtR FGs when participants considered being an academic. These comments were linked to the expectations of performativity to complete qualifications, publish or engage in scholarship such as conference presentations or attendance. The concept of scholarship and scholarly activity connects to Boyer (1990). All CHE lecturers engage in more than two teaching sessions and the initial module guide and scheme of learning preparations for HE programme delivery. Whilst 19 participants of the 27 stated that the current college structure underacknowledged scholarship; for example, two participants stated,

> '… fall much more in line with the college's role, as focussing on teaching and learning because my passion is communicating…. I recognise the importance of my currency… if I share some that I did, it is much more rewarding…' (BC FG1,3)

> 'We've also got people that are coming up the ladder, so, we've got people who are studying in their field and making self-improvements, might be delivering on various programmes, and they're also adding to that academic identity. (BC FG3,3)

However, the participants needed assistance reconciling their roles and responsibilities with the requirements to meet scholarship activities that were considered research-worthy. The participants struggled with the dichotomy of the scholarship expected and their perceptions of the CHE lecturer's academic identity. When considered through the HEA (2011) lens, lecturers, irrespective of their place of work, have been invited to engage in the fellowships, recognising their scholarship as worthy of merit. Nevertheless, in the BC and CtR FG data, there was a thread of acknowledgement about research engagement, and 14 of the 27 participants shared positive comments about academic involvement. Juxtaposed with the time accorded to fulfil the college's scholarship requirements, participants continued researching outside the CHE lecturing role. It could be argued that the participant's engagement demonstrated their professional/personal investment in scholarship (Bukor, 2015). Again, linked to the Buffer-fly concept (Milner, 2017) (see Appendix 2 - The Buffer-fly Concept), meeting individual identity requires individual growth, motivation, and the power to make environmental changes. Removing individual agencies creates disquiet, significantly impacting how

professionals function (Biesta et al., 2015). The very nature of CHE, therefore, becomes a barrier to its aspirations when participants express their awareness of the conflict of the business. Nevertheless, it would be unfair to suggest that the college management needs to be made aware of the conflict experienced by CHE lecturers when the focus is on the FE curriculum. Lloyd & Jones (2018) and Gale et al. (2011) recognise the challenges faced by CHE with a lack of a research culture present for lecturers to engage. Participants also highlighted the significance of the geographical location of a lecturer's offices in the FE building rather than the HE building [13]. Despite the curriculum teams' office location in the FE building, the perceived and actual differences between FE and HE were identified physically and geographically (Gravett & Ajjawi, 2021). HE sessions are delivered in the HE building and removed from the day-to-day running of FE. As expressed by one participant,

> '…,but it also presents opportunities, and creativity, and it is it is probably the one area of, kind of, with the rest of our profile of teaching, we're here in this building.'(BC FG2,2)

The location of the teaching, as well as the significance of the working environment, again highlighted the differences perceived by the participants. Gravett and Ajjawi (2021) recognise the sense of belonging created by the environment. The HE delivery's physical position in the college significantly differentiates between FE and HE. Despite the difference in expectation of their role, all participants were aware of their focus on HE, either as a bit part or shared responsibilities between HE and FE. Participants' confusion abounds with the perceived inconsistent approach to the roles of lecturers teaching FE with HE. In HE, all lecturers are expected to be engaged in scholarly activity, which is recorded in their CPD to inform the appraisal system. One participant shared,

> 'I have to say I've worked in quite a few colleges where there is, HE in FE, and I have to say the CPD opportunities here, far exceed.' (BC FG8,3)

However, within the same discussion, another of the four participants highlighted,

> '... if the college values research and values that, there should be something that is put on the college CPD record.' (BC FG8,4)

The experience is often considered with resignation, and HE provisions are not equally important (Widdowson & King, 2018). Expectations for participants to be equal to the university lecturers were

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[13] The geographical aspect of the research being conducted in the HE building was not subsequently followed up in the FGs. At the time of the research, it was not considered to be significant. However, on reflection this point would have been useful to explore with participants in the later FGs.

varied. Fourteen participants cited wanting to remain in the CHE environment rather than move to universities. There remained a discord, with 23 of the 27 participants voicing the variety of their roles as lecturers with disparagement. Even with the job specification, the perception of the role was broad enough for interpretation to be diversely varied, depending on the curriculum area.

4.3.3 Self-Perception and Self-Worth

Self-perception impacts CHE lecturers' values and beliefs about functioning as human beings. The teaching role can be psychologically demanding; at times, there needs to be more recognition within teaching organisations, including the wider society, of the strain experienced by new teachers (Buchanan, 2015). After entering the teaching profession, internal tensions emerge about the role and responsibilities connected with the pressure to meet the demands. Unfortunately, replacing passion with a dejected notion of the ideal is far removed from the reality of what constitutes teaching, a feeling not experienced during teacher training (Lindqvist & Nordänger, 2016). These feelings of discontent regularly result in new teachers leaving the profession within the first five years of their careers (Chaaban et al., 2023). 23 participants of the 27 participants shared the difficulties they experienced when completing the work tasks associated with their role. This provided insight into their perceptions of self-worth, professionalism (Archer, 2008), and introspective conflict regarding being a CHE lecturer. Education can be more than just curriculum; often it is about the development and nurture of individual self-identity for self-actualisation (Maslow, 1987). Likewise, the Buffer-fly concept (Milner, 2017) (see Appendix 2 -The Buffer-fly Concept) demonstrates how when an individual's potential is unfulfilled, it significantly impacts lecturers' practices, professionalism, and selfhood in an organisation. Instead of impacting the practices, professionalism and selfhood defined by the portrayal of functionalism, the conceptualisation of self-worth to develop individuals to self-actualise is limited to themselves, not the educational establishment they work for (Netolicky, 2016).

For educational settings to foster a sense of value for the educated professionals in the organisation, education should be seen 'first and foremost as a question of being responsible about oneself as a human being.' (Reindal, 2013, p.537). Pataraia et al. (2015) suggest academics are agents of their learning, seeking out those considered to have experience or expertise in each field of knowledge or

practice. Self-critical reflection generates a transformative learning process (Mezirow, 2000), whereby observing and meeting other professionals in similar contexts enables insight to be garnered, affecting self-perception. The idea of exploring one's own identity in comparison to others is beneficial in any profession. The reflective element of any professional role enables individuals to consider their position, knowledge, and experience. However, if perceptions are limited, so is the ability to reflect, slowing self-assurance development (Clover, 2011; Milner, 2017).

The HEA (2011) supports self-recognition development in a known academic arena and comparisons with other professionals in the wider academic community, awarding HE Fellowships. HE Fellowship attainment shifts self-perception development, reinforcing self-worth that provides credibility for professional practices in education (HEA, 2011; Sachs, 2016). Frameworks such as those offered by the HEA (2011) recognise the teaching and learning that is increasingly becoming a focus for HE professionals. Four participants in the BC and CtR FGs highlighted how vital recognition of scholarly activities and publishing a paper but that in the college, they felt little recognition (FG8, 4), and another participant's shared academic identity was linked solely to completing academic qualifications (CtR3,3). Murray (2002) suggests publication writing is a central professional scholarship role for FE lecturers. With the proper support, motivation, and energy, lecturers would embrace the opportunity to publish. However, Scaife (2004) suggested several reasons for fully embracing an idealised CHE academic perspective, which link to potential challenges encumbered by academic culture development. The perceived expectations of lecturers to engage in academic activity support growth. Perceived college management expectations for lecturers' scholarly activities to fulfil the role need to be aligned. A greater distance must be achieved before the two fully integrate within the CHE culture (Greenwood, 2010; Jones, 2006; King & Widdowson, 2009). One participant shared,

> 'I'm involved in some research at the moment, which isn't resulting in any qualifications or even really enhancing my academic identity in college because it's a random area that I'm not teaching. But I still feel that that's a really valuable process. And it's still contributing to my professional identity.' (CtR3,2)

Subjectively, individual perceptions of research-focused activities vary regarding how and what accounts for quantifiable academic actions. Whitchurch (2012) suggests academic activity is linked to teaching and research, reinforcing the possible under-acknowledged CHE lecturer's perception of their academic identity. Conversely, one participant shared,

'… teaching-focused lecturing is going up in terms of its recognition…' (CtR6,1)

The transition of lecturer's scholarly activity in universities shifts from research to teaching-focused, developing the pedagogical skills required for the role. The nexus between the two has often been poles apart in universities, though a shift in direction links to the introduction of TEF (2018). Increasingly, the emphasis on quality teaching has generated recognition of the importance of pedagogy (Boyd & Smith, 2016). In turn, it nurtures the growth of professional confidence and comparative alignment with the professional body, accrediting the experience and expertise alongside that of the wider academic community. Individual self-identity positively engages the individual, organisation, and HEPs. However, even with the achievement of the HE Fellow Award, CHE lecturers still feel compelled to make less of their achievements. When CHE lecturers accomplish the HE Fellow title, they often realise their achievements (Bottero, 2010). Reputationally, participants tended to modestly acknowledge their academic achievements. Instead of wanting to share academic achievement, focusing on the quality of their teaching practice links to the association of FE with teaching and HE with research. One participant shared that after publishing an article in a journal,

> 'There was no, oh, that's amazing, you know, thank you so much for trying to get the college's name out there. It was, do I need to approve this? I'm thinking, no, no, there was no. […] It's like, I couldn't have really cared less other than the fact that I just wanted like a well done. That is three years of your life that you've invested in that research, and you've done this and got it published, and you've got it published under the college's name because we're trying to get that academic profile out there. But no, not even a cup of coffee.' (BC FG8,2)

Simply recognising an academic achievement should not be riddled with problems. Journal publication should be acknowledged as an academic achievement rather than under-celebrated. The experience could have impacted the participant's academic identity. Of course, publishing research should be celebrated positively rather than in a tokenistic way. Methodological and writing conventions require that academics deny or minimise their reported impact on the phenomenon being studied (Yanow, 2009). Further, the BC and CtR FGs data suggested participants' reluctance to celebrate their academic progress, choosing to be far more pragmatic about their knowledge, experience and academic achievements to date. Instead, 23 participants focused on the quality of their teaching practice linked to the perception of teaching in FE, removed from the perception of HE as a quality teaching experience (Ainley & Luntley, 2007). FE is instead associated with teaching, and HE is associated with research.

Throughout all the FGs, participants debated their conceptualisation of academic identity, often needing clarification when asked to provide a definitive meaning of the term. Nevertheless, the level of uncertainty attached to the term academic identity became apparent during the many FG debates. For example,

> 'I think you have to be flexible, very flexible in your own academic identity.' (CtR1,2)

> 'I was tending to focus more on the student and their development journey, which is what I think academia is about personally.' (CtR3,3)

While participants contended with the differing concepts of academic identity and their meaning within the context of CHE, they tended to compare the differences in their abilities, knowledge, and professional academic identity. Confusion ensued when discussing terms of reference to the CHE lecturer's academic identity in the bead collage technique. All participants highlighted their navigation of multiple identities in the workplace, often citing their 'struggle with being, feeling, and seeming authentic both to their contextualised work roles and to their wider work selves' (Caza et al., 2018. p.703). Connected to the underpinning notion of the term academic being fluid rather than fixed, depending on the context, the use of the term by professionals in the field and the organisation (Whitchurch, 2012).

Alternatively, identity formation/confusion could be due to numerous roles and titles within HEPs. 23 participants of 27 cited innumerable college job role titles interpreted differently between the departments. The diverse responsibilities connected to each title and the completion of tasks create uncertainty. Clarifying contractual requirements in the college's CoP is unclear, which leads to participants being unsure about their academic identity. The daily responsibilities faced by professionals are diverse and varied (Caza et al., 2018; Lewis, 2014). CHE academic identity remains interdependent on the flux and variation of individual expectations of the role.

All participants acknowledged their academic identity from the bead collage technique to some degree or another. Some participants initially hesitated to conceptualise their academic identity using the bead collage technique. What transpired within the FGs was an untangling of ideas and concept that has become relatable to the blurred and symbolically constructed semblance of academic identity (Harding, 1993; Deem, 2006; Tilly, 1996). The tangible recognition of individual identity often outlined within the organisation remained unclear for participants as they shared thoughts about the diverse nature of expectations for their role (Boterro, 2010). Whereas the participants' academic

engagement in the research, including their contribution to develop innovative knowledge and practice explored CHE academic identity. Equally, 14 participants of the 27 suggested feeling undervalued by leadership in the college to support academic transition into scholarship in their college department. Participant's candid responses indicated their perceptions of academic identity about themselves and the college. Not all participants expressed a balanced view about their experiences of being a lecturer in CHE when combined with the concept of academic identity, for example, the nuanced guarded shift in spoken words, tone and expression. The participant views differed depending on the groupings in the FG, at times fuelling the mixture of positive and negative experiences shared. Negative aspects of CHE lecturers' academic identity are connected to the workload, coinciding with the increasing pressure for scholarship.

How the culture and pedagogic practices within FE colleges communicate the facilitation model relates to understanding the professional roles (Orr, 2013). Bathmaker and Avis (2005) suggest that FE colleges' professional roles are often as diverse as the courses offered. Representatives of the CoP and the individuals undertaking the role are featured heavily within the data in fulfilment of the job description. Due to the individual curriculum departments, all participants had different workloads and role responsibilities. Their roles were similar but often required a different skillset or knowledge linked to the curriculum. As with any academic role in CHE or universities, professional development continues to flourish at different rates (Lindqvist & Nordänger, 2016). Most participants enjoyed the variety of job roles. Despite this, ten participants cited their frustration with the systems, increasing their responsibility to meet the recent demands of their role, which they had not previously experienced at the college. The BC, CtR FG and RD data suggested that whilst some participants were content, there were equal numbers expressing discontent about their role and expressed thoughts of being undervalued. When one participant shared that although they are engaged in scholarship they do not feel valued,

> ' I feel more recently I've grown my role as an academic externally and with, like scholarly activity. But here as an individual right now, I am really lost where I am, and I feel very undervalued.' (BC FG8,4)

Which demonstrates that when participants feel they are a trusted, are in a safe space (Clandinin et al., 2009; Gravett & Ajjawi, 2021), they will openly share their thoughts. Indicative of the FG membership, participants engaged with the bead collage technique, communicating efficiently in the groups. Again, the opportunity to create a gateway between a previously undiscussed understanding

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of self-identity in the research context and personal experience fosters creative engagement (Mannay, 2015).

This section demonstrated participant perceptions of feeling valued and appreciated as a CHE lecturer, positively reinforcing the merit of the varied roles (Lamont & Nordberg, 2014). Scholarship activity for 19 participants of 27 was an additional task that, while expected, was only sometimes valued by all leadership (Deem, 2006). Frustration was expressed by participants who engaged in scholarship activities when they were given limited time to complete this part of their role (Billot, 2010). There were 11 research-active participants of 27 who stated that they were comfortable engaging in scholarship in their own time. Given the college's movement to achieve targets aligned to higher scholarship levels, with 14 participants of 27 acknowledging that remitted time to engage in research activities was positive. The 13 remaining participants were indifferent or unsatisfied with the support in place for scholarship in the college. However, considering Boyer's (1990) scholarship model, CHE lecturers should not differentiate scholarship requirements for research as a separate entity. Instead, they should embrace scholarship activities as standard practice, such as maintaining current knowledge and updating module guides. Research was known to be an expectation that was only sometimes met with positivity by 14 participants of 27. However, the opportunity to share thoughts and views in the FG that was perceived to be a safe space by the participants fostered open communication. The FG scenario established a welcoming environment for participants' views and was a positive addition to CHE lecturers' academic identity, acknowledging and valuing professional consideration of the topics discussed. In the next section, a discussion about the creative benefits of the bead collage technique is presented.

4.4   Theme Three: The Creative Benefits of the Bead Collage Technique

The following section focuses on the final theme of the creative benefits of the bead collage technique through an analysis of data answering RQ2: What impact does the bead collage technique have on research about academic identity? The selection of the creative strand of enquiry explored the previously underexplored area of methodology within mainstream academia, with acknowledgement of the dramatic growth utilising creative research approaches (Kara et al., 2021). Creative approaches are often considered with mixed opinions, with arguments against promoting emotional responses, or support for rational processing of ideological research theory (Lavina et al., 2017). Promoting imagination (Mills, 1959) to explore possibilities was a valuable continuation of the alternative design and analysis that initially ignited my passion and enthusiasm for this study. The following chapter explores four aspects of methodological-related considerations to the findings and the creative benefits of the bead collage technique.

Creative activity facilitates the exploration of undisclosed thoughts and reflections, which are only sometimes believed to be a vehicle to engage more profound reflexivity (Loads, 2010; Mannay, 2010). Although Woods and Roberts (2018) suggest this has not always been the case, collage represents a transcendence between perceived barriers to reflexive engagement. This is similar to the person-product-process theory, which claims that people investigate their identities during or after a creative activity (Simmons & Daley, 2013). Creative exploration exposed discomfort for participants who prefer tangible, explainable evidence to develop knowledge instead of self-representation via symbolism and metaphor. Three of the 27 participants expressed difficulty and indifference in engaging conceptually with the bead collage technique.

> '... struggled to connect to my identity I couldn't say why I chose to know what their why they were, I tried, but I just couldn't because I just thought, I can't, I can't think about this too hard, I cannot. So, I just did it. And then I struggled to explain why we don't, but it looked good.' (CtR5,1)

7.1   Bead Collage Focus Group 7: Participant 1

The second voiced that they,

> '...couldn't do the activity, couldn't, it doesn't. Sorry, doesn't represent for me. I could talk for England about it but not in beads. (BC FG7,5)

7.5   Bead Collage Focus Group 7: Participant 5

And another participant voicing that,

> 'I put indifferent in the same colours, beige, because they are not very bright, I put them on a beige background, then put these little beads on there because I got a bit bored. (BC FG6, 4)
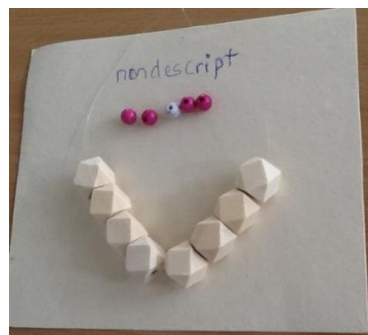
6.4   Bead Collage Focus Group 6: Participant 4

Instead, what transpired was the participant's engagement in research to develop their knowledge of the subject, added to the data. Even with these three participant's conceptual difficulties to illustrate their academic identity. Each participant completed a representation of their academic identity, providing a reason for their choice of colour and bead collage. Perhaps, the literal aspects of their interpretations were clearer than the metaphorical representations shared by other participants. Munday et al., (2017) research showed the impact of visual images to help self-exploration for realising identity. Recognising that all qualitative research participation is valuable for uncovering the hidden meaning, interaction and reflection based on the focused activity (Müller, 2021). Participants' contributions shared in the conversations communicated during the FG suggested agreement. For 24 of the 27 participants, the agency of having their voice heard evoked a clear representation of themselves in the bead collage technique discussion. As Roberts and Woods (2018) suggest, collage becomes a conduit for individuals to absorb reflexivity. The reflective element of the activity relies on an individual's reflexive nature or ability to engage creatively.

Conceptualisations associate objects for interpreting images using metaphor or assimilation with the creative process (Loads, 2010). Many participants drew on their natural inclination to represent themselves through metaphor, linking similar skills to those demonstrated in their pedagogical practices (Viera, 2009). The difference or deference in a participant's engagement with the bead collage technique highlighted the plethora of environmental factors their role encompassed.

> '…, this place, this part of this part of the college, particularly. We all think, not just me but the whole team, we all think that's the best part of our job.' (BC FG2,2)

> '… the place I used to teach the secondary schools would insist on sending their 16 year olds to 6th form College, and not an FE college it's just a sort of academic snobbery, that is there, that is inherent in the whole system.' (BC FG6,4)

Rather than limiting the reflection by separating thoughts and feelings, the bead collage technique enabled participants to consider themselves holistically. Roberts and Woods' (2018) 'Hidden Meanings' (p.626) demonstrates how the bead collage technique supported participants in exploring individual responses to their engagement with the bead collage technique or naturally when arranging the beads. The BC and CtR FG data revealed that participants' encounters with the bead collage technique depended on how they embraced reflexivity. During the BC FG4, four participants discussed the reflexive process that had taken place.

'Participant 1: We were sat for ages thinking about how we were going to do it.

Participant 3: Yeah, I think the pressure was on and I but yeah, I think I just allowed myself to just, to flow and just do it, kind of, just the fact that it was a quick.

Participant 4: Perhaps, you know you did it so quick, you reflect more on your role than maybe, I do, maybe, I think. I think of myself a fairly creative person, although I probably deliver more structured stuff like engineering. But it seems quite structured that compared to just little bits going on, very carefully creative bits all over. So, but I mean do you reflect? Do you often reflect?

Participant 3: I think I do, I do have some, possibly, and I think looking at it now, I think mine comes from not so much of as myself as an academic but the way I see my role in, in academia as well and actually, kind of, thinking, how the learners get to where they want to be and actually what the barriers and those struggles and those opportunities. So, I think I've probably come at it from slightly different angle but yeah, I think naturally. I do find myself reflecting on the things, which is maybe part of the reason, so yeah. But it is having that opportunity to do that, which is often.' (BC FG4)

Towards the end of one bead collage technique focus group, a participant made last-minute changes to their bead collages before it was their turn to speak.

'Can I, can I add one bead now. This is to represent a student who died two weeks ago.' (BC FG1, 1)

Participant agency enacted interaction with the bead collage technique, where thoughts and feelings were discussed often as a cathartic response (Culshaw, 2019). Acting as an outlet to explore their perspectives regarding the organisation to reflexively respond about their role in the college, as two participants expressed:

'And you want to change it, you want to make it even more creative, but the fact that you can do it in the first place. It's very different to anything else…' (BC FG2,2)

and

'..that's where the disruption comes in so being able to have your structure, symmetry and repetition. When things in the business change, that's the difficult bit.' (BC FG5, 2)

These participants from two different BC FGs shared the challenges they experience when there are changes in practice. Reconciling the benefits of the creative engagement for opening up and releasing the pressures illustrated in the placement of the beads to create meaning about the frustrations that are manifesting themselves in the workplace. The bead collage technique became a conduit as

highlighted by Roberts and Woods (2018) as a way to express tensions they felt were present in the structure of the organisation. Again, participants expressed the beneficial elements of the interaction with the bead collage technique from these two comments from separate FGs:

'… a little outlet. It's helpful…' (BC FG5,2)

and

'… found this very therapeutic.' (BC FG8,4)

Participants acknowledged the how the bead collage technique had assisted them in their discussions about being a CHE academic. Engagement with the activity enabled the participants to explore underlying thoughts that perhaps, without the bead collage technique would not have been so readily expressed. Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) acknowledge the impact of reflection can support individuals to gain a developed sense of self. As shown in the BC and CtR FG data, 24 participants of 27 experienced positive engagement with the bead collage technique, with one participant expressed in the BC FG4. I have summarised the participants words:

'I would only have considered exploring academic identity in the organisation through contextualised visual engagement with the bead collage. Once it is laid out in front of me, I can begin to understand the different ways that I interact with and visualise an analysis of the role we play here at the college. The process has helped me see the different perspectives and made me think about what and how I engage with my role.' (BC FG4,3)

Another participant noted the benefit of their reflective practice unfolding during the CtR activity:

'It's very difficult to be part of what they're doing and support what they're doing, when your saying, do you know what, I have to do this HE work and, and we're all in that mix office together. So, possibly, if you asked me to do one again today, it might be quite different. Personally.' (CtR5,4)

The value of partaking in the bead collage technique gained momentum for the participants, as many wished to repeat the activity.

'It could be a new way of holding meetings. I don't mean that flippantly, it's just that sometimes meetings just tend to be at a delivery of information or a shouting match. Whereas if you think through what has gone on.' (BC FG5,2)

Even regular reflective engagement can promote deeper connectivity with practices, inducing a critical awareness of the individual practices. Stronach et al. (2007) suggested that the performative

nature of reflexivity can generate self-development. The reflective benefits of the bead collage technique enabled participants to recognise the incremental developments they made in the time spent creatively engaged, and more thought-provoking responses emerged. The majority of participants acknowledged that the CtR FG enabled them to reflect differently on their academic identity after their engagement with the bead collage technique:

> '… but then when I looked at the other people's, and I said, yes, that's very interesting, that's very interesting, or I didn't consider that. So, because teaching is so you know, 360 degrees you can't really simplify too much, probably I simplified too much. And I needed to consider other aspects that didn't consider in the first place. And by looking at others, you know, collages, I could see that I missed something. So probably, yes, that's a basic representation, but maybe I can, you know, improve it a little bit more.' (CtR1,1)

> 'Whereas in this programme, when you walk into this room, things are not okay. And that doesn't necessarily reflect on your professional identity, but it has an impact on it.'(CtR3, 2)

> '… we talked about what we've reflected there and then, when we described it, although you might create something differently, it might look differently, actually. How, how you feel. Yeah, yeah, where your core values come from all of those things that you're feeling hasn't, hasn't changed.' (CtR5,4)

> 'So, um, yeah, perhaps, you could, within mine I could stick within that, but have a variation or a few variations on that theme, to reflect the other influences.' (CtR7,3)

> 'I think my memory of the collage is that I did this kind of thing that represented a kind of wavelike formation on the kind of fragmentary, sort of, set of beads, that, kind of show disparate elements, actually it does still reflect my feelings at the time, because if you remember, I was concerned about my course, our course being undersubscribed.' (CtR8,2)

> 'And I believe it ended up as a line, a very well and ordered thing, which is probably, actually, a bit more representative of me than I thought it was at the time. So, does it represent my identity? I wasn't in the mood to be feeling about my identity that day, so no it doesn't represent my identity.' (CtR8,3)

Reminiscent of the earlier BC FGs, the CtR FGs anticipated continued connective reflexivity that 12 of the 27 participants highlighted as a much-needed continuation of the activity. The practice of revisiting, reflecting and re-evaluating events is a fundamental component of being a teacher (Smith et al., 2014). One participant suggested:

> 'I think it would be interesting possibly, to have some kind of, regular reflective account recording, it is easy since well it's not easy to sit around talking, because I tend to wait till everyone says something, they have spoken before I speak so, and then the session is over.

So, you know, maybe I should have said something, but given it some more thought, it's quite difficult, but, you know. I, even though, I didn't, say I wouldn't add to it, when you see other people's like, they thought more about it than I did. I suppose it's just what comes after that time, but it would be nice maybe to see the other people's, reflecting in a year's time as to whether this is it…' (BC FG4,4)

Kreber (2010) advocates the presence of a genuine, authentic self through critical reflection. Critical reflective thinkers contribute to research and the academic scholarly community (Moon, 2004). Indeed, the reflective nature of the bead collage technique evokes a meaningful response to the question of being a CHE academic. The embodiment of reflective practice provided a conduit for self-development in practice (Hookway, 2017). As with any interaction, determining how truthful an individual is at the time can be challenging to measure. The participant's honest interaction with the bead collage technique was fundamental to the research. Several participants voiced their honest thoughts about the bead collage technique.

'I think, actually, actually, having never considered doing this or never done this before I found it a really good way to actually, contextualise and visualise the way that you think about academia and so institutionally and actually see it actually, to see it and to lay out and actually, look at it in a different way so it's great. (BC FG4,3)

Reflecting that their interaction with the bead collage technique was a positive experience which prompted them to think differently about how they engaged conceptually to visualise their identity. While there can sometimes be trepidation when engaging in a new venture, the participants' reflection about their initial engagement is unsurprising. Often when individuals are presented with new experiences there is an initial processing that is required to assume and understanding of what is required and how to react or interact with the given tools. Therefore, the opportunity to take some time, to stop, to think and then act can be perhaps a luxury that is unfortunately not forthcoming in the daily routine of professional working life.

'I think the format of doing it in a fairly small group like this; I think is a, is good, like you say, allows you to feel like in other words I suppose if you're in a bigger group doing the activity, you probably feel less able, to be honest.' (BC FG4,3)

'To be honest, it is the type of thing I absolutely dread. If somebody said to me, can you represent, and I'm like, that's just me, but actually, you know, I think it is fairly, cathartic' (BC FG4,4)

'I've got to be honest; I said yes, and of course, I'd do it to help staff out. Tiny bit cynical, in turn. No, I don't mean when I say cynical not, not like a real negative cynical, but it's because I know another colleague of mine, [Person's Name], did it yesterday.' (BC FG5,2)

However, all social research requires personal endeavour to motivate development (Schofield, 2018).

Participants' engagement with the bead collage technique authenticates ideas, thoughts, and reflections. Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) systems model of creativity can be defined using creative symbolism to visualise conceptual ideas. Creativity only becomes significant when ideas are exposed in a domain of knowledge or field of recognition (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). The diary entries explored the insider/outsider researcher's depth of knowing or action to learn to know (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; 1988).

> 'I like to think that the sense of knowing changes as we evolve as individuals. There are times when we are clear in knowing who we are, and then there are times when we have no clue!' (RD: 29)

Perhaps suggesting that the oblique nature of exploration exposed through the bead collage technique vies with the conformity of educational structures and curricula with their lines of reason and explainable outcomes. Gauntlett (2018) suggested that the physical interaction required to make a product, object or finished composition aids the creative endeavour. Rarely in professional roles when individuals are not directly connected to creative endeavours are there opportunities to play. Instead, carving time out to play can release the creativity to regard fresh ideas that innovate and motivate individuals (Nicholson, 2009).

Nevertheless, the occasion to engage in a shared experience personally and professionally does impart the importance of a CoP (Wenger, 1998). The shared experience of engaging in a creative activity, such as the bead collage technique, fosters an inner knowledge and understanding previously unseen (Gauntlett, 2007; 2011). As the participants shared their thoughts and feelings about their individual experiences with the bead collage technique, they also showed interest in each other's collages. The shared symbolism resonated within the bead collage technique, illustrating that participants' unique interpretations stuck to similar symbolic representations. Similarly, the experience of being a CHE academic, or the limited choice of beads on offer, represents academic identity in a few ways. Bourdieu (1988) conceptualised habitas supports the shared knowledge, language and understanding inhabited culturally. The shared conceptualised academic identity in the data revealed the completed bead collages of the CHE CoP. The bead collage technique represented the participant's academic identity. Despite some reservations, all participants engaged in the bead collage technique, connecting their experiences to identity and language that reflected the CHE CoP.

Participants created a variety of designs during the bead collage technique. The participants presented numerous representations, including the number of different beads. Occasionally, similar symbols were used to illustrate academic identity as seen in Appendix 7 - Bead Collages by Focus Group. Canrinus et al. (2011a, 2011b) recognised the similarity of experience between educational professionals as a unique impression of identity. Interpretations of familiar symbology were evident in the bead collages, whether from the experiential CHE culture or wider societal representations. Similarities in participants' choices disclosed how, as CHE academics, they traversed the collective interpretation of identity (Bottero, 2010). As such, participants' similarities in representation and symbolism benefit the creative mechanism of the bead collage technique for self-knowledge in response to the broader CHE environment.

4.4.1   Artful Research

Creative approaches are often associated with therapeutic healing, as suggested by Chilton and Scotti:

> '... where art therapists use art materials and approaches in therapy for healing and growth, researchers adopt the use of art materials and methods in arts-based research to generate new knowledge' (2014, p.164)

Creative activities are treated as less therapeutic self-expression and more developing cultural and personal identity (Freedman, 2017). Indicative of the therapeutic use of the bead collage technique acknowledges the possible underrepresented research area. In contrast, the bead collage technique demonstrated educational research, not therapy. A couple of participants commented on their experience of the bead collage technique being a cathartic therapy, recognising the benefits of working creatively in the FGs. The data revealed that self-reflective engagement in the bead collage technique allowed participants to symbolise their academic identity (Dutton et al., 2019). Chilton and Scotti (2014) recognise the beneficial experimentation participants embody explorations, layering personal interpretations in the bead collage. Even though the selected beads should have significance (Kay, 2013a), the participant's bead choice necessitated individual discovery. Each decision represented the forming and reforming of their positionality at that time. As participants illustrated when they were choosing the beads to represent themselves:

> '... each bead represents something important to me as part of my identity as an HE professional in my role here at the college.' (BC FG2,1)

'I am the little blue star in the middle and then kind of the green circle bigger circle are the team, I would say, like teaching team and my direct, kind of, who helped me, I would say, and then all of the little circles are, kind of, everybody else is kind of splattered around in that environment.' (BC FG8,4)

'… , talking about something that looked like a mermaid. So that must of triggered that off in my mind, and I was thinking, academic identity, HE in FE, sort of, between two worlds.' (BC FG6,1)

Individually, participants handled the beads, felt the shapes, smoothed the surfaces of the range of objects before them, and cognitively selected theoretical frames of reference (Chilton & Scotti, 2014). The range of colours represented an individual's preferences or the colour choice in wider society. Symbols such as stars and circles that were part of the hoard of beads on offer were frequently selected to make meaningful representations in wider society.

'Four stars around the cross figure in the middle, represent the four staff who created the course, and continue to fight for the course and still work very hard for the course'
(BC FG2,2)

'… the stars together are the other, HE staff, so the other lecturers, as a support.'
(BC FG4,1)

'… you've got your stars, which represent the ideas and the passion, skills and the competency [….] Stars together, so two elements come together and work really well in other areas, you've got squares' (BC FG4,3)

'And then the stars on the outside are kind of represent the pressures…'(BC FG8,4)

Alternatively, other participants selected beads to be built into a symbol or placed carefully to illustrate a particular aspect of their academic identity:

'I think I used stars as kind of like, like, like joy in my life, like a shining light. So, this is one of me.' (CtR4,2)

'The square, square ones here represent aspects or challenges and even failure as well so there may be failure along the way, which is an important part of the process, but then achievement. But in some cases, you know, failure is a fact of being a student, and not all students will achieve it. And so that's kind of a realistic perspective as well. And finally, I've got a knotted rope in there, which is representing, kind of, problem solving and trying to resolve issues, trying to manage, you know job role, kind of across different subject levels as well and that's, kind of, the knotted rope I suppose, represents not all issues can

always be completely resolved so you know that can be challenging but you know it's still something that we're aware of and really, you know, try and work our way through it' (BC FG4,2)

The physical interaction with the selected beads became a meaningful transformation symbolising holistic CHE academic identity. Participant's interaction with the bead collage technique demonstrated an artful interpretation of CHE academic identity. As discussed in section 3.2: Conceptualising Creativity in Methodology, the conceptual art form challenged four of the 27 participants. Nevertheless, participants revealed a meaningful combination of self-knowledge with physical interaction. The physicality of the bead collage technique revealed the impact of 'visual/tacit representations' (Kay, 2013a, p.4) alongside the vocabulary. Articulated language describes the bead collage technique, representing participant self-awareness (Munby & Russell, 1990). Extending reflexive thoughts in metaphor enabled participants to draw on their academic words to articulate their meaning, for example, in the FG8 (4) discussion.

'Participant 3: These are sort of, I feel like a cog, a cog within a machine, a part of a wheel within a machine. And these are the old sort of spanners you often encounter in the works. And it's sort of trying to keep that machine in the world of education. But quite often, it just slips into the world of teaching. That's just representative of the tears that fall. And the idea here is that all this moves, and this is pulling the students, at it's trying to pull students into education and learning rather than just being taught and sort of helping try and come up to, and.
Participant 1: That is epically meaningful.
Participant 3: Yes, it is.
Participant 4: Very, meaningful and deep.'

8.3   Bead Collage Focus Group 8: Participant 3

The significance of the words used in the individual bead collage descriptions was accepted as a sign of the knowledge and practice in the CHE community. Fostering the sense of belonging with the shared language symbolic of the professional practice environment in the college (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005) demonstrates the accepted norms for the collective identity in the organisation (Feather, 2010). The data reinforced the premise outlining the benefits of the bead collage technique as the mediator between internal thoughts and external stimuli in wider society (Moon, 2004). The emergence of individual revelations in the data echoed the significance of the metaphorical benefits of the bead collage technique.

4.4.2   Self-Knowledge Development

Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) sociological theory of creativity is that an environment that encourages individuals and allows them to feel valued for their efforts and is vital to their creative process. Similarly, individuals worked independently with the bead collage technique to express their thoughts about being a part of the CHE collective. Group discussions encourage individuals to share and participate more fully in conversations than alone (Mizzi, 2010). The participants engaged in the research activity at a cognitive level rather than merely following instructions to fill the space beneath the bead collage technique (Chilton & Scotti, 2014). Metaphorical engagement may require a deeper consideration to enable individuals to conceptualise the symbolic meaning of objects that they are using to reflect on their CHE lecturer academic identity. Inhibiting their ability to play and innovate affects individual confidence to create (Nicholson, 2009), with one participant sharing that they needed more time to get started as they were not creative.

> 'I'm quite surprised to be honest, because I sat here for about five minutes, not doing anything. But when I started it go much easier to do...' (BC FG4,1)

However, the same participant later identified a way to represent their academic identity using the bead collage technique. Reflection during or after the bead collage technique generated a group ethos of belonging to the CHE community. With participants reflecting on the small group in the focus groups, enabling a thoughtfulness towards the research,

> 'I think the format of doing it in a fairly small group like this; I think is a, is good, like you say, allows you to feel like in other words I suppose if you're in a bigger group doing the activity, you probably feel less able, to be honest.' (BC FG4,3)

The theory of loose parts (Nicholson, 2009) identified the cultural restrictions inhibiting an individual's creativity in society. Acknowledging that only those individuals considered creatively gifted will produce creative outputs for the remainder of society. As such, all participants had a go at being creative. Participant engagement with the bead collage technique became a process of adaptation and change (Attia & Edge, 2017). After the reflective period, amendments were made in response to initial preconceptions of the bead collage technique, including additional revisions to reflect CHE's academic identity as participants realised different representations as academics in CHE. The value of the process focuses on the importance of individual perspectives about their creative engagement (Black, 2011; Eisner, 2004). The creative process is more important than the creation at the end (Groch, 1969; Loads, 2010). 24 out of 27 participants shared how pleased they were with their final bead collages, actively photographing their creations before being prompted to do so. Impactfully, during the creative action discussion in the CtR FGs, participants welcomed conversation about academic identity at a different time and space (Mannay, 2015). After completing the bead collage technique, participants returned to the CtR FGs to reflectively consider their representation of CHE's academic identity. The three participants who expressed difficulties conceptualising their academic identity in the BC FGs found revisiting their bead collage pictures in the CtR FGs positive, as they all discussed their thoughts openly. The CtR facilitated a reflective discussion after completing the bead collage technique. One participant shared,

'I don't think I really overly thought about it back then.' (CtR4,2)

The CtRs comprised different participants from the original BC FGs. The alteration for the CtRs depended on participants' availability. Changing the participant groupings did not deter participants from discussing their bead collages with other individuals. As previously mentioned, the small CHE community means that most individuals know each other (Orr, 2013; Young, 2002). The new members included in three of the CtRs, rather than deter participants, enables a fresh perspective to be taken during the discussions about the bead collage technique. Perhaps, the newly arranged CtR FGs stimulated a revised adaption of their initial rationale to a different audience. Exploring deeper consideration promoted could have invited thoughtful clarity as participants engaged in the CtR FGs.

4.4.3   Personal Interaction

Personal interaction with the bead collage technique suited some participants more than others. Three participants needed help representing academic identity in collage form because the metaphor

and symbolism were conceptually challenging (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010). However, all participants interacted in the conversations during one or both FGs to some degree. Whether in response to the questions posed during the FGs or as part of the wider discussions that continued from the initial interaction with the bead collage technique. Individual interactions with the bead collage technique depended on each participant's comfort level (Whitehead, 2018). Whilst there was an expectation surrounding the benefits of the bead collage technique to facilitate open communication, the experience far exceeded my original thoughts. As the participants demonstrated their ease within the FGs to support their engagement with the bead collage technique and with each other. Perhaps, due to the smaller CHE CoP the participants felt able to engage, illustrated by one participant here,

> 'It is a nice environment. I remember one of the other people we were talking to, in the other focus group saying they had a sense of themselves as being involved in HE.' (CtR10,1)

When participants were invited to reflect on their bead collages, they used the photographs to remind themselves of the process they has used during the bead collage technique. Placement of the beads, bead selection, positioning and how they either decided to thread or frame with coloured background were discussed rather than hiding behind their initial trepidation (Leitch, 2006), they opened up about their choices. The medium of beads provided escapism from participants' busy lives to reflect on their CHE academic identity. As mentioned, during one of the CtR FGs,

> '... at the time, it was a lovely, sunny day. We were all in a nice mood; we had just finished teaching, remember? So, our reflection, probably reflected where we were at that time. Now, we're up against two weeks to go, and counting' (CtR5, 4)

As each participant opted to share as much or as little of their personal thoughts, whether they were honest and authentic was difficult to judge; the setting promoted a humanist facilitation process incorporating the external moderator (Clover, 2011). All participants completed ethical consent forms (see Appendix 10 – Participant Consent Form to view a blank copy of the form shared with participants) to speak confidentially during the FG and agreed to empower openness to freely share (Cox, 2013) in a safe and secure space. Whether the atmosphere of the FG positively impacts the level of sharing remains to be seen, but generally, all participants shared openly. Ethically, it was helpful to observe the changes in perspective during the interactive participant discussions. Perhaps, compromising the insider/outsider researcher, the data engendered the participants to engage more deeply with the bead collage technique, and the data set would have presented a different viewpoint.

There were expectations about confidentiality in the FGs, yet participants shared their thoughts and bead collage representations freely (Gilmore & Kenny, 2015). Reflexivity in ethical practice, perhaps, is the participant's responsibility as academic community members shaped by similar activities (Cunliffe, 2018). Mutual respect modelled the development of a shared participant experience to support each other during the creative reflexivity of the FGs.

Conformity to ethical compliance reflected respect for professional identity in the college (Briggs, 2017). However, there could have been mutual respect for the research, remembering that the participants were personally approached to participate but equally chose to be present. The level of personal sharing demonstrated the trust encountered in the FGs (Celestina, 2018), generating interest in each other and the research. After the pilot study, any potential power differential in re/formulating the bead collage technique impacted subsequent FG discussions. Beyond the initial reaction to the bead collage technique using the medium to elicit thoughts conceptually, 24 of the 27 participants explored their considerations of academic identity. Whereas the remaining three participants struggled to use the bead collage technique to explore their academic identity. With one participant sharing,

> '… my academic identity is somewhere around here. Because I've taught in HE, I still identify as an FE teacher. Um, that's kind of where I'm looking at it. I still feel like I'm looking from the outside in.' (BC FG3,2)

The bead collage technique assumed the role of a narrative tool, supporting participants' discussion about their lived experiences (Badenhorst et al., 2020; Ben-Asher & Roskin, 2018; Fleming, 2018). The addition of the final question posed at the end of each of the FGs, '…does anyone want to share anything else?' Prompted conversations in the FG flowed and often continued with additional thoughts connected to perceptions of CHE academic identity. For example:

> 'I don't care too much about the college and what they want me to be. I want to be an academic because I feel like an academic inside, and maybe the college, you know, the college, just wants to teach, really, in general.' (BC FG1,1)

> '… this place, this part of this part of the college, particularly. We all think, not just me but the whole team, we all think that's the best part of our job.' (BC FG2,2)

At the end of the CtR4, with three participants, they all shared that they were expecting to have,

'More beads. I am surprised we didn't have the beads.'

during the follow-up FG. Participants, having previously completed the bead collage technique, evidenced the ease with which they articulated their requirements and research expectations. At the end of each BCFG, the participants agreed on a time and day for the CtR FG discussion.

Following the initial interaction in the FGs, all participants contributed to the informal discussions. The perceived FG space fostered participants to share their woes in a professional forum (Scarles, 2010). The group ethos featured heavily in the FG's sessions differed depending on the mood, time or the number of participants. Colmer (2017) suggested that professional dialogue stimulates learning and communicating shared values, leading to pedagogical practice changes. Reflexively, participants' positionality was determined by the CoP (Wenger, 1998) and cordial interactions between FG members. Similarly, the Kaleidoscope theory (Milner, 2022) (see Appendix 1 - The Kaleidoscope Theory) demonstrates how individual positionality evolves due to the stimuli of the environment, learning and self-development. Therefore, within the CHE environment, lecturers are engaged in scholarship, directed or otherwise, that engenders progressive thoughts and practices.

The personal interaction between the participants resonated with the community ethos described by Wenger (1998), whereby a professional's identity in practice is intuitive, informally drawing the participants together. All the FGs fostered a form of micro-community, small enough for each participant to feel comfortable in the other's company without intimidation. As previously mentioned, not all FG members knew each other, but they would have frequented the same series of CHE focus meetings. Celestina (2018) indicates that trust is formed quickly from the shared experience, establishing relationships before or during the FG. All the participants belonged to the CHE CoP, and there was/is a commonality drawing them together with a mutual goal for student achievement. The values modelled by college leadership remained significant in the participants' interactions during the FGs. All participants can diarise events, choose when to engage in specific meetings, and prioritise their time. In much the same way, participants decided to contribute to the research. Nevertheless, they shared personal thoughts and feelings. The interaction during all the FGs generated interest, provoking discussions about their bead collages. One participant shared,

> '… you're really going to love this bead collage, and I read it, when you originally posted it, going, I didn't take, I didn't take it in, you know, and then you really love a bead collage, you're, going to express yourself and basically. I just knocked out, you know, five. Like that's something I didn't know, really.' (BC FG5,1)

The personal interactions generated discussion about the bead collage technique and highlighted the confident strength of the methodological approach. From my reflections at the time,

> 'Today, a colleague stopped me on the stairs to share that they enjoyed being part of my first focus group. They shared that the bead collage evoked feelings about their role at the college and what that meant to them. Affirmation and celebration for me!' (RD: 15)

Holland (1999) advocates reflexive movement, suggesting individual engagement boosts fresh ideas and broadens thinking or related activities, generating reflexivity. Abstract thought processes lead to the development of professional practice when adopting new ventures or tasks for participants (Kilmore & Kenny, 2015). The concept of reflexive movement remains central for the insider/outsider researcher; it acts as a catalyst for the insider/outsider strand immersed in the CHE academic environment (Milner, 2019). All additional aspects of layered experiences and the flow of ideas are in different forms for each participant. Whether the experiences were conscious or subconscious, completing the bead collage technique initiated personal interaction with the tangible materials. As such, the value of reflexivity promoted collective respect established by all as a shared experience.

Participants in several FGs asked about the research. Many discussions began whilst creating individual bead collages, as participants comfortably started conversations and engaged in the activity. These FG discussions were recorded in my reflective diary accounts (see Appendix 4 - Reflective Diary Title and Excerpts), informing the insider/outsider researcher perspectives:

> 'Being within the community of my participants I have received thoughts, had conversations and comments gifted to me' (RD:10)

> '… allows me to justify why I am in college HE, and how I can make a difference and an impact for both professionals, and students and staff and for the wider network of the community' (RD:21)

> '… I feel I have a good knowledge of the participants and would suggest that they are being their authentic self. I believe that due to the nature and approach I have assumed within my focus groups, the participants feel relaxed and able to share their thoughts about their academic identity with honesty. ' (RD:26)

Competitively, some participants saw themselves against others, comparing bead collages. Compared with other college professionals, the college's competitive business model stimulates healthy energy, promoting professional motivation (Gray et al., 2013). However, competing against colleagues could

be deemed unhealthy when the same results are sought. The belief is that greater knowledge comes from the more significant number of people involved in a venture.

A final question in the BC FGs was about what participants learnt about themselves. Although there are different perspectives shared about the individual experiences of CHE lecturer academic identity. There remained a commonality between the groups, possibly indicative of the CoP, the collective identity (Freedman, 2007) that all the participants shared the same purpose, to support students. As one participant shared:

> 'Yes, I think it is probably just how much we all feel the same.' (BC FG8,2)

Whilst initially, the comment is not ground-breaking, this was a heartfelt response. The intense collective bead collage technique experience created a unique situation where trust in sharing personal perspectives as an insider/outsider researcher with other colleagues was developed. The consent form was particularly significant as all participants felt an element of safety in the BC and CtR FGs to share openly. Group dynamics often dictate that speaking out against the grain needs to be vocalised due to unspoken peer pressure (Bleach, 2013). There was less challenge between the participants; many uttered assenting comments and murmurings, generating a collegial connection in the individual FGs. These murmurs demonstrated agreement with a view or perspective voiced by other FG members, as I noted in my RD:

> '…some participants offered supportive comments during the focus groups, sharing why they had placed the beads the way they had…' (RD: 31)

There were of limited occasions when participants felt uneasy about engaging with the bead collage technique. The three participants expressed their ability to conceptualise CHE lecturer academic identity using the bead collage technique.

However, when dealing with confident professionals, it is essential to provide time to share their thoughts and views, regardless of whether they hear their contribution. As is sometimes the case, time is available to share to promote professional discussions (Kilmore & Kenny, 2015). However, the moment or the medium in which to discuss personal representations, unfortunately, is not suitable for all, as was evident in BC FG7, discussion one participant commented how they had struggled to make conceptual sense of the bead collage technique sharing,

> 'I don't, I couldn't, I couldn't, and I am not sure if it because I am not feeling well today. But I can't represent it in any way. What I've written here, the first word is busy, and that's not what that represents because I couldn't do the activity, couldn't, it doesn't. Sorry, doesn't represent for me. I could talk for England about it but not in beads, no.' (BC FG7,1)

While the participant has completed the bead collage technique as requested and had gone through the motions, rather than conceptually engaging with the beads to metaphorically make new meaning. Given the conceptual requirement of the bead collage technique, the participant acknowledged their challenges but shared:

> '.., you know I ended up with string of beads, which I, because I was coming at it feeling very linear and very, I do this, I do that and do this, which on that day, it's very much how I felt. But actually, I mean, that is how I am, I, I like to get things right. I like process, I need to know, kind of where I'm going. But how it represented me, and my identity is not something I think about, so I don't know how I would have represented it differently.'(CtR8,3)

However, the request for participation was received positively, with all 27 participants, participating in both elements of the research. There was an emotional element to the bead collage technique. Participants were asked to share their thoughts and feelings about, what was for some a very personal process that they had previously not considered. Participation in the research was greater than expected given the numbers in the CHE lecturer population, was just over 100, with 27 participants. Recruitment underlined a few colleagues who were either unavailable or uncomfortable contributing to the research for fear of revealing more than they felt was appropriate. Other prospective participants originally agreed, accepted an invitation, and then did not attend with no explanation. The research is only for some. I did not knowingly pressurise individual participants before or during the FGs.

To negate emotional connections instilled during the bead collage technique would be a disservice to the whole research study. As the participants freely engaged in the research, they understood their rights as human beings. However, whenever individuals talk about themselves, they emotionally connect with the environment and individuals around them or with the bead collage technique (Attia & Edge, 2017; Vanner, 2015). The emotional connection can be challenging, as highlighted above, but it was not always positive, expressing frustration about the situation and being unable to engage in the activity for reasons beyond their perception to articulate at the time (Culshaw, 2019). 24 of the 27 participants voiced how they were able to be creative. As previously mentioned, the creative interaction for some participants is an abstract convention they struggled to engage with at the time.

The emotional response was fair, given the abstract conceptual processes to complete the bead collage technique. However, the participant still chose to join in with the BC FG, which provided feedback in a separate way than was expected. Contrarily, one participant stated:

> 'It made me think about how I feel about my students, and students who've just finished their exams and a couple of students who had, not breakdowns where they were just really, really tearful about it all, and I, sort of said, well, I, you know, I hope I've done my best to help, they said it wasn't you, you know, you were brilliant with revision and everything, I was just, it was just me at the, you know, collapsed under pressure.' (CtR2,1)

Whereas another participant shared their representation of the bead collage technique (which cannot be seen in the picture) with an illustration of feeling,

> '… forever stretched, and I'm a little purple bead at the bottom and these are all the weights on top of me which happened multiple faces' (BC FG8,4)

8.4   Bead Collage Focus Group 8: Participant 4

The reflective element of being a CHE academic does play a role in how we individually see ourselves and, subsequently, how we regard others around us (Adaira & Pastorib, 2011; Hughes et al., 2012; Schön, 1983). Lecturers experience constant pressure to perform, teach, remain calm, and manage situations, which places an inordinate amount of stress on them (Stronach et al., 2002). One participant explicitly explored the idea of the pressures they faced in their role during the bead collage technique,

> 'I was stacking mine for, like, the different pressures that were on us. And I think the squidginess probably reflects the fact that somewhere in that, I'm at the bottom of that, just getting squashed.' (BC FG8,2)

Culshaw (2019) describes struggling as a teacher in the daily tasks and activities as contributing to the pedagogues' role. The BC and CtR data revealed that many participants relayed emotional discontent about decision-making and expectations with the continued pressure to meet organisational requirements (Boud & Brew, 2013). As the BC and CtR FG data demonstrated, participants experienced a lack of power in their roles. The lack of power links personal/professional decision-making about curriculum, timetabling and pedagogy (Esmond, 2021). From the BC and CtR FG data, pedagogy and the teaching role were frequently shared as a struggle, meeting their students' needs and having enough time for additional support. The BC and CtR FG data highlighted the pressure to administrate the myriad role requirements, potentially removing precious time spent supporting students.

> 'Final assignments are coming in, and there's a load, load of pressure, pressure, pressure, so now the pressures off, for our course anyway, on the FdA, but there are a few referrals and different things like that, but I'm breathing again so, so maybe if I had a few more beads, I might, I might put some more positive ones in there as well.' (CtR4,2)

The data also revealed the angst about the ongoing lecturing role pressures (Thompson et al., 2021).

There are always differing views about the professional expectations of a given role (Beijaard et al., 2004). As the contract for lecturers outlines the numerous roles and tasks completed, academic-related activities are another job to meet the pedagogical module responsibilities. One participant shared that personal responsibility is paramount, stating:

> 'Whether you are a student or whether you're the lecturer, there's still that responsibility to either yourself or the college or you're learning or your knowledge.' (BC FG1,2)

Individual passion drives CHE lecturers' scholarship more than organisational incentives. Even when 22 participants of the 27 stated that they did not feel engaged as CHE academics, The rhetoric was evidence-informed, with consideration of academic literature to support their point. One participant shared:

> '… they no longer felt they were an academic, having worked in a university in the past.' (BC FG2,2)

The CHE context was brought to the discussion using the language of academics engaged in academic thought processes. In college, language usage in the college environment remains central to professionalism (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005) for accepting CoP norms and behaviours. The possibility of

accepting a collective identity in HE practices is partly linked to academic language use, acknowledging the sense of belonging in the community (Feather, 2010). Perhaps suggesting that the pracademic (Dickinson et al., 2020; Panda, 2014; Posner, 2009; Volpe & Chandler, 2001; Wasserman & Kram, 2009; Wolfenden et al., 2019) is a more accurate label to attach to the CHE academic identity. Though the perception of such was not so forthcoming when one participant shared their uncertain thoughts about the bead collage technique, which they used to explore their understanding of CHE academic identity. The alignment of an academic principle demonstrates the underpinning notion of academic engagement for this particular participant remains central to their interpretation of themselves as an CHE lecturer:

> '… based around that principle particularly physics things, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle.' (BC FG2,2)
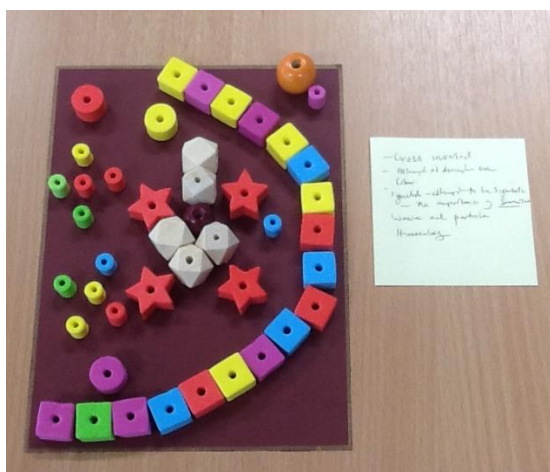
2.2   Bead Collage Focus Group 2: Participant 2

Reflexivity surrounding the bead collage technique supported the interconnective response for CHE lecturers' experience. Throughout all discussions in the BC and CtR FGs, there was a level of consideration regarding the language used and the appropriateness of the academic challenge demonstrated. From my facilitation of the FGs I was aware of the reflexivity of the participants as they considered their role in CHE. That through their engagement with the bead collage technique, participants were able to reflexively position themselves to examine their role and impact in CHE. Participants were perhaps connected to the Chrysalis concept (Milner, 2021) (see Appendix 3 - The Chrysalis Concept) evolving from the tentative steps to acknowledge their academic identity.

Developing self-awareness as a CHE lecturer to confidently make a difference in the college. As one participant shared,

> '… we try and make them [students] into people who are ready to go on, so then I thought, like a three-dimensional person, which is kind of what we do, so trying to take that and turn it into that' (BC FG6,1)

Again, there was no issue with the level of personal reflexivity employed during the BC and CtR FGs; the interaction during the discussions, even without the use of 'I', stimulated personal topics considered. On reflection, identifying a perceived barrier is interesting as insider researchers experienced support from leaders at the college (Kerstetter, 2012). The continual support throughout the completion of postgraduate studies included regular conference sponsorship attendance and continued academic scholarship engagement. Based on the comments, thoughts, and musings shared in the FGs, the reflective diary entries (see Appendix 4 - Reflective Diary Title and Excerpts) subjectively biased the viewpoint.

4.4.4   College Higher Education Reflexive Pedagogy

Frequently, commitments prevent meaningful reflexive engagement when teaching. Individual opportunities to reflect on actions and experiences are encouraged in teacher training, often with the requirement to complete a weekly reflection (Spronken-Smith & Walker, 2010). The weekly reflections were complex, and I enjoyed completing them with limited satisfaction. However, as an outside researcher, if my experience had been different, I may have viewed the task with enthusiasm. Reflective practice in the classroom to improve self-knowledge for addressing changes in pedagogy is and value personal development (De Vries et al., 2014). Reflexive pedagogy acknowledges individual vulnerability, informing professional attitudes (Kelchtermans, 2009). Adeptly identifying reflexive practices conducive to suitable learning environments acknowledges the significance of evaluating events and supports self-reflection (Vanner, 2015). Schon's (1991) reflection in practice and on practice are two ways professionals adopt reflection into their practices.

Adopting reflexivity in the research design cultivated a meaningful bead collage connected the feminist, humanist and reflexive lenses influential for the insider researcher's introspective positionality (Kerstetter, 2012). Listening to participants' voices and thinking about their responses to the bead collage technique enlightened the insider researcher's significance to understanding the cultural community (Banks, 1998). The CtRs encouraged participants to share their altered, adjusted,

and chosen beads to be placed in their pattern or layout and uniquely symbolised representations. Participants were able to voice concerns. Shared discourse about academic identity using meaningful language to demonstrate how the bead collage technique has influenced them.

The value of the feminist lens supported the application of dialogue between participants about themselves (Greenbaum, 1999). As I introduced the participants to engage in the bead collage technique, they were presented with my perspective for seeing the world. Individually, each participant found a way to interact with the beads to create a collage. Likewise, participants decided on their level of interaction with the bead collage technique, communication and choice of language in the BC FGs (Gilmore & Kenny, 2015). Reflections during the CtR connected participants to the bead collage technique and each other. Placing participants at ease when they revisited the bead collages during the CtR, reflexivity flowed. The complex decisions surrounding the bead collage design were no longer an issue; instead, what remained was the opportunity to shape the reflective considerations around the creative imagery (Kay, 2016). Although each participant engaged differently, group perspectives were observable, as were the findings and place results from the pilot study. Experiential insider/outsider research connected an appreciation towards the research, as stated at the time in my RD:

> 'Having completed the focus groups in the first week, I feel that the learning that's taken place has been immense. I thoroughly enjoyed participating, learning about colleagues and understanding their origins. About their thoughts, fears, roles within the college, and how those roles impact them and the students.' (RD: 14)

The arts-informed method assisted the construction of knowledge, reflecting meaning connected to individual thoughts and ideas non-linearly (Kara et al., 2021). Three participants reflected that their struggle to assimilate themselves with self-representation via the bead collage technique was too abstract for their conceptual processing (Kay, 2016; Moures et al., 2013). The overarching reflexivity participants shared during the BC and CtR FGs was the metaphorical benefits of pedagogical approaches (Bennett et al., 2016; Loads, 2010; Noyes, 2006). Even for some participants, the abstract approach needed to be less of a metaphorical leap for them to engage with the bead collage technique. The culmination of the bead selection, metaphorical conceptualisation of their CHE academic role was too many factors to consider in one go. This could have been a barrier to the three participants who struggled to express themselves in the bead collage technique. Whereas 23

participants responded to the bead collage technique revealing and sharing personal thoughts which lead to some very profound reflections (Loads, 2010; Mannay, 2010; Roberts & Woods, 2018).

One participant shared,

> '… that's a pressure at the moment, so I've got me in the middle, I'm the little pink dot, surrounded by all these management, and you got to be bums on seats, you got to get bums on seats, and I'm just a lecturer.' (BC FG5,1)

The questions posed after completing the bead collage technique stimulated reflective discussion. Various levels of engagement with the bead collage technique depended on the depth of reflexivity embraced by individual participants, stimulating agency, thoughts, and feelings governed by intuitive openness in the FGs. Engagement in the bead collage technique demonstrated a cathartic response, with two participants explicitly revealing their inner thoughts and feelings. As evidenced by these two comments from separate FGs about the bead collage technique,

> '… a little outlet. It's helpful.' (BC FG5,1)

when describing how completing the bead collage felt. Another participant relayed that they

> '… found this very therapeutic…' (BC FG8,4)

Creative methods often 'capture holistic, embodied experiences considered difficult to express in words alone' (Brown, 2019, p.12), acting as catalysts for profound revelation. Similarly, the Chrysalis concept (Milner, 2021) (see Appendix 3 - The Chrysalis Concept) supports the evolving sense of self-development when learning is present.

The reflexive creativity during the CtR FGs continued to impact the bead collage technique. Reflection, revisiting and re-evaluating events are essential attributes of teaching. Kreber (2010) encourages presenting a genuine, authentic self through critical reflection. Participants' reflexive engagement with the bead collage technique cemented their experiences when reconvening in the CtR FGs. The embodiment of reflective practice provided a conduit for the development of self within the practice, one participant commented,

> '… it would be interesting possibly, to have some kind of regular reflective account recording, […] but it would be nice maybe to see the others, peoples, [collages created from other groups] reflecting in a year's time as well to whether this is it.' (BC FG4,4)

Reflective practice activities, such as the bead collage technique, evoked a meaningful response to the question of being a CHE academic. Whether all responses were truthful remains questionable; However, genuine engagement appeared in participants' interactions (Breen, 2006). As recorded in one diary entry during the CtR FGs,

> 'The inspiration I draw from each of those individuals, is that honesty. The truthfulness, in actual research of themselves that self-reflection.' (RD: 14)

The participants' honest interaction with the bead collage technique was fundamental to the research. Breen (2006) opines that the moderator influences heightened awareness of any shifting opinions of vocally strong participants with the FGs. As demonstrated from this diary entry, awareness of these potential traits and behaviours was not evident during the FGs.

> 'I feel that due to my authentic nature, being the best authentic self that I can be, I can facilitate the discussion in a non-judgemental way, enabling the participants to engage fully. Whether or not the responses and discussion are authentic from the participant's perspective, I would argue that this is difficult to gauge.' (RD: 25)

Despite the beneficial impact the bead collage technique demonstrated, some participants needed help with the conceptual construction required. However, what transpired was that their engagement demonstrated equal contribution to the research. All participant involvement is valuable, and it helps the researcher uncover participants' hidden meanings, interactions, and reflections based on the focused activity (Colucci, 2017; Priest & Glass, 1994). Individual reflective engagement induced thoughts during the bead collage technique, accompanied by discussions during and following the activity. The bead collage technique facilitated an impactful response about their engagement in the research. 24 of the 27 participants shared their positive experiences, completing the BC FGs and making positive affirmations about the experience, for example,

> '… it was really fun, great to be involved…' (BC FG1,3)

> '… love it…' (BC FG3,1)

> '… it helps to pull your thoughts together…' (BC FG5,1)

> '… it could be a new way to hold meetings…' (BC FG5,2)

Singularly, the above comments demonstrated the interplay of intuitive communication revealed in the bead collage technique. However, participants were enabled to share and reflect on their CHE

academic identities during the BC and CtR FGs. The proposed change that could impact future college leadership meetings was an exciting dynamic for insight. Weber and Mitchell (1996) suggest that creative activities unlock sub-conscious thoughts, removing the need for written responses. The actionable thoughts generated in the bead collage technique would be a welcome addition to many pedagogical-focused events.

CHE's academic identity is contentious, often failing to reflect the realities of educationalists' work in a capitalist society (Neary & Winn, 2016). CHE pedagogical practices differ from universities but offer the same high-quality experiences (King & Widdowson, 2009). Students not only seek but often require different HE educational experiences. Increasing independence to overcome challenges supported in their learning is a requirement (Thompson et al., 2021). Comparisons and similarities of HE experiences conveyed to individual students enable them to choose their place of study. One participant shared a comparative experience,

> 'And they really brought a real quality that you can never get from just delivering in a mass lecture because that person isn't going to put their hand up or have the opportunity to be sharing that wealth of information. So, it's all about one person telling everyone else rather than it being like a shared collective of learning and what everyone else can bring within it. They bring a wealth of experience and other academic knowledge. Which, which, isn't, I don't think gained by being an in a big lecture theatre.' (CtR6,1)

Whereas another participant shared the impact of being an academic with HE students,

> '…here are, kind of, students that are, kind of, outside of the HE environment. So, they can be part of that package of being an academic as well, and other aspects of, kind of, personal life and another, kind of, job roles as well as they can become quite complex, as well. The hexagonal or octagonal blocks at the bottom represent my knowledge or foundation of my knowledge, which is kind of more, broader at the base, and then it becomes more focused but more complex as it kind of builds as well. Just thinking if there is anything else. These represent the HE students, kind of, circular beads here, and again, kind of, different colours representing that all students, kind of, are different, have different abilities and different needs…' (BC FG4,2)

4.2   Bead Collage Focus Group 4: Participant 2

Yet this extract demonstrates the significance of the bead collage technique to explore how combining CHE lecturer's academic identity with a student focus (Van der Want et al., 2018) can be conceptualised. Pedagogical practices remain central to the role of CHE lecturers, aligning with the pracademic role (Dickinson et al., 2022; Panda, 2014; Posner, 2009; Volpe & Chandler, 2001; Wasserman & Kram, 2009; Wolfenden et al., 2019). Metaphorical approaches to pedagogy were reflected during participants interaction with the bead collage technique. Further demonstrating the value of the bead collage technique for reflexive practice to enhance pedagogy, for continued evaluation, reworking subjects to improve the learning experience for all.

The section focused on the creative benefits of the bead collage technique in response to RQ2. The discussion on the value of artful approaches (Campbell, 2019) to exploring academic identity demonstrated the bead collage technique's significance in promoting reflection. Alternative approaches, such as the bead collage technique, enabled the development of personal interaction in a group to comfortably discuss matters related to the role of being an academic (Nicholson & Shrives, 2024). Reflexive engagement during the bead collage technique evidenced the importance of using creative approaches more readily in research (Kara et al., 2021; Lavina et al., 2017). Participant reactions generated interaction with the bead collage technique, enabling perceptions of CHE's academic identity. It was demonstrated that the bead collage technique's success in the BC FGs and the CtR FGs, with the allowance of time between them, allowed the participants the opportunity to engage with their thoughts reflexively. The benefit of the bead collage technique was the opportunity

to pause, listen and reflect (Sherry, 2013) when there is limited time for professional consider their academic identity in CHE.

5. Contribution to Knowledge: The Conclusion and New Beginnings

This study explored CHE lecturers' academic identity by gathering their perceptions using the bead collage technique. Taking an interpretive approach using qualitative research, the study aimed to unravel the intricacies of individual constructions of individual experiences of CHE lecturers. By adopting the feminist, reflexive and humanist lens integrated with the insider/outsider research positionality, I encapsulated a critical review of the study's literature, methodology and analysis. The opportunity to consider the vast range of influences that impact CHE academic identity has been outlined in the previous chapters. The conceptualisation of professional, academic and professional academic identity has been explored with consideration for the CHE lecturer's CHE academic identity.

The findings of this research revealed that there are many different interpretations of academic identity in a CHE setting. Many participants' identities resonated with, and in conjunction with student-focused approaches that included pedagogy, nurture and support for individual progression through learning. Focus groups were conducted using a two-stage approach. The bead collage technique activity involved constructing a bead collage. This was followed by the 'chance to reflect' focus group, where participants reflected on their bead collages. As the inside researcher, I gained a reflexive understanding of the participants CHE academic identity. The participants conceptually engaged with the bead collage technique to identify their academic identity, symbolised by selecting and creating individual bead collages (see Appendix 7 - Bead Collages by Focus Group). Although three participants struggled to illustrate their academic identity in bead collage conceptually, they nevertheless contributed to the discussions about their engagement as CHE lecturers.

Based on the findings from the study, academic identity in the conventional sense of the term was expressed as the pedagogical engagement that many of the participants resonated within their practice as CHE lecturers. However, 11 participants of the 27 voiced that their academic identity aligned with their aspirations of writing articles, publishing work, and presenting at conferences. The majority reconciled their CHE lecturer role with that of a teacher or pedagogue, student-centred approaches rather than research were felt to represent their academic identity. Rather than being unclear about their roles (Flecknoe et al., 2017), the clarity of the pedagogue supported the CHE settings' focus aligned with the FE sector, to support students with a WP agenda.

The following section includes a response to the two research questions generated from the research and illuminated from the literature to explore CHE academic identity using the bead collage technique. The study's limitations will then be outlined, and suggestions will be made for the impact the research has on policy and practice in CHE. Finally, the chapter will consider future emerging research endeavours illuminated by the study.

5.1   A Response to RQ1: What, if any, are the unique attributes contributing to the concept of CHE academic identity?

The key findings in response to RQ1 identified a disconnect between the CHE role and expectations to fulfil the requirements in an FE context. There remains confusion for CHE lecturers' sense of belonging to the wider HE community which negates a positive sense of self-worth, role recognition, and job title situated in organisation (Whitchurch, 2008). Participants shared that they did not have a sense of being appreciated in their identity, pedagogy or instead, nurturing students to fulfil their potential all the time. The sense of appreciation could be likened to many professionals in their roles but the pedagogical-focused role remained fundamental for CHE lecturers' academic identity. However, participants cited that they would prefer greater recognition of the benefits of scholarship in the form of research outside of the systematic resource updating while remaining current within the subject area (Boyer, 1990). Tensions remain around the workload and student focus often linked to college demands and wider expectations of the CHE lecturer role. Closely aligned to the lived experience, the shift in perspective advocates for CHE lecturers to recognise their significant impact on the educational landscape and the wider community. The offer for future research to continue the exploration of academic identity for CHE lecturers filters into the potential influence on CHE policy and practice (Donovan, 2019). Impactful role CHE lecturers offer to pedagogy as they continually engage in scholarship to enhance their professionalism through students' knowledge acquisition.

Through the FE-focused continued professional development (CPD) programme rolled out annually for the college, there are often gaps in the scholarship expectations for CHE lecturers. The tensions around individual and collective scholarship remain varied across the college, with the often little broad approach between the individual departments unifying the expectations and practices. The impact of the disconnected approach influences practice, with CHE lecturers mostly completing the necessary HE scholarship requirements, often as an addendum to the majority of practice in the college. With the focus predominantly on FE, HE leadership is often at odds with the main communications shared for pedagogy, practices and systems upskill (Kok & McDonald, 2017). Therefore, the synergistic approaches to practice counter each other, often fostering a 'them and us' mentality between colleagues rather than a collective CoP advocated by (Wenger, 1998). Internal politics around provision, systems management, and people leadership were sometimes considered divisive rather than united. The different foci between the departments highlighted the diverse practices experienced by the CHE lecturers. Accountability for the business, student numbers,

funding, and quality processes was considered an additional role rather than fully incorporated into the CHE lecturer role. While there were aspects of progressive practices, motivators for professionalism remained overarching as being 'othered'.

The unique attributes contributing to CHE's academic identity highlighted the excellent quality of student-focused pedagogical practices (Daniel, 2021). Among the favourable responses about CHE lecturers' experiences was the autonomy to decide module content to empower individual professional practice. Frustrations were expressed about the processes that were felt outside the teaching focus of the lecturer role. Pedagogy focused on students' learning experience remained central for nurturing academic progress, incentivising CHE lecturers' job roles (Harwood & Harwood, 2004; Van der Want et al., 2018), opposing views cited were the pressure to engage in research affecting CHE lecturer's academic identity. Often with research activities completed outside of the job, in lecturers' own time (Mittelmeier et al., 2024). There remains an awareness for the pedagogical development that is entwined with the research that informs practice theoretically. The term pracademic reflects lecturers' practice research that is often advocated in the sector (Botham, 2018), recognised from HEA fellowships which further endorse the theory links to practice since 2003 (Parry, 2012; Buckley & Husband, 2023). Pedagogical practices remain central to the role of CHE lecturers, aligning with the pracademic (Dickinson et al., 2022; Panda, 2014; Posner, 2009; Volpe & Chandler, 2001; Wasserman & Kram, 2009; Wolfenden et al., 2019).

The role of CPD values individual contribution to their professional academic identity. Time, space, and financial investment were essential attributes that sustain and reinforce CHE lecturers' contribution to the sector (Mason et al., 2010). Without the humanistic perspectives of perseverance and care, the students attending CHE courses would not benefit so much from their time at the college. The participants' student support and nurture contribute to professional engagement with academic pedagogy, meeting the quality directives in the sector outlined by the OfS (2019) and CHE widening participation (Bathmaker, 2016).

One of the defining features of the CHE community of practice (CoP) is the underpinning practice and critical reflection cultivating inquiry (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in the college. Teaching HE students remains at the centre of the community, upholding the principles and practices aligned with the curriculum quality requirements (QAA, 2024). The key findings identified that the often pressured role of CHE lecturers to fulfil the requirements and responsibilities for both FE and HE provision can

be confusing. Even with foundation degree awarding powers (FDAP), some tensions, perceived or otherwise, remain difficult to overcome. The confusion between the curriculum areas has been reconciled with the introduction of clear contractual arrangements. However, until this change, academic identity in CHE is about students, for students, and their pedagogical advancement and progress.

Without the acknowledgement from the college recognising the CHE lecturers' academic identity will remain a challenging entity to reconcile within the role. Developing CHE lecturer's confidence in their subject specialisms will boost confidence and minimise the unease experienced instead of empowering their unique roles in the local community (Stromquist, 2015). The alternative to HE study enables and builds confidence for mature students to realise their potential and remains an incentive for the majority of the participants. Strong value belief systems for educational engagement in practice were prevalent among the participants (Wilkinson, 2020).

Throughout the research and in response to and as a contribution to new knowledge, the conceptualisation of The Buffer-fly concept (Milner, 2017) (see Appendix 2 - The Buffer-fly Concept), the Chrysalis concept (Milner, 2021) (see Appendix 3 - The Chrysalis Concept) and the Kaleidoscope theory (Milner, 2022) (see Appendix 1 - The Kaleidoscope Theory) present a perspective for engagement with CHE lecturer academic identity. The insider/outsider research approach enabled more profound reflexivity to record the experiential transformation from student to researcher (Hollweck et al., 2022). Respectively, the research journey continually shaped my emergent self, with the realisation that academic identity was metamorphosising, like the Chrysalis concept, into a renewed sense of self-confidence and belonging (Milner, 2021) (see Appendix 3 - The Chrysalis Concept). The metaphorical benefits of conceptual frames of reference have supported my knowledge development and can be helpful for other postgraduate research students. The Buffer-fly concept (Milner, 2017) (see Appendix 2 - The Buffer-fly Concept) usefully conceptualised the key aspects of personal and professional development experience as a CHE lecturer, pracademic and early career researcher. The visualisation of the concept demonstrates the integration of personal and professional identity fostered for the formation and confirmation of CHE lecturer's academic identity.

My narrative positioning has fundamentally affected my sense of self. All my previous learning, pedagogy, and experiences have become interwoven in the research (Cunliffe, 2018). Moon (2004) described reflexivity as cognition without seams, becoming congruent to individual lives. The

insider/outsider perspective offered a necessary comparison for a holistic research review to become sustainably meaningful (Weiler, 2008). The bead collage technique revealed the significance of my role as an active, creative, and reflexive researcher (Basit, 2010; Woods, 2012; Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007). Aided by a pragmatic attitude (Eisler, 2002), the FG facilitation was an interactively reflective experience that welcomed participants to talk about their bead collages, offered represented thoughts, and enabled colleagues to connect. Room et al. (2013) suggested that pragmatic approaches facilitate attentiveness toward the discursive dialogue, capturing the essence of the conversations between participants, including the introduction of a facilitator for the FGs, which impacted insider engagement in the research (Clover, 2011) to become the outsider at that point in the process. Significantly, sensible actions were required to ensure authentic responses to the research questions. Cunliffe and Coupland (2012) acknowledge that rational approaches to narratives embed interpretative reactions in the moment and after.

Throughout the study, I experienced many positives that contributed to my self-growth, resilience, and academic identity development at CHE. The level of support provided within the college has been well-documented and appreciated. However, CHE lecturers need more time, as their contracts require a significant teaching commitment (Gale et al., 2011; Turner et al., 2009a; Turner et al., 2009b). Therefore, lecturers who wish to develop themselves beyond the CHE environment engage in research. However, there is a need for more detailed guidance for completing CHE CPD, which often results in lecturers fulfilling only the minimum requirement, leading to a lack of motivation and achievement in scholarship. Despite any physical or mental boundaries, there are ways to respond to the challenge, including sharing research journeys to motivate students and colleagues. I have developed personally and professionally in alignment with the Buffer-fly concept (Milner, 2017) (see Appendix 2 - The Buffer-fly Concept), impacting my roles as a lecturer, pedagogue, and leader. This confidence has enhanced my writing, publishing, speaking at conferences, and interactions with colleagues and friends.

5.2 A Response to RQ2: What impact does the bead collage technique have on research about academic identity?

The bead collage technique enhanced the exploration of CHE lecturers' academic identity perceptions with a chance to consider their roles within the college. The study found that facilitating authentic research allows an introspective reflection that aligns with the Kaleidoscope theory (Milner, 2022) (see Appendix 1 - The Kaleidoscope Theory). Encouraging self-learning, individuals subjectively engaged in research participate in the retelling (Fleming, 2018; Trainor & Bundon, 2020) of CHE lecturers' narratives. Participants responded as authentically as they could to interpret academic identity (Billot, 2010). In this, the innovative bead collage technique supported participants to share thoughtful perceptive responses. Removing the requirement for rigid written forms of data nurtured a reflexive appreciation of academic identity.

Conducting the research with CHE lecturing colleagues in an FE college afforded the exploration from an insider's perspective. The impact of using the bead collage technique enabled the participants to pause, stop and think about their identity (Ben-Asher & Roskin, 2018; Sherry, 2013), which was met with curiosity. The novel conceptualisation of the bead collage technique demonstrated the usefulness of a tangible vehicle to support reflexive engagement. Like the sandboxing technique adopted by Kara et al. (2021), the bead collage technique enabled individuals' narratives, thoughts and considerations to be heard (Ben-Asher & Roskin, 2018). Necessitating personal engagement, individual reflexivity during the study demonstrated a thoughtfulness towards another person's contribution to the world. If nothing else, the CHE lecturer's CoP generated a talking point, with a point of contact for the participants to culturally develop their identity (Freedman, 2017). Indicative of the therapeutic use of the bead collage technique acknowledges the under-represented worth of the study. Further, the value of the cathartic element of the bead collage technique to express oneself symbolically through the medium of beads (Dutton et al., 2019; Chilton & Scotti, 2014). The participants evolved their academic identity metamorphosis, reflected in the Chrysalis Concept (Milner, 2021) (see Appendix 3 - The Chrysalis Concept). The individual growth, whether recognised or not, enabled the CHE lecturers to share their narratives of being academic in an FE college and presented an opportunity for self-conceptualisation (Netolicky, 2016) to be applied practically and theoretically to CHE practices to form scholarly dialogue.

While there is no guarantee, the bead collage creations facilitated participant reflexivity. Generally, the participants worked with little evidence of tokenistic interactions or a 'crisis of representation' (Densin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 10). Some participants formed new connections with the activity and each other to further gain an understanding of their CHE community belonging (Clover, 2011). The critical discussions in the BC, CtR FG and RD data substantiate the importance of hosting a community of like-minded professionals as a CoP to support their critical awareness of their identity as CHE lecturers. A reflective therapeutic medium established a meaningful contradiction with fast-paced living (Silverstone, 1997). Involvement with the bead collage technique allowed reflexive self-discovery, slowing down thoughts to harness focus and meditation (Mäkelä et al., 2011). Through close contemplation of lived experience (Habel & Whitman, 2016), participants began to build an awareness of their CHE academic identity.

Feedback from focus groups suggests that the involvement of senior leaders in the study could provide valuable insight into the transformative impact of research activities across the entire college. There are distinct roles in CHE lecturers' academic identity that need improvement, as they often receive limited acknowledgement from a college-wide perspective regarding the various roles they fulfil as researchers, lecturers, student mentors, and administrators (Billot & King, 2015; Neary & Winn, 2016; Whitchurch, 2008) and pracademics (Dickinson et al., 2022; Panda, 2014; Posner, 2009; Volpe & Chandler, 2001; Wasserman & Kram, 2009; Wolfenden et al., 2019). In these increasingly time-sensitive environments, connecting and listening to other like-minded individuals in educational settings gives them a voice (Mannay, 2015). Appreciating different role responsibilities provides insight. For CHE to develop a scholarly focus, leadership should value the input of lecturers to gain the benefits of enhanced productivity and understanding. The bead collage technique workshops aided the promotion of this communicative tool provoking thoughts, proving the significant value of an ongoing dialogue about identity.

To illustrate how individual perception is revealed in the bead collage technique demonstrates the reflexive benefits of creative methodological approaches (Clover, 2011; Hunt, 2001; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011). The bead collage technique proved to be useful when engaging participants in discussions about the academic identity within the CHE. The bead collage technique facilitates individual reflexivity. An individual's identity is distinct and connected to their lived experience. Nonetheless, sharing commonality is made possible by the deliberate reflexivity united around creative activities. The bead collage technique encouraged individuals to use interactive creativity to

create a personal, distinct sense of who they are. Diverse ideas produced creative engagement that encouraged participation, removing visible and frequently invisible constraints connected to conceptual solutions, which may lead to the development of a visual self-understanding (Munday et al., 2017), where exploration of ideas through introspection often stimulates diverse ideas and emotions related to artistic endeavours. The bead collage technique promoted the presentism of holistic engagement, modelling the tacit interaction for shaping and reshaping conceptual identity.

The study enabled the exploration of academic identity using the bead collage technique to evoke an emotional response to an individual's persona (Kearney & Hyle, 2004). Far broader than a standalone conceptualisation, the study offered a focused perspective on the originality of a creative project unrelated to the creative process (Barron, 1955). In comparison, the reflective element of the activity relied on an individual's reflexive nature or ability to engage creatively. For some, processing may occur when interacting with the beads, resulting in alterations or adapted amendments during the bead collage technique whereas, during the chance to reflect focus group participants were able to reflexively engage. The space and time between the bead collage technique and chance to reflect FGs provided a useful gap to (re)consider CHE academic identity. As the research highlighted, some individuals found it challenging to interpret conceptualised objects creatively integrated using metaphor (Loads, 2010). The interaction at various levels depended on how deeply individuals engaged with or were attuned to creative conceptual interpretation as this did not work for all the participants, three struggled to represent their academic identity in bead form.

Artistic actions and visualisations frequently transform a contemplative sense of self, location, and community, facilitating understanding of the bead collage technique (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). Individual use of the bead collage technique promoted linguistic communication and supported self-expression. While discussions inspired by the bead collage technique benefit individual contemplation of identity, the bead collage technique aligns with feminist values that provide an appreciation of the interpretation, investigation, and reformatting of concepts for identification. Feminist theory's basic principles recognise the shift towards radicalising practice and support sentiments regarding concealed opinions and ideas (Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011). Collage and the bead collage technique transform consciousness, where interpretations of identity challenge the establishment of new meaning and understanding (Kay, 2013a). Individual discoveries identified may support the development of an alternative personal and professional self-identity formation (Milner, 2017).

5.3 Rewriting College Higher Education Academic Identity

Traditionally, the role of a lecturer in HEPs was primarily focused on research, which was perceived to be of higher importance than teaching (Healey et al., 2014b). However, there have been strategic shifts with the introduction of TEF and REF (2019) with pedagogical development being given more prominence. It is no longer sufficient for lecturers to be solely involved in research, as they need to be actively engaged in teaching, student mentoring, and support. Therefore, it could be argued that CHE is at the forefront of the movement towards the pracademic role (Dickinson et al., 2022; Panda, 2014; Posner, 2009; Volpe & Chandler, 2001; Wasserman & Kram, 2009; Wolfenden et al., 2019), a balance combining pedagogy with research. Rather than an overreliance on education as a business there remains a focus on ensuring students receive value for money from their lecturers due to the contemporary businessification of education (Shukry, 2017). Furthermore, educational research remains essential for informing the continuous evolving academic roles in HE. Individuals' responses to innovative ideas and how they assimilate the evolving self suggest that all-encompassing change can have a large or small impact (Flecknoe et al., 2017). The CHE lecturers' identity could be considered to shape the cyclical academic year and the educational structures in place for completing actions related to assessment. The fluid movement of identity demonstrates how CHE lecturers value processes and policies to nurture academic identity as a unique attribute. For CHE lecturers to perceive themselves as academics, there is a need for a change in the sector that can facilitate a shift in their identity, academic or otherwise. Recognising CHE lecturers' academic role, including drafting scholarly papers, presenting at conferences, and treating them as academics in the organisation, is necessary to change practice. The movement towards a more connected CHE academic identity is important for professional development. Some participants are pedagogy focused, continuing to improve and development their practices with their students at the centre. Updates for practice linked to student endeavours are not necessarily for the benefit of academic realisation but could be argued to fulfil research informed practice.

In traditional university settings, various identities remain, such as researcher, value-based perspective, and lecturer identity (Child, 2009). To support the constantly evolving educational sector, it is crucial to recognise the efforts of CHE lecturers, who must adapt to the ever-changing demands of internal and external politics (Smith & Walker, 2022). There should be a requirement to value lecturers beyond just their skills for the organisation and society instead of simply tokenistic representation (Buchanan, 2015). Acknowledging CHE lecturers' personal investment to their

pedagogy whilst maintaining quality to support students will motivate and value their work. Nonetheless, incorporating reflexivity into the lecturing role is essential for supporting personal and professional lecturer development provides a valuable workforce that can help students succeed, stay in school, and achieve their goals to gain employment. The visual aspect of the bead collage technique supported 24 of the 27 participants voicing their views through the interaction, illustrating the beneficial aspect of the bead collage technique as a vehicle to provoke thoughts for individual reflexivity (Roberts & Woods, 2018).

The bead collage technique generated meaningful discussions, making it an effective medium for reflection. I suggest that regular engagement with the bead collage technique, which aligns with the HEA fellowship (Heron & Corradini, 2023) promoting reflexive self-development. Changes or shifts in education are relative to the individual, situation, and context (Clandinin et al., 2009). Since starting my research, I have gained confidence in embracing change as a lecturer, which has improved my professional and personal skills and enabled me to navigate the evolving education sector. Adopting the Kaleidoscope theory (Milner, 2022) (see Appendix 1 - The Kaleidoscope Theory) has enabled me to conceptualise the change as I have thought about the research and being a researcher. It is essential to remember that change is inevitable for academic reflexive researchers (Berger, 2015). This introspective, reflexive attitude towards being an insider/outsider researcher has shifted my academic experience. The impact of the change has enabled my academic identity narrative to encompass the insider/outsider researcher (Hökkä et al., 2017).

Similarly, the Buffer-Fly concept (Milner, 2017) (see Appendix 2 - The Buffer-Fly Concept) reflects how professional and personal identity ebbs and flows at different crossroads, as discussed by Baxter Magolda (1998). As the participants engaged with the bead collage technique, drawing parallels with their professional identities, they began to discuss their academic identity formation in CHE. They have the space to explore their identity as CHE lecturers. The impact of exploring the conceptualisation of CHE lecturer's academic identity for future research projects, dissemination of my findings, and the bead collage technique on policy and practice. Academic identity is often shaped by individual accountability, value, and belonging within wider society (Whitchurch, 2008). HE lecturer identity is the centrally administered educational approach governing the curriculum in FE colleges (Augar, 2019). Yet, as discussed, the varied titles, roles, and responsibilities within existing leadership structures make the situation complex for lecturers (Gleeson et al., 2015). Often, titles in HEPs (Henkel, 2010) limit academic identity to organisational roles and responsibilities (Whitchurch,

2008). The diverse range of job titles in CHE is not always clearly aligned with academic role responsibilities, which leads to confusion surrounding identity formation.

5.3.1 Limitations to the Study

This chapter discusses the merits of the bead collage technique in facilitating reflexive consideration of CHE lecturers academic identity. The findings have demonstrated the benefits of creative methods to support introspection such a reflection, agency to voice thoughts and be heard and to stop and be present in the moment. Nevertheless, the challenges remain within the study that can be considered limitations.

The limitations of grouping participants based on individual availability are pragmatically suitable given the population for the study. As discussed in previous chapters, CHE lecturers govern workloads based on the timetabled sessions during the academic year. Therefore, the FG timings aligned with the ethics committee's consideration and validation for conducting the study. However, as highlighted, mood, workload, and timing in the academic year could have impacted individual interpretations that affect wellbeing and imposter syndrome (Wilkinson, 2020).

Therefore, to generate an accurate reflection of academic identity, possibly conducting additional FGs for participants to engage with the bead collage technique would further improve the overall CHE lecturers' interpretation. Though, just time to consider the benefits of the bead collage technique would not necessarily fit comfortably into the busy timetabled working week of many CHE lecturers. Almost every participant fully embraced the bead collage technique for conceptualising the academic identity of CHE. As previously mentioned, a few participants found it difficult to envision their academic identities being promoted through metaphor and imagery by the bead collage technique, which aided the debate by enabling the space to stop and think, reflect and engage differently (Loads, 2010; Sherry, 2013) when there is limited time for professional consider their academic. Knowing the limitations of a research approach as a researcher does not mean that theoretical or practical considerations should prevent creative participation. It is crucial to recognise that some people find it awkward to voluntarily share or use innovative methods that are unfamiliar or unsettling to them (Culshaw, 2019).

The unanticipated modifications made to the participant groups for the CtR FGs compromised the study's ethical considerations. Initially, the intention was for every member to rejoin their original group; however, owing to unforeseen obligations and workload, some participant availability meant they joins different CtR FGs (see Table 4, p. 111 and Table 5, p. 112). Even though it was not

immediately apparent, the changed group membership could have affected participant's reflexive participation. The college's CHE CoP brought this, where everyone knows one another. When this was not the case, as highlighted previously, there was trust and support among participants during the FGs, and they were willing to listen to one another.

The inclusion of participants in management roles was not fully considered at the time of the research being conducted. However, on reflection the impact that this may have caused on the other participants in the FGs is difficult to determine. Power and influence from the FG moderation perspective highlighted in the ethical considerations for the research. Potentially, the power differential between participants with four managers in the college could also have impacted the dynamic of the groups they were members (Barstow, 2008; Lindsey et al., 2011). In future research I will ensure I am more mindful of the potential power imbalance that may influence other participants' responses to the research and or their identity. Given the sensitivity of the subject area there is the possibility that this may have made a difference.

Another drawback identified after conducting the FGs was my researcher's confidence in posing further questions about some of the discussed topics. I could have explored the roles of the leadership members of the FGs identified in Table 3, (p. 108), for example, asking questions about how leadership facilitates academic identity for their teams. Comparisons about how different departments in the college advocate scholarship activities differently, were identified during the FGs, further critique would have been useful to ascertain why there was no overarching policy to ensure equality of experience for research across the college.

5.3.2   Impact on Policy and Practice in College Higher Education

The findings from the research emphasised the importance of recognising the diverse contractual obligations and various shifts that present challenges for academic identity in the CHE context. Shining a light on the confusion associated with the terms and titles for CHE lecturer academic identity. The research has illustrated that although there is movement towards recognising CHE, clarifying the titles and roles adopted by HEPs could minimise academic identity confusion. Often the organisational roles and responsibilities do not limit CHE academic identity; they are shaped by individual accountability, value, and belonging within the educational structure (Whitchurch, 2018). The fluidity of CHE academic identity's interchangeable nature remains influenced by individual role

responsibilities and the wider HE community (Lee & Jang, 2023). Acknowledging that 12 of the 27 participants accorded a heightened awareness of processes and politics within the college. CHE lecturers' academic professionalism can be attributed to the colleges' FDAP as an acknowledgement of upholding quality standards that contribute identity within the academic community. Therefore for CHE to remain focused on the local community to support educational development, then increasing advocates for CHE such as MEG (2018) should be openly sought and encouraged. Although measures such as including CHE lecturers' membership in HEA fellowships continues, support from the Government around the role of CHE and FE colleges needs to be more widely publicised. HEA fellowship accreditations supported a growth in CHE lecturers' academic confidence belong to a wider CoP (Wenger, 1998). There remains further work from the sector to acknowledge the role of CHE and likewise the lecturers.

5.4   Future Research

Already I have showcased several outputs from my time as a PhD student these include the presentation about academic identity and wellbeing to I intend to publish papers and speak at conferences about the conceptual frames of reference I derived from my PhD experience, including the plan to publish a book about the value of metaphor in creative research methodologies. I am keen to explore the visual benefits of research to empower early-career researchers and myself as I continue my research journey. I intend to publish my bead collage technique to be used by other creative researchers to support their research with participants to generate meaning and understanding about identity.

In the last year I have presented the bead collage technique to national and international academics showcasing the benefits of the approach (see Appendix 13). Research is important to advance the knowledge of creativity and understanding of identity.

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7. Appendix

1. The Kaleidoscope Theory

2. The Buffer-fly Concept

3. The Chrysalis Concept

4. Reflective Diary Title and Excerpts

5. Focus Group Questions

6. A Guide to Bead Collage Technique

7. Bead Collages by Focus Group

8. Ethics Form

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10. Participant Consent Form

11. Participant Email Invitation

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Appendix 1 - The Kaleidoscope Theory

The Kaleidoscope Theory - - Presentation transcript

The multiple formative suggestions influence different researchers' views during the research process leading to the development of the kaleidoscope theory. Individual perspectives at the start, middle, and conclusion of the research period are encouraged by Billot and King (2015), Lamont and Nordberg (2014), and Taylor (2017) as a crucial experience that moulds the researcher's identity. The kaleidoscope theory gives a conceptual framework that allows researchers to explore and comprehend their surroundings while deriving significance from the various experiences they have along the way. This method of self-disclosure during the research process takes advantage of the chance to highlight the frequently underappreciated abilities and tools produced during the research process as a conscious involvement leading to outcomes (Batliwala, 1994). The complicated reflective journey I went on during the PhD research process is theoretically supported by the kaleidoscope theory, which also acknowledges a shared research journey experience. Through their interactions, individual researchers can differentiate between self-revelations that are in-depth or not during the reflective stages of the journey.

According to some academics, education shapes life patterns and behaviours, including the capacity to recognise important events like critical circumstances (Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006; Lamont & Nordberg, 2014). It is up to the researchers how they respond to events or circumstances because not all experiences or reactions to experiences are favourable (Hookway, 2017). As a result, the hues and patterns in the kaleidoscope symbolise each researcher's unique preferences and experiences about their current point of view, which helps to shape the concept map of the research journey.

Whether the theoretical framework requires the researcher to conceptualise the research, there may be a chance for significant linkages to be made between the data and the research. According to some researchers, the choice to do creative research from a methodological perspective does encourage a tangible connection with the data. The visual realisation of the journeying aspect researchers connect with along the way is equivalent to the decisions taken at each juncture. Whilst this is a given in the research world for new or fledgling researchers the initial steps taken on this journey are often known. As the researcher becomes more comfortable with the research requirements an understanding is formed about why the processes are needed. The use of a visual metaphor to support this understanding of the research process further stimulates a natural creative encounter throughout the study journey.

'Visual listening' is supported by Butler Kisber and Podma (2010) as a method of engagement with the study, and Neilsen (2002) promoted individual knowledge acquisition as frequently being a distinctively personal experience. As a result, the kaleidoscope theory's inclusion supports the idea that the unique perspectives gleaned from a person's own experiences can distinguish them from the

collective and spur personal encounters with knowledge. Individual experiences are influenced by stratified personal encounters with knowledge that are informed by the social, political, and cultural context at the time (Neilsen, 2002). Depending on the attitude and voice of focus used by the researchers for the study, different people may experience the stages of the research journey differently (Zhou & Hall, 2018). Therefore, whether acknowledged or not, every unique experience is connected to the person. No matter the project, all research has a beginning, middle, and end. According to Barrow, Grant, and Xu (2020), a researcher's involvement in research is typically equivalent to that of other researchers because it is indicative of all research journeys, whether they are academic or practice-focused.

However, depending on the degree of interaction, stimuli, and experience before, during, and after the encounter, the research experiences are also uniquely distinct. Schemas that systematise the structure and format of the research offer a foundation upon which the research can be supported. As a result, images provide interpretive lenses for structuring and bringing coherence to our conceptual frameworks and pedagogical methods (Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, as cited in Weber & Mitchell, 1996).   Even if they are referred to as a group endeavour, individualised research journeys ought to also be praised as an individual draws on their interpretation of the study's methodology and results. Therefore, it might be claimed that each person's participation in the research process supported the collection of personal experiences that went into the study. The choice and decision-making in the formation of the study are determined by the ontological and epistemological features of the research/er. As a result, the visual kaleidoscope theory combines the individual contributions of thinking, experience, and knowledge. Each researcher makes decisions on personal characteristics of experience that contribute to the study, whether as a significant or insignificant consideration. However, each person's involvement in the research's ontological and epistemological stances shapes how decisions are made. Only if the researcher promotes reflective research involvement will the reflexive aspect of the kaleidoscope theory be of any help to the researcher.

Every research study that is conducted must involve reflexive participation, which is not a natural perspective embraced by all researchers (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003; Possick, 2009). Instead of being disconnected from the potential learning that can and does occur along the research journey, the researcher may become personally engaged in the research process by being attentive to the political, cultural, and professional contexts. A reflexive attitude ensures researcher connectivity.

Reflexive researcher

The ability to recognise our own truth and reliable knowledge helps the researcher reflect on the research study. It is quite challenging to include the kaleidoscope theory in and throughout the research without the construction of the reflexive self during the investigation. Understanding the delicate features of the research about the researcher and/or the research subjects provides an insightful picture of not only what is being researched but also why and how this is important for the

study's conclusions and dissemination. As a result, using the kaleidoscope theory's conclusion to comprehend the researcher's circumstance allows one to better understand the subtleties of research positionality. Possick (2009) emphasises the risks a researcher could face, particularly when the context of the study or the research poses a greater risk to the outcomes, participants, or study itself. Any research, whether academic or not, should go through an ethical review to guarantee the security of all participants. The potential hazards or contentious topics are frequently not brought up or clearly emphasised at the outset, only to raise questions once the research has started. Therefore, only the individual researcher can bring together the recognition of the coloured lens of vision contributing to the study journey. These lenses of vision help the research's direction or perspective come together to create the many colours or hues of perception at each stage of the journey. Though not always the case, these areas of focus frequently act as the pivot that permits the balance of vision or perspective to be considered. These points of focus are frequently used as a fulcrum, allowing the balance of vision or perspective to be considered, though this is not always the case.

Every conclusion is based on careful consideration of the data, which is obtained by reading past research studies and findings or from the researcher's own experience at the time.   The researcher moves on to the next stage of the research journey after making the decision using evidence-informed processes (Sachs, 2001). This is partly because of the recognition of the unique characteristics that contribute to one's positioning, which is important during the PhD process.   The varied hue combinations and distinctive patterns shape the situation's visual reality, polishing the individual's perception of emotions connected to occurrences. Importantly, the various colours have distinct meanings that increase the importance of events for subjective reasons. An additional aspect of the researcher's kaleidoscope's total frame of vision is produced by assigning significance to the lens colour choice. According to Cotterall (2013) and Ezzy (2005), these interconnected perspectives incorporate important life events and frequently stimulate the visual, sensory, and emotional connections from a particular experience or memory.

As the accumulation of the physical or metaphorical space increases or closes to accept and/or retain the information, this is the point at which experiences can be permanently stored in memory (Madikizela-Madiya, 2014). People engage with the environment around them, storing experiences and memories that can be recalled at specific times in response to stimuli. As perspectives on life change, so does how the memories are interpreted. The researcher can then choose to repeat and revisit effective portions of the research rather than those experiences that were not as beneficial based on the memories established during the research journey.

Patterns of knowing

Numerous occurrences develop an intuitive design as the study process progresses (Ellis, 2007). There are reflexive learning opportunities along the road, regardless of whether these occurrences are connected to the ethical components of the study design or partially linked to the

personal connectedness experienced during the research journey. Having accomplished a task akin before can often be linked with the confidence to take on a challenge throughout the research process, providing a sense of understanding of the possible outcome that can be obtained when acting. When learning is visualised through concept mapping, however, this is where the journey changes. Intuitive personal occurrences allow for individual enlightenment to be pulled from circumstances (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010).

The kaleidoscope's mirrors reflect the surrounding area, the educational environment, the time and location, and/or the larger society. Depending on the light (or perspective), certain viewpoints take on greater significance. The kaleidoscope is a portrayal of the effects social interactions have on individuals in communities or groups in the larger society that somewhat imitates symbolic interactionalism (Turner, 2015). Indeed, the connections between the research field, subject area, and/or the researcher community or practice all have implications for the various interactions, stimuli, and conceptualisations of the world that inform individual choice and identity (Slay & Smith, 2011). Even the people we surround ourselves with often reflect the values and vision we consider important. Therefore having a clear understanding of our ontology and epistemology bears significance to and for our research, supporting our positionality throughout the research journey.

When a new research project or study is first conceptualised, a different strategy is often used, often with comparable values in mind. The researcher is looking for a novel way to answer a question or solve a problem. The hues or values alter the researcher's or observer's position as they encounter the study. Similarly, as the material is filtered to refine the inquiry, the lenses change the perspective and direction of the research. Finally, the shifts in perspective are represented in the new pattern shown by the kaleidoscope, much to how I or any other researcher engages with their research. The transition between the beginning, middle, and end of the research process is linked to the distinct elements of the kaleidoscope pattern. These patterns shift every time the same or different researchers engage with their chosen ontology, epistemology, research methodologies, and tools.

Appendix 2 - The Buffer-Fly Concept

The nature of identity from a professional teaching perspective, can be complex and confusing. The dualism of personal and professional identity provides distinctive elements to be considered when addressing the context of the role and the responsibilities for a position. The perceived separateness of identity when acting, behaving or being professional is sometimes so removed from the concept of personal identity that the positionality of the two are poles apart. Problems can arise in the uniting of personal and professional identity with consideration being made for the possible outcomes and their disconnected nature. Harmony of personal and professional identity can be linked when amalgamating goals, aspirations and intended action for the academic (Billett and Pavlova, 2005). However, the imbalance of the two aspects of identity can also necessitate disillusionment with the roles and responsibilities of the academic when there are deep seated differences in the goals, aspirations and actions.

One way that this can be overcome is through the utilisation of the *Buffer-fly* concept where by the nature of identity can be positioned as such to establish boundaries and similarities for the individual in their role and personal identity. The crossover of the two entwined aspects of identity can be understood by the deriving the amount of cross over. Determining the key factors identified in both personal and professional identity will enable the pattern to be created to support the alignment the academic has with their given role from a personal as well as professional perspective.

Identification of individual values such as power, beliefs, conformity, selfhood, acceptance and trust will provide a basis on which to determine the individual's natural alignment to the political motivations of the role professionally with the individual values fostered prior to entering the position.

Beginning with the two main themes resonating from the *Buffer-fly* the political alignment and individual values. For the purposes of this concept political alignment outlines the determinate factors related to the educational setting or establishment, the sector and the motivations of governance from policy. The political aspects of alignment promote and at the same time prohibit the establishment of change for the individual, setting and or sector. With this in mind consideration of factors that are outside of the individuals control have a bearing

on the arena of educational transformation. Whether this is positive or negative will ultimately be determined by the individual within their role, adoption of the responsibilities and the boundaries accorded by wider internal as well as external policy.

As with any concept defining key aspects of the individual distinctiveness is not clear cut the *Buffer-fly* provides a rationale regarding the relationship between the personal and professional identity of each academic teacher. The six identified integral aspects of the individual for establishing the identity of the academic are: Beliefs, Acceptance – being and belonging, Selfhood, Trust, Power, and Conformity.

Beliefs are determined as a result of our individual upbringing (Lee and Schallert, 2016). They are informed by people around us, through family units, communities and influential individuals in our lives. The identity that we ultimately configure is inextricably linked with our own experience of life as we grow and develop from children into adults (Clandinin, 1985).   Values and beliefs develop and grow providing changes with our fledgling experience, the experiential element of learning supports the construct of our own individual beliefs. The impact that our beliefs have on own identity formation create tensions which fluctuate depending on the experience at the time (Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop, 2004). The results are that the individual acts and behaves according to their beliefs creating an identity uniting both professional and personal identity. However, the discord with a series of belief and values that are not entirely accepted within the professional role can and will foster disharmony. The unity of professional and personal beliefs is fundamental in providing academics (teachers) with the means to maintain equilibrium of self in the acceptance of their role.

Acceptance, being and belonging in any aspect of life acknowledging the arrival of the individual. When aligned to the role of the professional academic teacher the need to belong especially in a western perspective is linked to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1954). Drawing narrative from the professional in understanding and linking to the chosen responsibilities attune with any given role, the need to uncover the depth of recognition for the role allows the individual academic to sketch their own meaning and acceptance. Understanding the nuances of a given role provides a sense of knowing and privilege apportioned to the confident and able professionals (Lewis, 2014). The balance between the socially acceptable and the individual acceptance of agency supports the actions and deliberate choices made to improve self and develop beyond the perceptions of own goals. Acceptance within the constructs of the Buffer-fly supports the notion of growth for

the individual to develop a sense of self enhancing being in the moment and becoming through the transition of growth in confidence, ability and knowledge to be.

Appendix 3 - The Chrysalis Concept

The Chrysalis Concept

PLYMOUTH MARJON UNIVERSITY

Bead Collage (Kay, 2013, 2016)
- Visual Representation
- Construction of knowledge
- Seeing the unseen
- Identtrsn

Bager-Elsberg and Loads (2016), Leavy (2009), Loads (2009), Marshall (2007), Roberts and Woods (2018)

Autoethnography:

Me at the centre - researcher and researched
- Reflective Diary of my journeying

Ethnography:
Lecturers in CHE

2 Focus groups (Transitional reflexivity):
- Bead Collage
- Chance to Reflect

A 'Creative' Exploration of Academic Identity in College Higher Education (CHE).

The **Chrysalis Concept** encapsulates the transitional self going through metamorphosis.

Journeying: Emerging self, lecturer in college higher education, PhD student.

Personal identity perspective 'a subtle interweaving of many threads' (Burr, 2015 p.123).

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2019)

The continual revisitation of data led to a spiraling continuum of reflexive discovery, identifying themes in my data.

- 'The 'Influencers' of CHE'
- 'The Reflexivity of CHE'
- 'The Creative Benefits of Bead Collage'

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The Chrysalis Concept

The embodiment of visual imagery was especially significant throughout the research, evidencing the choice of methodology, methods, and data analysis. Marshall (2007) suggested that the innate connection with imagery when using visual representation is synonymous with the construction of knowledge. As with creating all new ideas, how they are interpreted and understood becomes as essential as the idea in the first place—enabling a conceptualisation of the research from a theoretical reality. Individual metamorphosis transitioning from a knowledgeable CHE lecturer to a pracademic (Panda, 2014). As an inside/outside researcher navigating the path of knowing to unknowing on the research journey. The research journey offered the integral nature of the research to signify the impact of the insider/outsider researcher. Imagery and metaphor supported the meaning-making ideas integral to the research journey. Metaphors culminated from earlier conceptualisations of professional and personal self-identity in the form of the Buffer-fly concept (Milner, 2017) (see Appendix 2 - The Buffer-fly Concept), springboarded the visual imagery to symbolise the evolving researcher and research. Only in the stages of evolution are we ultimately

entwined with the world's natural order. Conceptual imagery generates a more profound reflexive response to understand further the different stages required to fulfil the journey. The self-conscious transformation of the Chrysalis (Milner, 2021) is synonymous with the research journey.

The Chrysalis typifies the emergence of self, immersed in research as an insider/outsider researcher. Vass (2015) discusses the notion of selfhood being interchangeable and that there are expectations and nuanced structures for an insider/outsider researcher. For the researcher, the overarching morally ethical guidance surrounded research etiquette practices of role immersion. Meanwhile, the researcher often guides research as an authentic response to the research question; the participant/s become the authors of their narratives (Brady & Brown, 2022; Lomax et al., 2022; Mannay, 2010). Interwoven stories told in the initial bead collage focus groups, later to be retold in the Chance to Reflect focus groups, became a significant experiential retelling of academic identity in CHE.

Additionally, the positioning of the autoethnographic reflective diary entries became an emergent source of reflexive engagement in recording the journey. The nuanced complexity of the researcher/researched role exposes the veil of intrigue often in place, perceived or otherwise, when research is being conducted revelatory (Mannay, 2010). What transpired was the developed sense of self-knowledge (Loads, 2009). The notion that through self-reflexive practice, individuals can, in many situations, learn from experience often supports self-revelation (Berry & Clair, 2011). Uniquely entwined with the creative methodological approaches to transformative revealing, fresh insight emerged experiences. In response to solving a problem or dilemma, the Chrysalis became a way to unpick nuanced meaning from self-revelatory practices of reflectivity. Initially, my sense of identity was evident; however, this has evolved throughout the research journey.

Throughout the journey, I have been in the transitional state of becoming; at the same time, I have remained in the present, completing the necessary research requirements. Acknowledging the researcher's role becomes as much a part of belonging as the transitional elements of a new role (Ennals et al., 2016). Nevertheless, being and becoming are synonymous with a congruence to authentically enact the role and responsibilities of being an insider/outsider researcher (Attia & Edge, 2017). The participants also required self-acceptance amid the insider/outsider repositioning

researcher (Attia & Edge, 2017; Mannay, 2010). Journey completion in research, life, and career are all metaphorical or actual milestones denote achievement.

Along the research journey, all the events, significant or otherwise, have culminated in personal and professional endeavours realised. I have become as much a product of where I have been, where I am now, and where I am going. Combined with acquiring the many qualities and skills gained, I recognise that my current sense of self is and remains a transitional state of becoming and belonging (Archer, 2008). When fused with being a professional, I have been present throughout my experience as a tutor in College Higher Education (CHE), a student, and in myriad roles in my life as a woman in academia. This transitional state of not being there has also evolved as I proceed through the learning journey. Possibly linked to the transitional state within our society.

Professional being and becoming evolve from the experience in the role, knowledge of the tasks completed alongside the respect of the professional judgement accorded from colleagues or the organisation (Wenger, 1998). Aside from the expectations mentioned above within an organisation, the fledging growth of shared knowledge supports the development of a professional identity (Colmer, 2017). Located in contention with the professional belonging in a community of practice is what constitutes a professional. For the most part, alignment with the sector and organisation. However, there is often complexity surrounding the naming conventions, causing conflict around the accountability of professionals in CHE (Colley et al., 2007; Turner et al., 2015). In conjunction with the sense of being with colleagues, there is a shared level of communication and a nuanced understanding of professional learning linked to professionalism. In becoming a professional, one continually expands oneself beyond the initial completion of the outlined role. Professional development in the form of research into and for the area of practice demonstrates a commitment to the germane (Colley et al., 2007). Acknowledgement for becoming somebody recognised in society from the title and role held within society combines the transitional life of development often marked more widely by education (Billett & Pavlova, 2005).

Transitionally, individuals are continually primed for the next stage of life, whether dictated by the schooling system or social expectations within the society we are all becoming. From an early age,

conformity is taught, and we must be socially appropriate in our behaviours to fit in. Yet, this notion of belonging does present a neo-liberal tension for individuals to stand up and be counted, which creates individualism. Therefore, conscious rationalism to detach from the pressures accorded to professional working life in its many guises should perhaps be shunned in the main to strive for an individualised approach to roles and responsibilities (Moore & Clarke, 2016). Juxtaposed with the enjoyment of the process, the transition, as we transcend periods of our development, growth and achievement. The cataloguing of events is part and parcel of our life story as we meander the terrain of experience in the quest for happiness, arriving and creating a sense of being.

In the Western world, the concept of being is sometimes lost in the quest to become. Many transitional periods within my PhD journey are navigating as I have engaged with my emerging academic identity as a researcher. The acceptance of the PhD, the various gateways that are necessary to gain entry as the passage of the journey is credited along the path to the quantifiable assets that are measurable in securing the privilege to continue passages along the way (Sheehy, 1996).

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Appendix 4 - Reflective Diary Title and Excerpts

Date	Title	RD No.	Extract
10th April 2017	Starting Out	1	Belief and recognition of oneself is a rare gift, not accorded to all individuals within society. The exploration of this statement holds a light, igniting my curiosity. I wish to understand the impact of self-knowledge, reflection, and identity of self. For me, life has been an interesting experiment of self. I grew up in a wonderful open shared communication with my Mum. I have a wonderful role model who is strong, determined, compassionate, generous, and extremely kind. I am fortunate to have been nurtured in what I believe are important aspects of humanity. The grounding and recognition of self being unencumbered by the constraints of barriers to ability and opportunity were not something I really experience. I was with guidance to make and form ideas beyond the confines of my own experience. This is not to say I gained extraordinary wonderous happiness with no, or limited sadness, no this was not the case, but what I was allowed through my experience, was the opportunity to try, fail and reform, stronger and able to take on the world again. From a very early age, I was determined like my Mum but also from an innate sense of justice. I am yet to understand where the sense of justice comes from. Some would say this justice is a taught or learnt component of society, but I firmly believe that though experience from learning and conformity in society plays a part, I was innately receptive to the tenets of justice, fairness and appropriateness on a human level.
June 2017	Me in My Research – an Auto ethnographic review of self Initial thoughts	2	I love learning and gathering information throughout my daily life. I find the whole process of engaging with new information and cogitating familiar topics in a new way, interesting and exhilarating (in the main). My motivation to learn and be inspired from the information I gather is deep seated in my need to know, explore and investigate the world around me. I recognise that I am driven, and this is sometimes a stumbling block in my perception of others, as I expect others to be the same as me. This I am realising is not always the case, and at times has been and interesting lesson for me. The interest I have in learning is linked with my individual need to improve and develop myself.
	Exploration of ideas	3	The opportunity to engage in research and learn new ideas and concepts about the world excites and interests me. However the issue that accompanies this thirst for knowledge is that I tend to have too many ideas, I get distracted by the amount of information and knowledge that I have gather so much so that I then struggle with the focus that is required to make sense of the information I am seeking. The internal struggle for me makes absolute sense, I engage and therefore I learn, however what I have learnt about myself on this journey of discovery is that my own logical understanding of a situation is often marred by the nonsensical presentation of the idea for others. This has been a useful discovery about myself and has helped me to foster new mechanisms to understand my own jumbled ideas. I now know that if I have an idea, I need to stick with it, fumble along and draw out a pattern of connections between the creation of new ideas that spin from the original. I have found that by organising myself and restructuring an idea, at times on many occasions, I am able to draw some semblance of logical structure in my though processes. Now I know that the method that I adopt in making logical connections from one schematic idea to another is not a new concept nor that I am the first person to struggle with this, however what I am aware of is that this is the 'thorn' in my side that prevents my confidence from rising to the top.
	Workability	4	I have always been a self-motivated individual who is keen to aspire and be inspired by those around me and the information I receive. The knowledge growth excites and stimulates me to engage on many different levels and I enjoy the challenge that comes with consolidating new and fascinating ideas and practices. Having been on the PhD for a year now I can see the potential for exploration of ideas and how this will formulate into a realistically achievable research project which provides longevity of study and or motivation. I am keen to continue generating ideas that will make useful development in my own practice but also in the practice of others. I work hard to explore how the thoughts I am gaining from my research can be transferable into practice for other lecturers, but further to this for the benefit of students and their own learning.
	Compromise and consideration	5	As a professional I have come to realise the importance of priorities and how and where they position themselves in my life. Experience has taught me that there are some tasks and actions that can wait, they are not life threatening after all, whereas other tasks become a priority based on who is requesting the task to be completed and the motivational factor that supports the completion of the task and or action. There are many aspects of my role which I find difficult as a professional. I don't always hold with the ideas and ideals of my place of work, not because it is a poor environment to work in, far from it, but the motivation and driving force which necessitates a decision being made and or the behaviours that are required. The identified threats in the job role are often overlooked as part of the job.
16th Oct 2017	The Buffer-fly Realised	6	The nature of identity from a professional teaching perspective, can be complex and confusing. The dualism of personal and professional identity provides distinctive elements to be considered when addressing the context of the role and the responsibilities for a position. The perceived separateness of identity when acting, behaving or being professional is sometimes so removed from the concept of personal identity that the positionality of the two are poles apart. Problems can arise in the uniting of personal and professional identity with consideration being made for the possible outcomes and their disconnected nature. Harmony of personal and professional identity can be linked when amalgamating goals, aspirations and intended action for the

			academic. However, the imbalance of the two aspects of identity can also necessitate disillusionment with the roles and responsibilities of the academic when there are deep seated differences in the goals, aspirations, and actions. One way that this can be overcome is through the utilisation of the Buffer fly concept whereby the nature of identity can be positioned as such to establish boundaries and similarities for the individual in their role and personal identity. The crossover of the two entwined aspects of identity can be understood by the deriving the amount of cross over. Determining the key factors identified in both personal and professional identity will enable the pattern to be created to support the alignment the academic has with their given role from a personal as well as professional perspective. Identification of individual values such as power, beliefs, conformity, selfhood, acceptance and trust will provide a basis on which to determine the individual's natural alignment to the political motivations of the role professionally with the individual values fostered prior to entering the position.
30th June 2018	Ethics a philosophical construct	7	I feel that having come this far in my research I now have a greater appreciation of the ethical process. In the previous research I conducted I was aware of and followed the necessary protocol of ethical consideration. However, having now created a project of my own, on my own terms I have a far more considered approach to ethics. The philosophical underpinnings of research, the whys and wherefores are emerging as important themes in my own practice for my research and life. My beliefs and values are important to me as a person, how I talk and treat others is a guiding force to my personal conduct. I appreciate I do not always get it right, and that along the way I may upset someone. I don't seek to intentionally harm others, and as I have grown and matured, I am much more aware and reflective about my actions and the impact that they would have on another person. However, there are still times when I am sure inadvertently, I cause harm. I am sorry for these actions, and I do spend a great deal of time reflecting, ensuring I do not repeat those actions, so that I learn from my conduct. I feel that this is how ethics should be taught. Consideration of how we as individuals would like to be treated should influence our actions towards others. Thinking, reading, and digesting the work of Kant does impact on the deontological philosophical practices, do to others as you would want to be treated yourself. If more people lived by this tenet, I do believe that the world would be a better place. Consequently however, this is not the case but within the reaches of research the thoughtfulness of actions, impact and practices should be considered to further influence the practice of those educating themselves and others.
	Bias and research perspectives	8	Constructing, creating, and conducting your own research on your terms is a wonderful opportunity, a celebration of what you know and how you are going to indulge your own passions. Unfortunately, when gifted the liberty to research a topic of individual choice individuals are blinkered by the potential prospects, the outcomes, the engagement in seeking and finding. The complications are engrained in the human psyche, we are naturally subjective beings. The opportunity to engage in research, however big or small in content, participants or impact once conducted, the challenge for ethical research is still regarded as a central tenet for the research to be deemed plausible. Researcher bias does impact on the nature, construction, and results from the research. Where quantitative researchers try and succeed in removing the human element within the research. Qualitative researchers are bound by the human interaction, bias and perspectives which are deemed valuable in the construction of the research and subsequent data collection and analysis. I learnt important lessons from the sessions I attended at the beginning of this academic year with the online sessions provided as an enhancement for research methods development.
	Ethics and Self	9	Ethics and self-do need to be considered in the protocol of appropriateness within research. Conforming to conventions of organisations such as BPS and BERA are important as they assist in the collation of a body of knowledge which help in the mediation of correct human conduct. The moderation of processing supports the individual in making the right decisions, aligned to the societal expectations of appropriate behaviour. The legalities of conduct can and do collide with the ethical processes of decision making. Legal does not always mean ethical.
	Researcher's Role	10	For qualitative research this experience has taught me that removing myself whilst ethically appropriate had the potential to stunt the research flowing, enquiry being deeply considered and thoughtfulness being unexplored. I appreciate the need to remove the dominant stimulus from the process, but also feel that I am pertinent to my research, that by being engaged I am fully immersed. It could be that through my choice of stand in, I could have provided a deeper consideration for the person to facilitate the focus group. Again, hindsight presents a differing position. Reflection and movement from the reflective practice does gift me a different perspective now, which I feel needs to be explored. Exploration of a process and being present in the change is central to the action being useful, informative for adapting practice. Being within the community of my participants I have received thoughts, had conversations and comments

			gifted to me. These have not always been directly from participants, but from those who feel they need to share with me following conversations with participants. The impact of engaging in bead collage has been regarded with confusion, yet inspiring. A space to share confidentially in the moment. A pause of thought not often found within the CHE environment, or any educationally setting. The constant change, adaption of practice, policy and organisational protocols do often negate the positives of coming together as a community. The chance to have your voice heard is important in being valued within a community, whatever or wherever the community resides. This is one of the clear themes I have identified in my data so far. Community is what allows is to function. Educational settings are constantly seeking to find the answers about what and how practice works. Ultimately it is not a science, it is about humans coming together, being valued in their practice, having their voices heard. This very simple yet effective practice is what make the world spin. Humans like to be heard, they may not like the responses, but all the same they enjoy the consultation of practice, process, and policy. Being heard, valued, and sharing in decision making processes provides an empowering aspect of human life supporting work ethic and productivity. Within wider society we are instructed, guided to consider aspects of life, and living from others' perspectives, in a bid to gain a greater understanding beyond our own experience. However, in so doing individuals potentially compartmentalise life experience to deal with aspects which are unpleasant.
	11th January 2019	11	**Ethics Approved** One thing to consider is the nature of the first exploration, especially when the researcher's choice potentially controls that exploration in terms of the offered bead collage, which can be incredibly expressive. However, the determinism she created through the limitation of beads on offer will affect the participant's perspective of the choice and/or opportunity to think more deeply about their self-identity and Academic identity. Following the successful completion of the ethics to be celebrated but, consideration does need to be made about the perspectives of limitation based on the beads and or combination of beads on offer, which the researcher determines in the choice of bids purchased and or chosen research it's interesting to consider this as a perspective for evaluation and limitation of the research everyone might be too at the pilot study that individuals bringing on their resources in which to explore their own academic identity not sure if this will work, however, through ethnographic studies in nature, self-exploration, it could be that this is far greater and more powerful initial controlling of a situation and certainly something to be considered within the pilot study just had it approved.
	26th January 2019	12	**Being misunderstood** Today when I met with a colleague we had an interesting conversation about my research and that prior to seeing me with my research otherwise regarded research to be a process that an individual went through my own research which is also ethnographic and allows me to be who I am within my research this allows me to steer search based on my own feelings and also the interpretation whilst also bearing in mind jective rationale provided from literature this is really interesting for me because up until this point although I know I am part of my research I hadn't fully gauged with research being me and me being research and we hadn't certainly this week and conducting my first focus group I was able to realise my own ideals and ideas reality with others state of Nature of that enabled me operationalise my own thought processes in terms of how my bead collage would enable me to engage with my colleagues in college he interestingly it was also useful to recognise the not everybody hears what your saying even though you may well articulate yourself and post questions clearly where you feel there is meaning potentially of someone coming into that situation means that they don't always and don't always provide the responses that I needed because they're not listening I think that for my ultimate the graphic research I've explored who I am as a person cognising what that means and how that's represented to others as well within my community if he psychology he which again it could potentially be two different things but in but for me they are the same thing learning in college he me as the researcher within that community of learning.
11th January 2019	My Bead Collage	13	So here I am starting my bead collage. It interesting, it's taken me awhile to get here I think that there has been some reluctance about actually starting. I think this is due mainly to the amount of reading that I have undertaken, really grappling with the idea of being an academic for me whilst reading at the same time and also just experiencing I'm reflecting on what it means for me to be an academic in higher education I think possibly a little bit scared too actually voice that. I think that reticence is due to really wanting to experience what it means to be an academic fully and considering those points along the way through the discussions I have with colleagues, discussions I have with friends, discussions I have with family, so here I am about to start my bead collage. I've got some questions that I'm going to be considering at what it means for me to be an academic in higher education within a college setting and that context, I think, is unique; we move towards a precedence where we will have foundation degree awarding powers and also how that feels with regards to having teaching degree awarding powers, which is something I know that we as a college by myself and the role that I am in involved in the formation and development of college

higher education for the future so as a result I do feel very privileged to have been part of that journey I've worked in the college now for nearly 15 years. In the last 13/2 years, the last 13/2 years of teaching in HE, my role has always allowed me to develop the courses and look where the gaps are in the market programmes as well, so my involvement is really heavy in development and teaching courses, and as a result, this academic year. The Higher Education Academy has awarded me the senior fellow, and that in itself is a recognition of the work that I do within college. having that role is excellent. I have a friend from another University who also has that role. It's exciting to have the same rights as someone from another university, which is about equality for me.

So Let's Begin, What's it feel like to be an academic in college higher education with me for me it is a privilege to be in that situation and I look forward to developing that role I'm just I'm going to go with something a little bit shiny in a bit different, actually the shiny one, because I particularly like the special component that comes with choosing something shiny and gold, for me it is about that thread the thread that goes to everything and it's recognise the Education doesn't sit on its own sits uniquely with all of society and we as individuals or agents of that education it is a privilege to be an agent of education something a film excellent excellent I love my job valued people I work with a value the students I work with so value that I placed on the I like selecting the beads and choosing how I'm going to thread them and for me I am choosing to thread them selected a yellow bead which is bright and colourful and vivacious and I've gone for another bead which is wouldn't both wooden beads actually next bead has got ridges in it and it's unique and I think that my role within higher education within the college is unique it's a privileged position selecting a pink B it's like a tube and I think that is about how we all fit together I think it's a place for everybody it's just finding where that place is I'm going for a green round bead and this for me represents my favourite colour, Green it's again it's got ridges on it so it's a little bit different and again I think the role that I have within higher education as unique as senior fellow having that role within a college is a unique privilege to be unique to the point where it becomes elitist for me it is about that widen participation that we create within the job that we do I'm not using a turquoise bead again like the earlier wouldn't want but I like the colour it's bright crates for me energy and the energy that we within higher education constantly striving college environment to make the best we possibly can do for us students and for the I've now selected another green bead I'm going from the other angle going the other side because it that it's about balance answer quality who I am as a professional I'm going for a bad one but again is unique interesting a concert I think I I liked the Organic nature of a wooden bead Yes, I like that I prefer that to the glass beads plastic, beads ceramic interesting with the colours and choice and how I feel that cold to the touch but I quite like the wooden that it's warm how to warm feel about it you have a shakespeare which doesn't necessarily anywhere other than being said it wouldn't S66 you were to block them together or they do have flatter chest they might do it's about how everything fits together altogether always trying to make it work being the other something might be a challenge we can I'm at challenge being an academic in college he is about recognising that there is a challenge challenging everything we do every Walk of Life and seeing how I can improve that for people individuals to make the best for them I'm following people having people is is very important in what we do and if you don't value people you don't like people I think you'd struggle to be an academic because we are so connected I think that unlike you I haven't talked in the university but unlike University were potentially don't for most relationships with students we do we do have those relationships with students we do build that connection with them and so my identity is about the interconnectedness images coming together I'm actually do not I think that I'm going to stop now stop I'm actually going to tie in a bow because for me that completes how it looks it is the bow the Gold that enables me to understand who I am it's together beautifully it looks lovely and peace Earth best place on photo of my beard collage I think that for me it's enabled me to express doing this because she's unable to express who I am; it's enabled me to talk about the bits of myself a peg. Actually, do you know what I have been understanding in my reading but that I haven't verbalised and three verbalising the bead collage? I've made it real yeah I've made it real which is really interesting so having I have fun decided as a result of my first focus group use music in the background and actually that's been really soothing and relaxing and welcoming I have many beta but I've chosen to use the wooden beads because I like how I feel I like how the different textures of The Painted beads and the wooden beads are not painted and they will need to represent who I am I like how I creating a bow because the both me sizes the everything together the everything has a place that is all encompassing one bracelet and I have made a bracelet really but I don't know the seven so wear it but that is that is interesting for me it is a very positive experience I feel you my life my work is a very good so it for me it is about positivity the individual beads that I have represent the differences that I have within my role and the similarities I have in my role in that I've chosen the couple of beads that look similar but have different colour or different colour so it's the same colour but different type of B and I think that again represents the differences and similarities within people fashions within college higher education within higher education with people at conferences and have those opportunities to chat and share those experiences it's a wonderful way to I need to check things out really check with the ideas in your head and just to see that I said you know what we're all people trying to do

			the best I possibly can in the circumstances that we recorded and yet there are challenges and those challenges can be really difficult but and for me that is about that community building that community that we have within college HE that the students where we know who they are that professional capacity do what we do really positive experience I really enjoyed this and I've really enjoyed the Bead collage
18th May 2019	My Own Reflection	14	Having completed the focus groups in the first week, I feel that the learning that's taken place has been immense I thoroughly enjoyed the participation, learning about my colleagues and understanding where they came from. About their thoughts, their fears, the roles that they have within the college, how those roles impact on them, and the students. The interesting thing that springs to mind through how the common theme of their learning is. And the learners. And all of them feel the role to complete what they do for their learners. That's always at the core of who I am as a person. And that's why I teach. It's good to acknowledge that within those that I've been talking to and speaking with in the focus groups. Be collages allowed. Lots of unknowns. Previously unconsidered thoughts to come out. And for those thoughts to be shared with other colleagues, within the focus groups. The inspiration I draw from each of those individuals, is that honesty. The truthfulness, in actual research of themselves that self-reflection. And that whilst I'm happy to reflect. It's useful to see that there is reflection consideration soulfulness in the jobs that they do that the struggles that come through are also something which does impact on them. And that might me, those struggles. And those tensions and pressures, come from the decisions that we don't make for ourselves, that are bound by the organization, and then in turn from other bodies. Outside of the College, where we adhere to certain requirements quality control to ensure that the standardization and the practice that we have. I think what's interesting is the uniqueness of what we do. Within college he naturally. That's been clearly defined throughout from most of the focus groups that, what we do is different from universities. We offer a unique experience that recognises the individual at the centre of their learning. We know individual student names. We talk we Converse we chat. We share thoughts with them wherever we are within the University Centre on the college campus, we're there, we're there for them. And that consideration that dialogue is a constant, no matter where we are on the stairs in the cafe. On our way to one building or another. We're always accessible. And that difference in accessibility creates a unique bond between the student and the teacher. And that's been really evident with the focus group so far. Interestingly, the community of learning that's created within these focus groups has meant that individuals have spoken to other individuals that I work with, then it gets back to me how they enjoyed pay taking part in the bead collage, and that dialogue continues. The talking the chatting, the sharing. And that communication that two-way communication three-way communication four-way communication is a constant. And that constant has been something that, again, binds the individuals within the college that we communicate we share our thoughts, our feelings. And that that in turn translates to what we do for our students that we're talking with and we're sharing their thoughts we're providing feedback feed forward, feed up and showing that we're evaluating as we go through. And that that self-reflective environment, continues beyond the focus groups, beyond the teaching in the classroom.
25th May 2019	Praise 😊	15	Today, a colleague stopped me on the stairs to share that they enjoyed being part of my first focus group. They shared that the bead collage evoked feelings about their role at the college and what that meant to them. Affirmation and celebration for me!
10th June 2019	UPNorth	16	What a whirlwind of a journey I have travelled both physically and metaphorically during the last year. The knowledge I have acquired during this past year since April has been astounding. I don't say this lightly either. The shift I have taken in my own ability to assimilate new information, translate and transform has accorded me a newfound identity. The formation of this new identity was always rooted in who I am as a person. But interestingly the realisation of that self was hidden. Hidden by the detritus of everyday life, living, and generally functioning in society. I have found my own confidence. I have gained the language to communicate this to and for myself but also others. Establishing a research partnership with someone who up until last April I had not meet, provided the eventual meeting of souls and partnership in the research sense was not until November. Interestingly the formation of the relationship was founded through conversations on the phone together with email messages. The subsequent partnership has led to a common aim being established allowing a comfortable, free flowing discussion to ensue. All too often within

			our busy working lives we struggle to make time to form strong bonds with individual professionals from other colleges - HEIs, for anything beyond professional working.
12th June 2019	Reflection about gathering participants	17	I now begin the process of gathering the participants for my study. Interestingly I thought this would be a fairly easy process. I know many of the staff who teach in HE within the college, therefore, I presumed that this stage would be a simple process. I am adopting a convenience sampling approach to gathering the data.

When I reflect however, when I can gather the number f participants in such a short time and be able to place them into time slots, I feel incredibly proud of myself. I think that through the nature of them and who I am it is difficult to not see the positives in the situation. When I adopt this approach to my thinking and practice, I can gain a deeper understanding of who I am and what I plan to want to achieve. The nature of my research and the topic area are so intuitively linked to me as a person that I gain a great deal of positivity from talking and discussing my research and the impact that this has on me as a person. I believe that through the creation of focusing on the focus groups and managing the number of participants in each of the groups will allow the development of the knowledge to be enhanced and developed to a far greater level. Following on from the pilot study I found that the smaller more intimate groupings allowed the flow of comfort to be manifested. I believe that when people feel comfortable they are motivated to share and be themselves as much as possible, with this in mind I think that the participants will provide a clearer more unadulterated view of their perceptions of how and hat being an academic means for them in CHE. My participants are in some cases people I know personally and some I only know professionally. This is itself provides another fact that I can investigate as the nature of the individuals is central to my own study. As part of the ethnographic study of myself and others I can share in the dilemmas created or fostered. The nature then allows the deeper understanding to be drawn about the community of learning that is present for my and the participants in CHE. I would like to make and see changes within the practice of academic identity in my own place of work.

ON Thursday I was involved in the interview and decision making for the appointment of a new academic team in the HE area of the college. I was asking questions and listening to the creation and amendment of new ideas that will be a pathway to the new beginnings of CHE identity in the college. I felt proud and valued in being asked to participate. I feel that my own identity has changed so much since starting the PhD, I have become more mindful and able to articulate my own studies and desires for change within the college. I know that when I am given an opportunity, I strive to make the best of the situation. I see all new challenges as barriers to be overcome, to find a way through, over and under the situation to find a solution. This mind-set which I feel in part is linked to Dweck's growth mind-set is and has always been part of who I am. I am unsure if the nature of who I am is part of my own upbringing from a perspective of my family and or resultant from the nature of my own biological makeup. I do know that I am a fortunate to have been fostered opportunities in my life that enable me to be the best I can be and that my passion drives me in the right direction most of the time! I am aware that not everyone I am within the world, either in my teaching and who I work with fosters the same positive attitude to life, work and play but I do know I can have a positive impact on the nature of who I am on others. I want to ensure that everyone could reach their potential. Whatever the potential on is for each person is important in striving for the perfection they seek. This perfection or wanting to find a place to store or manifest itself is promoted in a way that will allow me and others to strive for the betterment of the world of education.

Encouraging factors
I have experienced many encouraging factors in my life. Not all these factors have been positive experiences but what has led from them has been an encouraging factor which has led me to find a solution or create movement beyond my original position. My career has been varied, but thankfully I have been able to find a path through the variety to where I am now. I have always had vision, again this I feel has been a really important component to my attitude and life moving forward. Movement and encouragement are central to my mission in life. I don't believe in being stagnant, stopping and looking around yes, to take in the scenery of life, to marvel at the wonders of the world, but not to not continuing. My very being is linked to the world, we are ever evolving, the seasons move us through the year and the months allow us to catalogue the changes. I feel that my life is linked to the changes and evolving nature of the world. I move through each section/season or component of life. I embrace the changes the difference, marvelling at the new beginnings the possibilities accorded to the changes. The doors that will open for me once the changes have taken place. The changes are sometimes needing to move |

			from one struggle to another, but at the same time the movement is present. Nothing stands still. We are humans are often scared of change; we forget to be at one with the world. Forgetting the need of the world, spinning constantly. I feel that the movement of change the shift in behaviour, patterns and thinking means that we can strive and find a place for ourselves. We are constantly trying to move towards better being, a greater place of solace or sanctuary.
12th June 2019	Analysis Dilemma	18	How do you solve a problem like analysis? This is how I am feeling right now. I am unsure how to proceed with my analysis of data. I know that my ethics has been approved with the agreement that I undertake thematic analysis, but I am unsure now if this is the right way to go. I have spoken with my friends who are experts at the methodology of research, they have guided me to read about differing aspects of analysis, some I was unaware of, as they come from a psychological standpoint, and therefore are gifted in that knowledge base. So, I have been reading about reflexive thematic analysis, I have been reading a new article published by Braun and Clarke (2019) and guess what? I have found where I need to be....I am going to use the ideas from their paper to explore my data thematically with a reflexive slant. This should not be a surprise, as I am deeply embroiled in the reflective nature of research of self and others to develop. I will keep you posted.
24th June 2019	Worry and trepidation	19	This weekend prior to the completion of the last focus groups I have been feeling worried. I am worried that my questions will be sufficient to gather the information I want to gain. I am worried that my academic identity is being questioned through my research, which I acknowledge ultimately is! Since I have begun my research, I have been feeling joyous at the prospect of undertaking a project. Feeling a sense of worth that I have previously doubted and gaining confidence all the time. Currently at work there have been shifts in the requirements and management of the college. Although this does not affect me directly, I have been very unsettled by the experience. The Why's, what if's and Maybe's are unanswered, and this has been unsettling. I think that given the time of academic year, the end is nigh, and this does present a perspective that is often experienced at this time of year – tiredness. I am tired and recognise this in myself. But at the same time, I am excited by the prospect of completing my research data collection. I am excited about the findings and deciding how to interpret them.
24th June 2019	The Wider community and networking	20	The wider community and networking. Since I've embarked on my research journey, I have experienced immense kindness from fellow researchers. in the country, when I read an article, or I see something of interest, I message that individual. And the responses I have received have been brilliant. So not only have its people email back, but then followed up with an actual chat on the phone. And or Skype and FaceTime, to engage further and share knowledge and expertise. I have found this invaluable. Then, the supportive individuals I've come across Eve rapidly, Daphne not. I've also had work, work shared, but also talks and chats with Ron Barrett, I think is a bond that, again, very, very useful in being able to direct and stay where I'm coming from. And interestingly, when I spoke to Eve, last week, or the week before other, she was amazed that I have had ethical approval to undertake my research within the college. It's such a personal sharing that I'm experiencing, and the sharing and trust and the security that the staff feel, in, discussing with me what their thoughts are, is, is wonderful. And again, it allows me to explore who I am as a person, I think because of the nature of who I am, it allows people to speak carefully. It allows people to speak confidently knowing that what they say to me is not shared. Anyway, thank you.
24th June 2019	Sharing and research practice	21	Sharing and research practice. Today following the first to have my chance to reflect focus groups, students, not students at all. Participants in my study, following the actual focus group discussion, were really interested to hear how my research was progressing. And to identify if the things that they were saying will link to what I was doing, and I shared with them about my auto ethnographic elements of my research. And it was insightful to share in that way for them to be engaged in my research through the questioning the sharing of their own experiences. Although informal, I still feel that there's been a record belt between myself and my participants. And I feel that this will enable me to create cohesion for research and scholarly activity in the college way beyond, my research, finishing and completing. And therefore, it for me and allows me to justify why I am in college he, and how I can make a difference and an impact for both professionals, and students and staff and for the wider network of the community. Interestingly, in the last couple of weeks, I have been feeling unsettled due to the changes that are occurring at college to have different management systems being put in place. But today allowed me to see the light if you like, and to see the good that comes from doing research and conducting research of being involved. So, although I have been feeling challenged, stretched, and exhausted because of everything that goes on at this time of academic year, I do feel that my research is making an impact. And that's all we can ask. That research makes an impact that our voices get heard, that get recorded and stored, and make a difference and make a change. And as I always believe you

			must be in it to make a difference and change is no good sitting on the outside. And I think it's interesting, bearing in mind the, the changes, and the introduction of college HE within Ofsted that's come and out this week in terms of FE and how that's talked about in the media. And, again, interestingly, the representation on the panel to investigate this area of research in FE is by HE providers, not FE providers. Again, missing a trick. If you want to know about the things that are going on, you need to ask the people who are involved. That's why my research really does make a difference because I'm asking the actual staff what they think, what they feel, what it means to them. So of course, it's going to be impactful, it's going to have relevance, because you're talking to the people it really matters to rather than looking in and working with. Thank you
24th June 2019	Congruence of Self	22	It's been very interesting within my focus groups is the congruent attitude to sharing, or not. So, I've had individual focus groups that have where the individuals have shared aspects of their identity academically, and how they perceive themselves within college HE. And within our field and had one participant who was adamant about the fact that he was indifferent to Haiti and Effie, he could put him anywhere. Didn't matter if he Rafi he would do what he needed to do. And yet at the same time, he was talking about the studies that he'd read in journal articles, indicating that he was well read, academic, and therefore not indifferent because he wanted to know and needs to know to do the job that he did, indicating he was caring about what he did. He did have buying, he did her focus, and because of that, I would argue that he does have academic identity. He just chooses not to acknowledge that. Now, I've known this person for a while, and being an individual who likes to be fair balanced and break the boundaries of systems is interesting, he teaches sociology. He is one of the college reps, a staff member for the union. And so, he's always an advocate for other people. And interestingly, he was, he was an interesting addition to the focus group. Interestingly again though he didn't deter others from contributing. They continue to offer thoughts about their academic identity, which were not hampered by his contradictory thoughts. And interestingly again on reflection focus groups will always throw up different aspects of individual personalities sharing ideas, either to be controversial to be difficult militant, or just have their voice heard. When maybe their voices aren't heard normally. I don't think that's necessarily the case with this individual. This person will show plenty, wherever and whenever, but it was an interesting observation, around the journal articles that will be impacting on practice theory, making those links back into why we do what we do, again I would argue that scholarly activity that links and aligns to research for personal, personal gain. But also, for professional identity and academic identity. Signing off.
24th June 2019	I am a Talker	23	I'm a talker and do my research and having to ethically guard the information from those around me. It's a challenge, not because I want to spill the beans and tell other people their secrets, but purely because I want to talk through the ideas and the concepts and the worries and the struggles and woes of others to improve the situation. And I know that I must wait a couple of years to make that happen. So, I'm struggling currently, with the fact that my identity is a talker. I like to talk I like to practice ideas, I like to challenge the rules and how things are to discuss their a to discuss why something is to understand practice, to improve practice, develop, practice, and develop professional identity and academic identity in the college. So, for me, personally have experienced a bit of a struggle. Because I am a talker. And so, I need to find another way of communicating which is writing, recording, and listening, developing my listening. I've also found that in my research and doing my research, it's still to me, it's enabled me to have a quietness, where I sit and ponder and think about things. I've always been a thinker. But undertaking PhD research makes you think. I grapple with ideas for several weeks, sometimes not finding a solution Initially. And then I do find the answer and enables me to see the light again. And so, I go into the darkness, I go into the light, I go into the darkness, and I go into the light. Currently, I'm experiencing a little bit of darkness. I can't see the clarity about how I'm going to get out of this situation. So, it is challenging right now. So That's me. Thank you
30th June 2019	Information gathering: A reflection	24	My PhD journeying has accorded me a great many privileges. Doors have opened that previously had been closed, friendships have been fostered and strength is self has been reinvigorated. My experiences have been blessed by the interactions with people. Time has been given freely, insight shared, and wisdom relayed. This has enabled me to gather and filter the information given, using it for my own purposes to enhance my position in the research. I appreciate that this would have happened anyway, that information would always be gathered, communications always developed, and people interacted with. But from the position of undertaking postgraduate study for the PhD I have seen and experienced a greater emphasise from the interaction with others. I am not sure if this is due to the confidence I have developed as part of my own journeying or whether due to the community I am entering, engaging with and belonging I have been gifted a pass into the inner sanctum.

			All my life I have been the person people want to share with, take into their confidence and seek counsel from. I have often wondered why this might be the case, now after 43 years of seeking the answer feel I am uncovering insight into this phenomenon. These are my musings, I am open, I try where I can, to not make judgements about others, I like to engage and involve myself in new experiences and relish the knowledge and excitement I gain from the activity. I believe that by being a humanist and valuing people I have become the personification of a humanist in practice. I am a counsellor, without training, I admit, but all the same I have acquired the skills to support, listen and engage with people at a basic level meaning a common connection is fostered through the interaction. My communication skills from not only a verbal sense enable me to engage with people. I try to be honest with people, not necessarily provide an answer that they seek, but rather a questioning of themselves perspective, adopting Socratic techniques to ask questions rather than provide answers.
7th July 2019	What does it all mean?	25	Since commencing my studies I have always felt I know where I am going. The direction of my research for me was clear. However, this was not the case at all. What I considered to be clarity was not so for those supporting, guiding, and advising me. My supervisors felt that my idea, whilst plausible was not clear enough. This meant that I needed to operationalise the idea into a concept that would eventually become a valid and reliable research project. The first thoughts I had to contend with was narrowing down my topic and research. I needed to determine a question that would enable me to fully explore my subject area, whilst at the same time answer the question, I had posed for myself. Where I thought there was clear thought, I now found was a murky jumble of uncertainty. I am as one friend describes an ideas person. I like to think creatively, seeking answers, undeterred by the challenges I encounter. I am great to have in a meeting; I can offer a range of solutions to the problem to move the ideas forward. However, what become obvious when I approached my own research question and topic area was a lack of clarity. I am as I say, able to think beyond the bounds of possibilities, but when it came to my own research, I struggled. I struggled to find a solution, a way forward. I knew what I didn't want to do, but not what I wanted to explore. Prior to finding my path and direction I stumbled about, opening doors, and finding everything exciting. I quickly realised that whilst I can explore ideas, because I am open to most things, approaches and ideas, I am so ideas lead that I find it hard to focus an idea down to the minutiae. I am now no longer afraid to write. I always felt that I was not quite there when it came to be writing. Now, I am strengthened and able to see the development of my knowledge base and writing to assimilate the ideas as best I can. I practice and get friends and family to question me, ask me difficult questions to which I then need to find an appropriate evidence informed response. I believe, that the more I practice this process, I will hopefully cover all aspects of the research, so that when it comes to my viva for my PhD. I now identify as an academic, I conduct research, engage in discussion with peers in a knowledgeable and self-assured way, this was previously present, but I would argue I was less self-assured. I find myself sitting quietly now, more than ever before. I think in the past I would offer my ideas and share, whereas now I think I have certainly become more reflective. I have always been reflective, but this skill and part of who I am is an aspect I feel has become strengthened. I no longer feel that need to speak at every opportunity, rather, I sit and think through my ideas fully to ensure I engage the concept before openly sharing how this has impact for the situation.
7th July 2019	Reflection the story so far	26	Well where to begin, I feel I have come so far on my journey into research, 'phdness' and personal and professional identity. I have now completed two weeks of focus groups in phase two of the study. The 'chance to reflect' focus groups have been engaging. The themes and topics discussed within the focus groups have been similar. Some of the groups are certainly in possession of a more positive outlook in life and working within CHE. Whereas other groups are perhaps more realistic or negatively driven acknowledging the negative aspects of their roles, responsibilities, and barriers to being who they need to be to realise their potential as academics in CHE. This week has certainly presented a mixed bag in terms of perspective. The reflective element of the focus groups has provided a catalyst to be honest. I feel that due to my authentic nature, being the best authentic self that I can be I am able to facilitate the discussion in a non-judgemental way enabling the participants to fully engage. Whether or not the responses and discussion is authentic from the participant's perspective, I would argue that this is difficult to gauge. However, knowing the participants in the community of learning that is CHE at ▉ I feel I have a good knowledge of the participants and would suggest that they are being their authentic self. I believe that due to the nature and approach I have assumed within my focus groups, the participants feel relaxed and able to share their thoughts about their academic identity with honesty. I think that the authentic self I am trying to stimulate in the focus groups is aligned with the thinking from Aristotle's theory around obligation and motivation to be and do something. Whilst all the participants have a vested interest to participate in the research, whatever that may look like. Some feel they want to support me as a fellow colleague in CHE

			whilst I am sure others feel the need to gain knowledge about the research I am undertaking. There are those who wish to actively engage in research because they are authentically bound by the academic scholarship fostered at ▇▇▇. Whether I am correct or not will certainly be fully explored when I get further into the analysis of the research. Interestingly on this PhD journey I have far better at deciding what I don't want rather than what I do want. I can always clearly articulate what direction I don't want to go. I suppose this approach rules out the definitive in my life, I can then focus of what I want without the mess from indecision. I suppose this approach belies the fact that I am directed by my clarity to not do something, clearing my mind to the purpose and direction of then uncovering what I do desire or want to do.
16th July 2019	Writing for academia	27	My confidence to write has always been low. I have struggled to see the patterns required to ensure my meaning comes across. I was not taught grammar at school, a child of the eighties, when the curriculum didn't include grammar. I feel that this is something that has been a burden for me throughout my life. I have got by, so to speak, with the completion of A levels, a degree, masters and now here studying for my PhD. I am very able verbally and find nothing in sharing my thoughts in discussion or presenting my research to others in a crowd. Since I have started my PhD in February 2017, I have grown in confidence with my writing. I am now able to refine my writing, though there is still some work to be done here. I have written several iterations of various papers for conference proposals and think pieces. To date I have not been refused a place at a conference based on my submission. Initially I believed that I was gaining a place based on there not being many entrants. Now however, I believe that I can articulate myself enough to get a place at a conference as a presenter based on the quality of my work. Self-doubt rears its head again and again; I do however believe that this feeling of not quite being good enough is part of human nature. We all doubt ourselves when we are unsure or seeking confirmation that we are on the right lines. I think that human nature and wanting to gain recognition for the work we do is important. Self-doubt, though not a pleasant sensation builds us up, it makes us try harder, as a motivator. I appreciate that this is not the case for all who experience self-doubt but being an eternal optimist, I look for the positives in the situation. I now realise that the work that I submit for consideration for a conference is of a quality that opens a door.
August 2019	Reflection on the notion of being	28	I have found through the experience of being one whom participants in research as researcher and researched is both extremely frightening and empowering, I think, the two though appearing so far from each other, are close. The polar opposites provide a closeness I had previously not given enough credence to. Just because I am empowered by learning and am keen to take learning to another level does not mean that others are willing or able to do the same. Whilst I am excited by the prospect of uncovering previously unseen, unexplored aspects of self. I am not daft to assume that this is felt by all those who share in my research. Some participants are just going through the motions of supporting others in research. They are not necessarily taking the thought process further, in exploring self, which is step too far. I believe through my research and how it is focused on the notion of CHE I am unique in being within my research. Research from within rather than looking from outside in. Interestingly, I am not far from the sense of self in knowing and being, I believe I am closer to knowing my true self than others. I believe that through my naturally or learned ability to be reflexive I am constantly considering aspects of existence and or experiences I have through life. My own experience has taught me the nuances of human nature, of working and being with other people. For me the connection to and with people is fundamental to who I am as a person. The nature of being honest with yourself to uncover and reveal aspects of self previously not seen are enlightening. However, I am very aware that this is not everyone's take on the world. I am also aware that there are others through history who have considered aspects of human kindness and knowing human behaviour before me. I am enlightened by the prospect of change, discovery, and innovation. I have recently, again experienced inspiring notions of human kindness.
August 2019	Learning to Listen	29	My focus groups have taught me to listen, not just listening for the sake of listening but actively engaging in the discussion. Removing myself from problem solving, finding a solution. I have watched and documented the process by which the bead collage focus groups have enabled the participants to uncover aspects of their frustration and troubles. Whilst also recognising their own joy, celebration and happiness in their role, responsibilities, and life in general. The conduit of the bead collage enabled participants to share their most inner thoughts about their own identity. I believe that this due to the medium of using and working with beads in a physical

			sense. I acknowledge the power of the tacit experience of bead collage. The success of the bead collages created were due to the factors of working with people, knowing what and how motivation works. The active listening formalised as a process was identified by Carl Rogers. Rogers assumed the role of counsellor when working as a psychologist, enabling individuals to work things out for themselves. This is how I modelled myself within the focus groups, when I was not present, within the initial bead collage focus group with my team of colleagues, this was not evident from the recording of the session. T
8th Aug 2019	Reflection – The Art of Transcription	30	The transcription of all my audio files has now been completed. I feel and immense sense of relief that this element of my research has now finished. This is not due to the task itself, which I found insightful and useful to revisit and listen to the audios of the focus groups again. No, it is more that I am rapidly progressing through my research and feel at peace with the completion of tasks. I like to feel in control, like most people and when you are juggling the amount of work needed for a PhD there are times when the research is overwhelming. I like to think that the sense of knowing changes as we evolve as individuals. There are times when we are clear in knowing who we are, and then there are times when we have no clue! I have felt tense for the last couple of months and I think that this is since I am progressing through my research, but there was such a lot to be completed. I am now in a comfortable position moving forward knowing that some elements have been completed. The next phase of my research is to complete the work for the major review on the 25th September. I need to have my introduction and methodology sections completed and send to the panel by the 11th September, alongside the log of my meetings and timeline.
Sept 2019	Reflection - Engagement in process and outcomes	31	'Chance to Reflect' the opportunity to consider aspects of previous activity and engagement in bead collage. The chance to reflect (CTR) focus groups permitted participants to reflect on the notion of academic identity through the medium of bead collage. The creation of the bead collages created a pause in time, a time and space to consider alternative perspectives about academic identity. The CTR groups were made up of alternatives, differences, conflict and consideration of thoughts, opinions, and questions. Although I had planned for these sessions to mirror the original members of each of the bead collage focus groups, this was not to be. The variation of membership of the CTR focus groups was determined in part to those who were able to still commit to the original invite made following the completion of the bead collage focus groups. Deviating from the original plan was not detrimental to the facilitation of the CTR focus groups. If anything, I feel the mixture of different participants added to the originality of the sharing. The CTR sessions were diverse in presentation completely made up in some cases of participants from three different original focus groups. I believe that this further diversification of the focus groups added another dimension to the research which I had not predicted in anyway. Uniting participants due to time, availability free from conflicting time constraints meant that in the main calmness resided. This was not the case for all sessions. There was additional tension experienced by some of the participants, this was due in part to the timing of the session but also to the workload at the end of the academic year. The finishing off, completing arduous tasks which at the time feel like they lack depth and purpose. Whether the differentiation of the membership created difference, yes, it did, but I also had nothing to compare this with. Would there have been difference as there was a duration of time that had passed from one session to another. However, this did mean that I was able to have a fresh experience every time I entered the room for the session. Incidentally this would have occurred naturally anyway, so not sure what or how this would have looked in practice. The reflection and consideration following the bead collage was important enabling insights into the process of creating the bead collage as well as the processing of inner thoughts and processes within the capacity to be an academic in CHE. The triggers were similarly encountered in the CTR focus groups in much the same way as the original bead collage focus groups. However, I certainly experienced a greater, deeper thought process taking place. The reflexive element of the intended research methodology was facilitated with participants joining in with their thoughts and reflections. I think that this could have been due to the fact that the participants are clearly reflective in their natures and or that they are able to consider the experience beyond and apart from their normal everyday lives as professionals in CHE. However, I think another aspect to be considered in the questioning and mediation of the facilitator, me, within the focus groups. As previously discussed my non-judgemental practice during the focus groups could have and in the main did allow the free discussion from all the participants, with minimal probing and pointed questions to unravel the nuances of meaning and moving the discussion along.

4th Nov 2019	Writer's Block	32	Writing can be a real blocker when trying to engage in academic skills. Writing and knowing what to write can be difficult when you have no idea or focus. Thinking about what to write and planning the content is difficult so planning is essential when engaging in academic writing. Being mindful of the strategies to engage in when writing is challenging but can assist in managing time. One of the time management strategies is about what can be achieved in a short amount of time and what this feels like. Whilst a skill to be honed one that is rarely sought or fully explored for students. Once you write and see what can be achieved.
			I like to feel that motivation can be a blocker to achieving the target of writing and this can be difficult in writing. Look for smaller goals and how this can be achieved by breaking down into individual tasks. Once one part is accomplished then a sense of wellbeing motivates intrinsically for you to continue.
			Five minutes becomes ten minutes that further down the line becomes twenty minutes. You can achieve a great deal in a short amount of time and see how this can be utilised to develop focus and discipline in the world of academic writing.
			When engaged in reflection and reflective writing again the impact of the exercise is doubled. Reflection and reflective practice
			Reflexively writing can aid development of writing and academic skills for oneself. Knowing the impact of this activity can be hard to recognise initially but becomes clearer once completed. Understanding my own confidence in writing and grammar lessons is tricky for me as I struggle to spend enough time, or sufficient time of going over the work completed and what this then means for the finished product, my writing. I think that the art of writing has been siloed in all that we do in life. Education has a place for writing and so the engagement in the activity is seen to be beneficial for those involved. I understand the strength of engaging academically in the work of writing but also recognise that this can be challenging.
			I have come to enjoy writing; I see the benefits of giving time to the action. The therapeutic nature of writing is cathartic and makes for an interesting process when engaging in a topic. I just need to ensure that I can engage for a period in all that I do. I know that other activities in my own life mean that I sometimes struggle to concentrate on the action of writing. I feel that motivation is s factor when writing and this does become a barrier to my own ability and or confidence.
			I am really looking forward to getting back on with writing as I have placed the activity at the back of my mind. I need to set myself targets on a daily and weekly basis to ensure I complete a set amount of writing. This will also benefit the quality of my writing. Once I have written and initial draft I can then engage in modification and revisions to improve my work. I recognise that reading academically goes alongside the mechanism of writing and so employing the two in union does help to develop academic skills. I am an academic and recognise the skills i need to employ but possibly don't always engage in on a regular basis.
			Sometimes I need to remember my skills and what I a worth. Celebrating the good things, I do and how I do them can support my own motivation when studying for my PhD and or academic work at the college. I am only human and acknowledge that I am not always able to meet my own expectations as there are challenges in all that I do. I also acknowledge that I am only capable of the things I set myself up to do. I need to maintain a positive mindset in my academic work and ensure that I can use the experiences to spur me on in my work. The work being that here at the college but also within my own studies on the PhD.
			Exploring intricate ideas, feelings and thoughts can and do allow the time and space to consider the greater benefits of writing academically. I know that through the engagement in space, time and focus I can achieve a great deal. The achievement does not need to be in competition with others but used merely to measure my own engagement and composite parts of being an academic in CHE.
			When I struggle to motivate myself, I need to fully employ my own ways of doing things, how I feel and what this means for my overall wellbeing.
			I feel down, unmotivated, and stagnant when I don't complete the tasks, I set out to achieve. I need to employ mechanisms to support me for the next twelve months to complete my thesis. I love being academic and feel that the needs on my own self outweigh the non-completion of being a student studying a PhD.
			I need to development my motivation and skills in accomplishing the necessary skills needed to write academically and complete my PhD as currently I am not progressing as I feel I should. I know that I have already completed a great amount of work in the time I have been enrolled as a

			PhD student, but currently I feel I have not moved forward. Keep. Moving forwards needs to be more readily employed in my own journey of writing, studying and being an academic. I strive to complete the work I set out to do, i would like to do more exercises, tone my body, and alter my diet to be healthier. A health mind, body and soul will culminate in reaching the targets for myself rather than standing still, which is what I feel I am currently doing. Reflection and the benefits of seeking answers from within are tools to ensure engagement with self. Being honest with myself and seeing the benefits of the work that I do. I need to be honest about my achievements and how these will better aid my own development for the future. Whilst I am not only focussing on academic development for career prospects, I need to be aware of the skills I have and wish to take forward on my academic learning journey. I feel I can achieve great things, and this will support all I do in my teaching generating a supportive pedagogically way forward for education.
6th August 2020	Reflexive Thematic Engagement	34	When I initially considered the interaction, I was going to have with my data, I was concerned that the process in the research journey remained as authentic to my research prior to this point in time. I felt that the importance of the engagement in my analysis should not be negated in the telling of my own autoethnographic narrative. I have and still do remain as honest in my retelling of my data as I can. However, I do need to be aware of the factors which do influence my own perceptions of data analysis and engagement with my findings. Sword (1999) recognises the value of reflecting on the process of engaging in qualitative research, suggesting that too often researchers do not acknowledge their own beliefs and values as they approach the data analysis phase of their research. I am privileged through my own interaction with the data, in that I am, a lecturer in CHE.

Appendix 5 - Focus Group Questions

Research questions for the pilot and main study

1. What does it feel like to be an academic in CHE?
2. How did you feel when you were completing the bead collage?
3. How easy was it for you to represent your academic identity through the bead collage?
4. What do you like best about the bead collage?
5. Can you explain the elements of the bead collage and how you are representing them?
6. What problems do you see with the use of bead collage as a research method?
7. How did you find the bead collage as a means to explore your academic identity?
8. How would you describe the experience of completing the bead collage?
9. Can you explain why you chose to frame your bead collage in this way?
10. What factors have you identified about your academic identity; are there aspects you have chosen not to represent in your collage?
11. Have you learnt anything new about yourself through the use of bead collage?
12. How have you chosen to represent your identity as an academic in CHE?

'Chance to Edit' follow up semi structured interviews:

1. How was the experience of revisiting your bead collage?
2. How do you feel the bead collage you created still represents your academic identity?
3. Can you explain the elements of the bead collage and how you are representing them?
4. Are there any factors which you chose to highlight about your academic identity?
5. Can you explain why you chose to frame your bead collage in this way?

Questions for bead collage as a research tool to be used for the pilot study only.

1. Do you feel bead collage is useful as a means to explore academic identity?
2. What would you change to improve your experience of bead collage? For example, materials, more time, and different environments.
3. Were there any limitations to the representation of your academic identity through the use of bead collage?

Appendix 6 - A Guide to Bead Collage Technique

A Guide to Bead Collage Technique (BCT)

Aims and Objectives

The aim of the BCT is to support participants exploration of identity.

The objective is to conceptualise identity using the BCT.

Participant Recruitment Criteria

This BCT can be used to explore and identify the identity of any participant population (including children, young people and adults who have the ability to express an opinion on the beads meaning to them).

Methodology

This is a qualitative research methodology that has been developed from the creative methodologies approach.

Method

The BCT collects data in the following way, and consists of two parts:

1. The participant creation of a bead collage

Bead Collage is individual – Think about how you want to represent your identity in bead form. Here are some questions you may consider for your collage:

- Justify the selection of beads included the colour, shape, material and size for the collage
- What is the significance of each selected bead?
- Why has the selected colour, size, material and shape: why is this significant?
- How does the type of bead represent identity?
- What is significant about the selection of bead used?
- What is the significance of the position of the bead/s?
- How does the position of the bead/s impact the whole collage?
- Who is represented in the bead collage?
- What is represented in the bead collage?
- Why are certain aspects/perspectives represented in your bead collage?
- How is identity represented in the bead collage?
- Why is the representation of identity important?

2. Participant revisits the bead collage they created with a two – four weeks of the original bead collage creation.

This is the opportunity for the participant to have a 'chance to reflect' on their bead collage photograph, having had time to think about their identity and whether the bead collage still reflects how they perceive this. The 'chance to reflect' can be in a group or individually.

Why is reflection important – 'chance to reflect' allows the researcher to be reflexive and check their interpretations of the participants data on identity and adjust if needed.

Ethics

As the researcher you are collecting participant data and therefore need to ensure informed consent through normal ethical approval for your institution.

Equipment

What is needed to complete the BCT?

- A variety of beads of different colours, shapes, materials and sizes
- A variety of coloured paper and card
- A variety of different threads some elasticated
- Or whatever bead-like objects you have to hand

Discussion guide

Suggested questions to ask:

1. What did you feel when completing the bead collage?
2. How easy was it for you to represent identity through the bead collage?
3. What do you like best about the bead collage?
4. Can you explain the elements of the bead collage and how represent them?
5. How did use the bead collage technique to explore identity?
6. Describe the creative experience for completing the bead collage?
7. Explain the framing of your bead collage? Why did you choose to thread the beads? Why did you choose to frame the bead?
8. What factors have you identified about your identity; are there aspects you have chosen not to represent in your collage?
9. Have you learnt anything new about yourself during the bead collage technique?

10. How have you chosen to represent your identity?

'Chance to Reflect' follow up questions:

1. How was the experience of revisiting your bead collage?
2. Does bead collage still represent your identity? If so, how and why is this the case?
3. What individual elements of the bead collage have you chosen to represent?
4. Are there any factors which you chose to highlight about your identity?
5. Explain your choice of bead collage framing.

Considerations for success

In order for bead collage technique to be successful the following need to be considered and mitigated wherever possible:

- Selection bias – when participants are not representative of the sample
- Loss to follow-up – when participants are no longer actively engaged in the study
- Feasibility – the decision for the study to proceed or not
- Recruitment – gathering participants from the population to be sampled
- Study team – the researchers on the study (appropriate training and guidance aligned with the research principles, design and process)
- Participating centres – where data is collected, and collated in collaboration with the study team
- Study funding and progress – the monies gathered through funding bids that require progress checks
- Study organisation and ensuring data quality – the establishment of data quality management tools to ensure accuracy, consistency and completeness throughout the study
- Organisation and management – planned management of the study with regular monitoring to standardise the procedure and techniques used in the study
- Researcher responsibilities – to ensure ethical considerations are upheld for participants and participant data. Oversee the study, accurate management and recording of research outcomes and new information gathered
- Central coordination – support and uphold the research protocol and procedures to maintain the accuracy and trustworthiness of the research study
- Ethical considerations – the overarching principles that guide the research design, practices and operational aspects of the study
- Ensuring data quality – research team training to be provided to ensure the established research principles are followed accurately for data gathering, analysis and data handling requirements
- Study significance – an explanation of the importance of the study and contribution to the research area

Appendix 7 - Bead Collages by Focus Group

BC FG1

1.1 Bead Collage Focus Group 1:
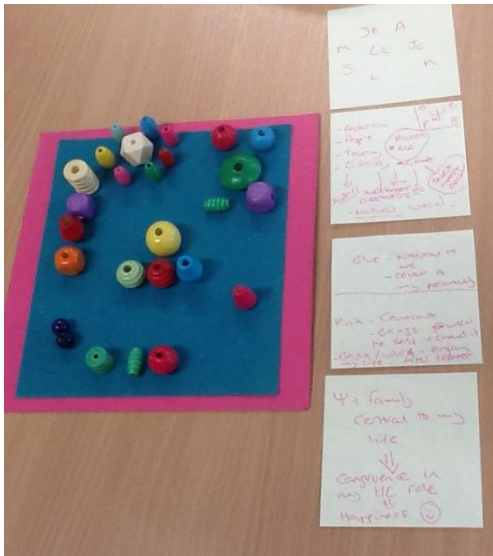Participant 1
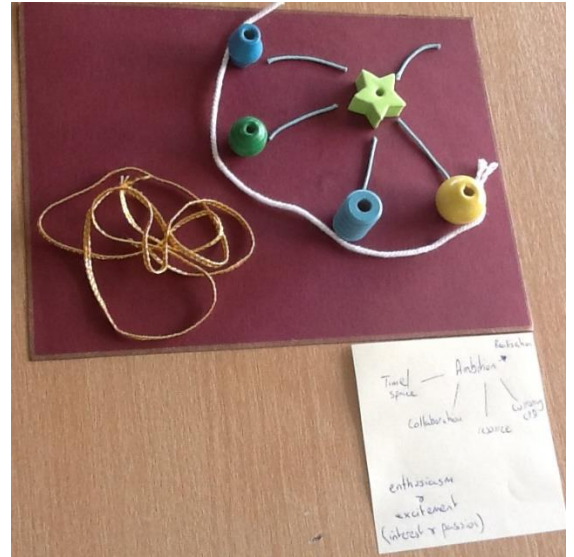
1.3 Bead Collage Focus Group 1:
Participant 3

1.2 Bead Collage Focus Group 1:
Participant 2

BC FG2

2.1   Bead Collage Focus Group 2:
Participant 1

2.2   Bead Collage Focus Group 2:
Participant 2

BC FG3

3.1   Bead Collage Focus Group 3: Participant 1

3.3   Bead Collage Focus Group 3: Participant 3

3.2   Bead Collage Focus Group 3: Participant 2

BC FG4

4.1   Bead Collage Focus Group 4: Participant 1

4.3   Bead Collage Focus Group 4: Participant 3

4.2   Bead Collage Focus Group 4: Participant 2
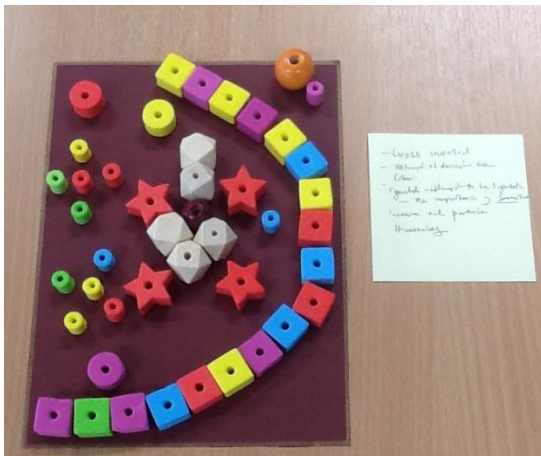

4.4   Bead Collage Focus Group 4: Participant 4

BC FG5

5.1   Bead Collage Focus Group 5: Participant 1

5.2   Bead Collage Focus Group 5: Participant 2

BC FG6
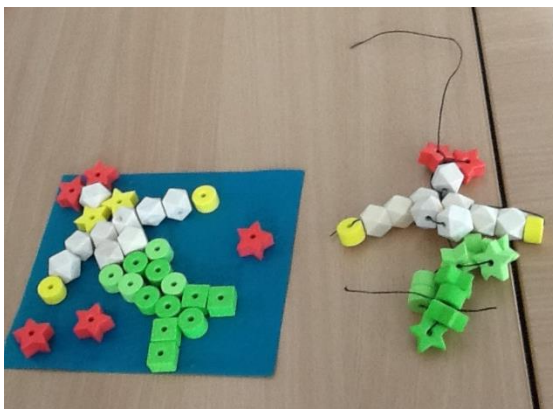
6.3   Bead Collage Focus Group 6: Participant 3

6.1   Bead Collage Focus Group 6: Participant 1

6.4   Bead Collage Focus Group 6: Participant 4

6.2   Bead Collage Focus Group 6: Participant 2

BC FG7

7.1 Bead Collage Focus Group 7: Participant 1

7.2 Bead Collage Focus Group 7: Participant 2

7.3 Bead Collage Focus Group 7: Participant 3

7.4 Bead Collage Focus Group 7: Participant 4
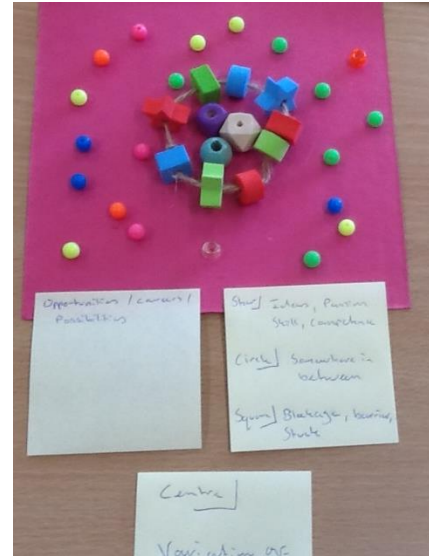

7.5 Bead Collage Focus Group 7: Participant 5
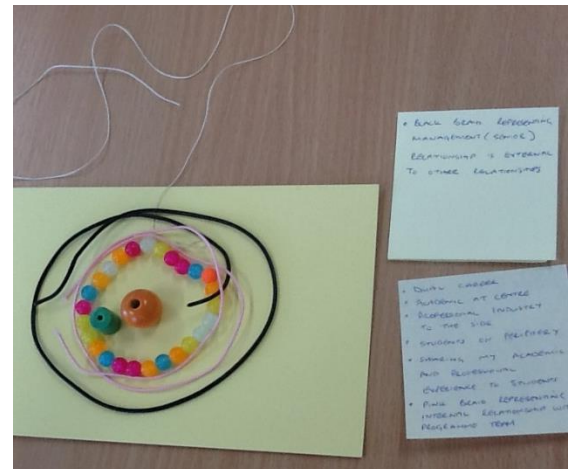
BC FG8

8.1   Bead Collage Focus Group 8: Participant 1

8.3   Bead Collage Focus Group 8: Participant 3

8.2   Bead Collage Focus Group 8: Participant 2

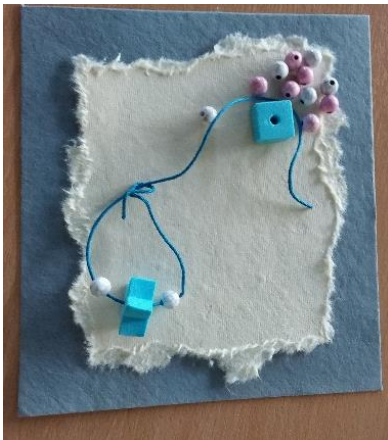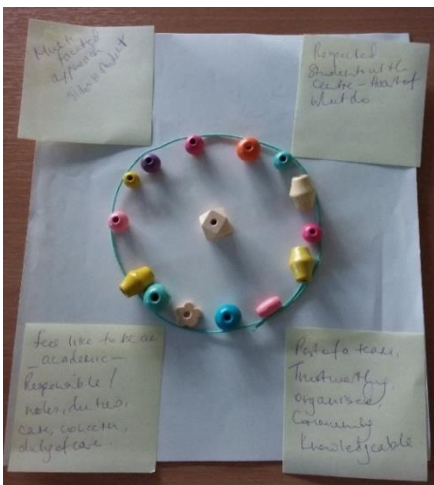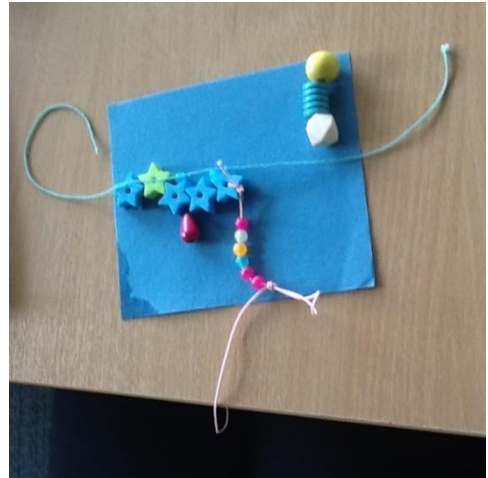

8.4   Bead Collage Focus Group 8: Participant 4

My Bead Collage

[Add form in here.](#)

Initial Research Ethics Checklist & Ethics Review Protocol

Ethics Application Code *(provided by Ethics Panel upon submission)***:**

Please submit your completed application to ethicspanel@marjon.ac.uk. Applications should be saved as ONE pdf/word document, including all required documentation. All applicants should complete Question 16 (signatures) as appropriate.

All forms and templates, and application deadlines, are provided via the [staff intranet](#) and [PGR Dashboard](#).

Please refer to the Guidance documents for Initial Research Ethics Checklist and Ethics Review Protocol when completing this form.

Title of Research Project

What does it mean to be an academic in College Higher Education?

Investigator Information

Principle investigator (or student's name)

Name: Alison Milner

Department: Faculty of Education, Enterprise and Culture

Institutional email: Milner.A@pgr.marjon.ac.uk

Are co-investigators involved?   Yes *(if student application, insert supervisor's name)*

If YES, please provide the names and institutional contact details of co-investigators, describe the decision-making processes for collaborative research studies and if Terms of Reference exist, attach them to the application.

Supervisors: Dr Ian Luke – iluke@marjon.ac.uk, Dr Helen Goodall – hgoodall@marjon.ac.uk and Dr Tanya Ovenden-Hope – tovenden-hope@marjon.ac.uk

Checklist

Section A	Response
Will your research involve research participants identified from, or because of their past or present use of, the NHS and/or Social Care Services	No
Does the research project involve intrusive procedures with adults who lack capacity to consent for themselves or health-related research involving prisoners?	No
Will research be led by a researcher at another UK institution?	No

If you answered **YES** to **ANY** question in Section A then your research may require review by the National Research Ethics Service (NRES) or another University's Research Ethics Committee. **It is the responsibility of the researcher to determine what means of approval are required and to obtain approval prior to starting the project.**

Please consult our guidance documentation and contact the Research Office is further advice is needed. Once review with NRES or another Research Ethics Committee is complete, please submit a copy of this form and their response for record keeping to our Panel (ethicspanel@marjon.ac.uk).

If you answered **NO** to **ALL** questions in Section A please proceed to Section B.

Section B	Response
Does the research project involve human biology, or experimental human psychology?	No
Does the research project involve human participants, or personal data in any way (this includes secondary data e.g. existing survey data, interview transcripts)?	Yes
Does the research involve non-human animal participants, or non-human animal biology?	No

If you answered **NO** to **ALL** questions in Section B such proposals will not normally require ethical review. Advice should be sought in cases of doubt. Please complete **Questions 4 to 9 below**. Your completed form should be submitted to the Panel (ethicspanel@marjon.ac.uk) before the first Monday of the month. This will be reviewed and a confirmation letter provided if the Panel agree that the project is exempt.

If you are a student, please submit **Questions 1 to 9 of this form** to your supervisor for their signature. Your completed form (signed by your supervisor and a counter-signatory) MUST be submitted together with your dissertation.

If you answered **YES** to **QUESTIONS 1 AND/OR 2** in Section B please proceed to Section C.

If you answered **YES** to **QUESTION 3** you will need to contact the Research Office to ensure your research is compliant with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act (1986).

Section C	**Response**
Does the research involve participants who are unable to give informed consent, considered to be vulnerable, or who lack capacity? (e.g. your own students, children, people with learning disabilities)	No
Will the research require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups/individuals to be recruited? (e.g. for access to students at school, or to members of a particular organization)	Yes
Will the research involve access to records of personal or confidential information concerning identifiable individuals, either living or recently deceased?	No
Will the research involve the use of administrative data or secure data? (e.g. student records held by a school or college, medical records)	No
Will the deception of participants (including covert observation in non-public places) be necessary at any time?	No
Will the research involve discussion of sensitive topics? (e.g. sexual activity, drug use, political behaviour, ethnicity and, potentially, elite interviews)	No
Will the research involve sensitive material that might be linked, or interpreted as linked, to terrorism/matters that the PREVENT policy is concerned with?	No
Will the research involve members of the public in a research capacity, helping to shape methodology and/or to collect data? (e.g. participatory research)	No
Will the research involve visual or vocal methods where participants or other individuals may be identifiable in the data used or generated?	Yes
Will the research involve any drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins and other supplements) being administered to the participants, or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?	No
Will blood or tissue samples be obtained from participants (deceased or alive)?	No
Is the research likely to involve or result in participants experiencing pain or more than mild discomfort?	No

Could the research induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences? (both research participants and their living relatives should be considered)	No
Will the research involve prolonged or repetitive testing of participants?	No
Will data collection involve e-mail, social media, and/or instant messaging services in data collection?	No
Will financial inducements (other than reimbursement of expenses) be offered to participants?	No
Will the study involve external organisations to recruit participants?	No
Will the research place the safety of the researcher(s) at risk?	No
Will the research be undertaken outside of the UK?	No
Will the research or its dissemination involve data sharing of confidential information, or the re-use of previously collected data?	No

If you answered **NO** to **ALL** questions in Section C your research may qualify for **LIGHT TOUCH** review. Please submit the following to ethicspanel@marjon.ac.uk:

this completed checklist

Ethics Review Protocol Submission Form (see below)

Participant Information Form (template provided)

Consent Form (template provided)

Any other relevant documentation (e.g. advertisements for recruitments/questionnaires)

If you answered **YES** to **ANY** question in Section C please proceed to Section D.

Section D

Please indicate the Risk Level for the project by checking the intersecting box:

		Research Risk		
		Low	Medium	High
Participant Vulnerability	Low	x		
	Medium			
	High			

Any higher risk (i.e. shaded area) research must undergo scholarly review

The risks to the participants from being involved in the research is minimal. The thoughts and perceptions of participants will not harm others and or themselves. It may allow the participants to be more mindful in their presentation of themselves professionally, no harm can result from this action.

If the Risk Level for your project is in the shaded box in Section D your research may qualify for **LIGHT TOUCH** review. Please submit the following to ethicspanel@marjon.ac.uk:

The completed Research Ethics Checklist and Ethics Review Protocol (this form)

Participant Information Form (template provided)

Consent Form (template provided)

Any other relevant documentation (e.g. advertisements for recruitments/questionnaires)

If you answered **YES** to **ANY** question in Section C **AND** the Risk Level of your research is **OUTSIDE** the shaded box then your application requires **FULL REVIEW.** If the Risk Level of your research **INSIDE** the **DIAGONALLY STRIATED** boxes your research also requires scholarly review. Please submit the following to ethicspanel@marjon.ac.uk:

The completed Research Ethics Checklist and Ethics Review Protocol (this form) Participant Information Form (template provided)

Consent Form (template provided)

A copy of the outcome of your scholarly review (this could be the review itself, or a message indicating the outcome)

Any other relevant documentation (e.g. advertisements for recruitments/questionnaires)

Other Organisations and Research Ethics Panel Approval(s)

Where will the research be conducted?

Plymouth Marjon University ☐

     If your research involves another institution or site please specify below:

Hospital   ☐   specify site(s)

School/College/University   ☒   specify site(s) South Devon College

Community within the SW   ☐   specify site(s)

International   ☐   specify site(s)

Other   ☐   specify site(s)

Have you received approval from the other institution to conduct this research? Yes   *If yes, please attach a copy of the approval to your application*

Have any other Research Ethics Panel approved this project?

No   *If yes, please attach a copy of the approval to your application*

It is the responsibility of the research to determine what means of approval are required and to obtain approval prior to starting the project

Project Start and End Dates

Estimated start date for the component of this project that involves human participants or derived data: July 2018

Estimated completion date of involvement of human participants or their derived data for this project :   March 2019

Scholarly Review

Has the proposed research undergone scholarly review?   Yes

If YES, please indicate the type of review and provide a copy of the review:

Review by Departmental Colleague   ☐

Review by Plymouth Marjon University Colleague	☐
Review by Department Head/Dean	☒
Review by External Colleague	☐
Review by Funding Agency	☐

Any research posing greater than minimal risk (Section 11 below) requires scholarly review. Attach a copy of your scholarly review, or any correspondence indicating the outcome of that review.

Rationale

Describe your proposed research using, wherever possible, language understandable for a non-specialist reader. You can, and should, include references as appropriate.

The aim of the research is to explore the perception of 'being an academic' within college higher education (CHE). The evolving nature of the academic, and the range of providers in which academics reside is moving towards framing academic work (Blackwell and Blackmore, 2003). This research will explore what being an academic means within CHE, understanding this is key to recognising the psychological and social needs of academic staff in colleges (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The concept of what an academic is, and how those outside of educational establishments perceive this, has historically created a barrier with individuals who are not part of the academic community (within Higher Education Providers (HEPs)). The diversification of HE providers, highlights the different areas of practice more clearly, identification of the distinctions is vital to sustaining a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Drawing out meaning, understanding the perceived and real barriers to practice as an academic in CHE, will open the dialogue of how government can support the continued development of higher education (HE) provision. Changes in the regulation of HE provision requires core practices to align with the quality code (QAA, 2018). Whilst this is not inherently problematic in CHE, these changes are incorporated into HE practice, where the focus is predominately further education (FE) there are tensions for the academic community. Evolving practice rhetoric for CHE practice affects the academics, students and the role of HEPs. The gap in knowledge about the identity of academics working in CHE whilst not new, HE provision has been in diverse forms since the introduction of the widening participation agenda in the 1960's (Lamont and Nordberg, 2014). Shifting practice, curricula and identity within education is a constant as much as change (Muzio, Brock and Suddaby, 2013). Whitchurch (2008) recognises the difficulties with the shift of identities and boundaries of academic staff, as priorities and job roles diversify in focus for student satisfaction.

Academic identity related to the teaching and researching within the individual's academic cognate area (Deem, 2006) is the focus of interest for this study. Quigley (2011) suggests the notion of being an academic is not a fixed state but one that is developmental. I believe together with the perspective of moving towards an academic identity through the identification of an ontological

standpoint, being and becoming (Quigley, 2011; Lamont and Nordberg, 2014), exploration of academic identity in CHE can be researched. Interestingly the construct of academic identity is also in the formation of particular attributes that influence the individual (Boud and Brew, 2013; Biesta, Priestly and Robinson, 2015). Whilst the constraints of this definition can be limiting it is just the starting position in which academic identity is constructed.

The evolving nature of academic environments does correlate to the changes of academic identity (Henkel, 2005). The changes and development of the role of an academic has shifted significantly creating new and diverse roles within CHE. Thus, academic identity has modified from the historical conception of one who navigates academia as part of a collective, formed identity supporting practice necessitates the knowledge, esteem expected through the role (Wenger, 1998; Henkel, 2005; Quigley, 2011).

My own experience has been linked to a traditional trajectory of educational development, GCSE's, A levels and degree at a red brick university. Reading Theology influenced my perception of self, society, opportunities and life progression. Teaching in CHE has accorded the realisation of my own learning experiences and how I wish these to be shaped and moulded in education. I feel passionately about the power education can provide. Leading me to my research focus for this project, I want to gain an appreciation about what it means to be an academic for individuals in CHE.

My academic identity in CHE is fully immersed in the research and theory behind the practice I engage in through my life and role. Further to my role, I also take a feminist perspective in my approach to my life and work as an academic. My feminist lens grounds my research from a feminist standpoint. Embracing the creative energy of my research method and tool permits the engagement of a transient unorthodox view of gaining views, feelings and perception of the participants in my proposed study.

Recent changes in the monitoring of HE in the UK has seen the cataloguing of student feedback to ascertain their satisfaction from their studies (such as National Student Survey, Student Perception Questionnaire). To ensure a counter to the student satisfaction of their learning experience it is also important to address the satisfaction of academic staff in their role and work (REF). One way that the needs of professionals teaching in HE can explore their satisfaction is through the identification of their own identity. Currently there is minimal research exploring academic identity within CHE, which this study aims to uncover.

Methods

Describe where and how data will be collected and how they will be analysed.

Out of the transformative nature of phenomenology grew ethnography, a variant that enabled individuals in their daily lives to authenticate their experiences. Garfinkel (1967) coined the characterisation of ethnomethodology with a focus on consistency, coherence, planfulness, method and reproducibility. With this as a focus, the research will certainly enable the investigation of a group of individuals that in the words of Wenger (1998) are a community of practice. Whilst this is not the actual focus of the research, understanding and drawing meaning from the conversations and words used during the research dialogue are important to gain a sense of the situation. The means of the semantic value of the spoken word drawn from the language used is a useful mechanism to draw the hidden meaning from the research. As such, the use of a bead collage activity (Kay, 2013) will be introduced within the focus group to create and facilitate discussion about being an academic. With the added support from the bead collage as a tool, the peripheral meanings will become central to the discussion and analysis of the research (Loads, 2013).

Together and in unison with the ideology of feminism, a wholeness and balance of the research will provide an honest and truthful investigation about the perceptions of what it means to be an academic in CHE. The feminist approach coupled with participatory research is one in which the participants will engage in activities providing a voice (Clover, 2011). The bead collage aligns to contributions from those who have not been heard. Further excessing the thoughts and views through creative methods employed through the facilitation of the focus group scenario (McNIff, 2008). Whilst it is important to acknowledge the differences in approaches and identity that all the participants will bring to the research the nature of the research method will be one where the hidden meanings will be embraced and uncovered.

Weber and Mitchell (1996) identify the importance of narrative discourse evidenced through the creation and interaction of a creative activity. The concept of creative methodology as a frame to explore further the notion of identity, beyond the traditional safe place in society, providing a space where extraneous thoughts can be realised. Whitchurch (2010) recognises the implications of exploring professional identity, suggesting the management or organisation in which the professional is working, does in fact play an important role in the acknowledgement of and practice, of being an academic. As such I will be engaging in an autoethnographic reflective piece in which I will be exploring my own experiences and what the engagement of 'being an academic' means to me. I will be using the concept of 'The Buffer-fly' (Milner, 2017) to test my understanding and meanings derived from my experience. I will also embark on my own bead collage, firstly photographing my collage and recording my findings via audio recording equipment and responses to the indicative questions posed following the creation of my bead collage. I will then after an incubation period return to my bead collage and respond to another set of indicative questions to further ascertain the meanings explored initially, identifying whether there is new insight to be gathered from returning to the bead collage.

Further to my own autoethnographic reflection, an initial pilot study will employ participants from the UCSD academic community of which there are approximately 100 using opportunity sampling (Cresswell, 2014). The focus group will encompass the bead collage (Kay, 2013) as a means to explore academic identity and its meaning. The bead collage is comprised of a selection of beads of different material, size, colour, shape. Together with different threads such as silk, laces, ribbon,

string on which to mount and create a collage. Alternatively, card of different colours and sizes will be available on which to display the bead collage, without sticking. The two choices of framing the bead collage will decided by the participant as part of their exploration of academic identity with the representation of beads. Following the focus group, break out rooms will be provided with audio recording equipment, which the participants will be briefed and conversant within prior to reflecting on their bead collage, participants will be invited to answer indicative questions that will be audio recorded linked to their interpretation and understanding of the choice and decision regarding their bead collage. Photos will be taken of the bead collage as further evidence to support the audio recording. Both artefacts will be saved with a code to create anonymity at the time of saving. Again, in line with my own bead collage, I will invite the participants from the pilot study to return for 'a chance to edit' focus group. The continued dialogue resulting from the initial focus group is also important in maintaining a connection to the field of research and the participants who have provided time and thoughts to the process (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011). Further justifying the invitation for participants to revisit their bead collage, again answering further indicative questions.

The actual research study will be conducted in the same way, with any changes from the pilot study being documented and amended, as appropriate.

Data Analysis

Truthfulness linking to the naturalistic view of design and finding's credibility allows the data to be received with the faith in which it was intended (Gray, 2014). Whilst this may seem an interesting perspective to consider, the imperative of the research is fundamental in the dependability of the findings. Without this truth the potential to make changes in line with the research could be lost challenging the whole purpose of the research (McNiff, 2011). Boud and Brew (2013) support the notion of authenticity impacting greatly on the results of the data, furthering the direction of professional practice and academic development.

As with all research in education, the need to maintain a semblance of quality in tantamount to the continuation of excellent practice in research, teaching and interactions with students and fellow staff. Quality is at the centre of all practice in education and is closely aligned with the work and processes of QAA (2015) in HE as such the research I am undertaking also needs to be valuable and meaningful. As such, Barbour (2007) states by concentrating on the voices of individual participants, there is much to be learnt. The analysis of the indicative questions answered following both the initial focus group and that of the 'chance to edit' focus group will be authentically preserved to gain true meaning from the formation of themes.

Together with the autoethnographic reflection I am writing, I will be able to triangulate the common and uncommon themes emerging from the data. Self-narrative through ethnography provides a rich insight into the daily workings of a situation, both value and meaning are gifted from the process (Nomanesi, 2017). The semantic meanings drawn from the bead collage focus groups and the self-narrative will enable a textured tapestry to be created with truth and authenticity allowing the depth of meaning to be woven into the fabric of the research study.

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Include as appendices all questionnaires, interview guides, standard operating procedures and/or other instruments to be used in data collection

Participants and/or Data

Describe the participants to be recruited, or the individuals about whom personally identifiable information will be collected.

The sample of participants will be drawn from the total population of UCSD academic staff (approximately one hundred), using opportunity sampling.

As a UCSD programme manager, leader, and lecturer it is important to consider the potential power differential between the research participants and myself as researcher. Barstow (2008) describes a power differential as 'an enhanced amount of role power that accompanies any position of authority' and considers that once in a position of power peoples' tendency to empathise and be altruistic degrades. This observation could influence the way participants interact and contribute to the interview. Recognising the potential power differential between the participants, and myself I will seek to mitigate this by identifying participants from different cognate areas from myself (so we don't have a close teaching relationship) but in a similar job-role to myself. Additionally participants will be briefed about the importance of a range of views and that there are no wrong answers.

As part of UCSD's ethics process, I will need to submit a parallel application to their Ethics Committee as the research will take place at UCSD and the participants will be self-selecting from the staff team. Opportunity sampling will be employed participants can opt into the research for the pilot study from the community of academic staff at UCSD. For the full study participants will come from the team I work directly with, they will be briefed and can then choose whether they wish to contribute to the research. Consent will be gained in the same way as the pilot study.

Describe the types of data that will be collected and if appropriate how confidentiality will be maintained.

Data collected and analysed will be managed and written up in accordance with confidentiality and anonymity norms, and in adherence to the Data Protection Act 1988 and the incoming General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which comes into force at the end of May 2018.

The data collected will be from the bead collages themselves in electronic picture form as well as the transcriptions of the responses from the indicative questions posed following the completion of the bead collage focus group.

All participants will be anonymised for the research report, which only they and the researcher will know. The pictorial evidence of the bead collages will be stored along with the audio-recordings and the data transcripts will be held on a password protected Dropbox account and/or computer (depending on file size). The audio recording will be deleted at the end of April 2019, but the transcript data will kept for 3 years to allow time for the research to be written up and potentially submitted for publication either in conjunction with the focused research or for other subsidiary

research. The transcript will be deleted in July 2019 unless otherwise negotiated with the participants.

Does the proposed research involve participants who have a pre-existing relationship with any of the investigators (e.g. instructor-student, clinician-patient, minister-congregant)?

Yes *If YES, please explain the relationships and how power differentials (actual or perceived) will be managed.*

As a UCSD programme manager, leader, and lecturer it is important to consider the potential power differential between the research participants and myself as researcher. Barstow (2008) describes a power differential as 'an enhanced amount of role power that accompanies any position of authority' and considers that once in a position of power peoples' tendency to empathise and be altruistic degrades. This observation could influence the way participants interact and contribute to the bead collage. Recognising the potential power differential between the participants, and myself I will seek to mitigate this by identifying participants from different cognate areas from myself (so we don't have a close teaching relationship) but in a similar job-role to myself for the initial pilot study. Additionally, participants will be briefed about the importance of a range of views and that there are no wrong answers. Further to this the actual focus group with members of my own team, will be led by a neutral individual, the individual will be briefed on the instructions to complete bead collage and also when facilitating the questions following the focus group (These will be individually recorded by the participants to keep interaction to a minimum).

Does the proposed research involve extraction or collection of personally identifiable information about the participant (e.g. medical records)?

No *If YES, please explain how consent from the individuals or authorisation from the data custodian will be obtained.*

Does the proposed research result in products (physical or intellectual) that are commercialisable?

No *If YES, please explain how ownership will be negotiated and communicated to participants.*

Experience of Investigators with this type of research

Please provide a brief description of previous experience with this type of research, including data collection techniques, by the research team. If there has not been previous experience, please describe how the researchers will be prepared.

I have previously conducted research using focus groups as part of my Masters in Education and through other smaller research projects I have been involved in through my professional practice. I am new to the proposed research tool; the use of bead collage is a new concept utilised in conjunction with extrapolating the individual views and thoughts of academic staff around their understanding of being an academic in CHE.

For projects that will involve community members (e.g. peer researchers) in the collection and/or analysis of data, please describe their status within the research team (e.g. are they considered employees, volunteers or participants) and what kind of training they will receive?

N/A

Compensation

Will participants receive compensation for participation?

	Financial	No

In-kind	No

Other	No

If YES, please provide details and justifications for the amount or the value of the compensation offered and how will compensation be affected if participants chose to withdraw.

Possible Risks

Please indicate all potential risks to participants as individuals or as a member of a community that may arise from the research:

Physical (e.g. any bodily contact or administration of any substance):   No

Psychological/emotional (e.g. feeling uncomfortable or embarrassed: No

Social (e.g. loss of status, privacy or reputation):   No

Legal (e.g. apprehension or arrest):   No

Please briefly describe each of the risks noted in 11(a), justify the indicated in Section D, and outline the steps that will be taken to manage and/or minimise risks.

None anticipated, but when discussing elements of teacher practice and academic identity it is possible that some discussion will unintentionally upset a participant. During the de-brief participants will be reminded that they are able to access support for any of the issues raised from the UCSD Wellbeing Team and/or the HE Manager.

Possible Benefits

Describe any potential direct benefits to participants from their involvement in the project as a result of this research. If there are potential direct benefits to the community, the scientific/scholarly community or society as a result of this research, please also describe these here.

All participants will be able to make a connection with their own identity that could further develop reflective practice/practitioners from undertaking the focus groups. The community of practice and empowerment of staff (Wenger and Traynor, 2015) will continue to foster a shared identity at UCSD that in turn will support the interaction and sharing of scholarship activity.

Consent Process

Describe the process that will be used to obtain informed consent and explain how it will be recorded.

Please include as appendices any documents (e.g. consent documents, information letters, email scripts) to be used in the consent process.

All participants will be briefed (Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet) on the nature of the research and that it is exploratory rather than action based, and no recommendations or changes in practice are anticipated following the research.

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Where applicable, please describe how participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the project and outline the procedures that will be followed to allow them to exercise this right including timelines for withdrawal of data.

Participants will be asked for their written consent (Appendix 4: Consent Form) to participate and have their comments analysed and written up. They will be offered the right to withdraw up until submission -July 2019.

Data Management

Will electronic data be stored in a place other than the Plymouth Marjon University secure network drive?   Yes

Will electronic data be transferred between institutions?   Yes

Will a data sharing agreement be required?   No

Will data be retained for future research?   Yes

Will the data be disposed of securely?   Yes

If YES to any of the above questions, please provide an outline of data management processes for your research and how this will be communicated to participants.

Data collected and analysed will be managed and written up in accordance with confidentiality and anonymity norms, and in adherence to the Data Protection Act 1988 and the incoming General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which comes into force at the end of May 2018.

All participants will be anonymised for the research report, which only they and the researcher will know. The pictorial evidence of the bead collages will be stored along with the audio-recordings and the data transcripts will be held on a password protected Dropbox account and/or computer (depending on file size). The audio recording will be deleted at the end of April 2019, but the transcript data will kept for 3 years to allow time for the research to be written up and potentially submitted for publication either in conjunction with the focused research or for other subsidiary research. The transcript will be deleted in July 2019 unless otherwise negotiated with the participants.

Signatures

My signature below confirms that I am aware of, understand, and will comply with all relevant laws governing my research. I agree to ensure my co-investigators, collaborators and all involved in the running of this research will comply with these laws. I understand that for research involving extraction or collection of personally identifiable information, national and/or international laws may apply and that any apparent mishandling of personally identifiable information must be reported to the Research Office. I agree that research will only commence after a favourable opinion has been received from the Research Ethics Panel; that neither the University, Panel or individual members of the Panel accept any legal obligation (to use to any third party) in relation to the processing of this application or to any advice offered in respect of it or not for the subsequent supervision of the research. If there is any significant deviation from the project as originally approved I must submit an amendment to the Research Ethics Panel for approval prior to implementing any change.

Signature of Investigator

A D Milner   Date **10/05/2018**

Additional for all student applications:

As the supervisor of this student project my signature below confirms that I have reviewed and approve the research project and the ethics protocol submission. I confirm that I will provide the student with the necessary supervision throughout the project, to ensure that all procedures performed as part of this project comply with all relevant laws governing the research.

Signature of Supervisor

Click here to enter text.   Date

As the counter-signer of the project I confirm that I am not directly involved in the project, and have reviewed and approve the academic merit of the research project and the ethics protocol submission

Counter-signed

Click here to enter text.   Date

Appendices

1 – Ethical consent form (from the College)

2 – Participants consent form

3 – Participant Information Sheet

Appendix 1 – Ethical Consent form (from the College)

Research Ethics Application

Select options from the drop down box where applicable

Title of project (max 20 words)	
Type of project	
Name of lead researcher	
Lead researcher email address (@southdevon.ac.uk required to be used)	
Names of supporting researchers	
Estimated start date (dd/mm/yy) and duration of the project	Start Date: Duration:
Project supervisor:	Supervisor name: Email address:

Project Summary

Summary:	
Does your research involve work with animals?	
Track?	

Consent

Will you describe the main experimental procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed in advance about what to expect?	
Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	
Will you obtain written consent for participation?	
If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	
Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	
Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	

Research Ethics Application

Select options from the drop down box where applicable

Title of project (max 20 words)	What does it mean to be an academic in College Higher Education (CHE)?
Type of project	Staff Research Project
Name of lead researcher	Alison Milner
Lead researcher email address (@southdevon.ac.uk required to be used)	amilner@southdevon.ac.uk
Names of supporting researchers	
Estimated start date (dd/mm/yy) and duration of the project	Start Date: 06/07/18 Duration: 12 months
Project supervisor:	Supervisor name: Ian Luke Email address: ILuke@marjon.ac.uk

Project Summary

Summary:	The aim of the research is to explore the perception of 'being an academic' within CHE. The evolving nature of the academic and the institutions in which academics reside is moving towards framing academic work *(Black and Wackmore, 2005)*. This research will explore what being an academic means within CHE is key to recognising the psychological and social needs of academic staff *(Ryan and Deci, 2000)*. The concept of what an academic is and how those outside of educational establishments perceive this has historically created a barrier with individuals who are not part of the academic community (within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)). The acknowledgement of this barrier does substantiate the nature of what academics are trying to regale in their role by establishing identity. Consequently, the nuances and patter of the academic is one which creates a semblance of elitism, this in recent years has been dissipated through the introduction of widening participation policies and practices during the 1980's in the United Kingdom (UK) *(Whitchurch, 2012; Lemont and Nordberg, 2014)*. However, this is still evident until the introduction in the 1980's when former colleges were permitted the credentials to teach and support students in their academic studies. Whitchurch (2008) recognises the difficulties with the shift of identities and boundaries of academic staff, as priorities and job roles diversify in focus for student satisfaction. Further to my own autoethnographic reflection, an initial pilot study will employ participants from the UC4D academic community of which there are approximately 100 using opportunity sampling *(Creswell, 2014)*. The focus group will encompass the bead collage *(Kay, 2013)* as a means to explore academic identity and its meaning. The bead collage is comprised of a selection of beads of different material, size, colour, shape. Together with different threads such as silk, leaves, ribbon, string on which to mount and create a collage. Alternatively, card of different colours and sizes will be available on which s display the bead collage, without sticking. The two choices of framing the bead collage will decided by the participant as part of their exploration of academic identity with the representation of beads. Following the focus group, beads out loans will be provided with audio recording equipment, which the participants will be briefed and conversant within prior to reflecting on their bead collage, participants will be invited to answer indicative questions that will be audio recorded linked to their interpretation and understanding of the choice and decision regarding their bead collage. Photos will be taken of the bead collage as further evidence to support the audio recording. Both artefacts will be saved with a code to create anonymity at the time of saving. Again, in line with my own bead collage, I will invite the participants from the dict study to return for 'a chance to edit' focus group. The continued dialogue resulting from the initial focus group is also important in maintaining a connection to the field of research and the participants who have provided time and thoughts to the process *(McNiff and Whitehead, 2011)*. Further justifying the invitation for participants to revisit their bead collage, again answering further indicative questions. The actual research study will be conducted in the same way, with any changes from the pilot study being documented and amended, as appropriate.
Does your research involve work with animals?	No
Track?	Track A

Consent

Will you describe the main experimental procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed in advance about what to expect?	Yes
Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	Yes
Will you obtain written consent for participation?	No
If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	Yes
Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	Yes
Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	Yes

Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation (i.e. give them a brief explanation of the research)?	Yes
If you have selected **No** to any of the questions in this section and you consider that your project has no significant ethical implications, please give an explanation here:	The participants are staff members who are self selecting through opportunity sampling. All participants will be required to sign a consent form prior to undertaking the research.

Participants:

Will your research involve deliberately misleading participants in any way?	No
Is there a risk of any participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort?	No

Vulnerable groups

Are any of your participants under the age of 18?	No
Are they in education (e.g. School)?	No
Do they have learning or communication difficulties?	No
Are they at risk of psychological distress or otherwise vulnerable?	No
Are they in custody?	No
Are they engaged in criminal activities (e.g. drug taking)?	No

Working with children

Does the school you are planning to use require their own consent forms to be filled in?	No
Will participants be contacted via their school?	No
Do you have, or are you applying for DBS clearance?	No

Track A

In your opinion, does this research have any significant ethical implications that should be brought before the Ethics Committee?	Yes
What ethical issues are raised by your research and how will you mitigate their impact?	As a UCSD programme manager, leader, and lecturer it is important to consider the potential power differential between the research participants and myself as researcher. Barstow (2008) describes a power differential as 'an enhanced amount of role power that accompanies any position of authority' and considers that once in a position of power peoples' tendency to empathise and be altruistic degrades. This observation could influence the way participants interact and contribute to the bead collage. Recognising the potential power differential between the participants, and myself I will seek to mitigate this by identifying participants from different cognate areas from myself (so we don't have a close teaching relationship) but in a similar job-role to myself for the initial pilot study. Additionally, participants will be briefed about the importance of a range of views and that there are no wrong answers. Further to this the actual focus group with members of my own team, will be led by a neutral facilitator who will be briefed on the instructions to complete bead collage and facilitating the questions following the focus group (These will be individually recorded by the participants to keep interaction to a minimum). All recorded documentation will be destroyed April 2019, transcripts will be kept and coded to be analysed for the final interrogation of the data.

Track B

Name the animal species to be studied (and in brackets the estimated number of animals to be used)	
Is the research laboratory or field-based?	
Have you considered the 3 Rs (state in justification). (Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research)?	
Is the research observational or invasive?	
Will the research result in termination?	
Is a Home Office Licence required?	
Has a Home Office Licence been obtained?	

Supervisor Comments

Decision	Passed on to next stage
Comment	Happy for this project to proceed. Alastair Wilson
Date	01/05/18

HE Leads/HEREC Committee Comments

Decision	Approved
Comment	
Staff Present (2 for Track A, Minimum 4 for Track B)	Issy Hallam and Thea Jones
Date	01/05/18

Appendix 3 -Participant Information Sheet

1. TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT
Exploring the meaning of being an academic in College Higher Education

Name of Researchers:

Alison Milner

What is the purpose of the study?

The study aims to explore what it means to be academic in CHE.

Why have I been invited?

You have been invited to participate in the study as you teach Higher Education (HE) in a Further Education College.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in the study is purely voluntary. If you are interested in participating, your informed consent shall be recorded on a prescribed Consent Form.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be requested to take part in a focus group creating a bead collage. Following the creation of the bead collage, you will be asked to answer some questions about your bead collage (The responses will be audio-recorded). In a few months, you will be invited to return and answer more questions about your bead collage (The responses will be audio-recorded). Verbatim quotes will be used in the study. I consent to anonymise verbatim quotes being used in publications and conference presentations. I understand that there is a risk I could be identified, but the researcher will take all steps to protect the confidentiality of your data.

The audio-recording of your responses will be anonymised and treated as confidential.

Expenses and payments

No expenses or payments are given
No incentive is promised

What will I have to do?

If you agree to participate in the focus group and two semi-structured interviews, you must consent by reading and signing the Consent Form.

What are the advantages of taking part?

To have an opportunity to support academic research in the field of academic identity in CHE.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

You may feel uncomfortable answering questions about your bead collage and the meaning you have given it. This is highly unlikely but is a possibility. In this event, you will be offered support and an opportunity to stop the interview.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

- The researcher will protect the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants and their data at all times. There shall be no risk to anonymity. The confidentiality of the participants will be ensured in the audio recording. Personal information will not constitute an audio recording of the responses to questions and pictorial evidence of the bead collages. The audio recording will begin after the participant is introduced.
- Participation in the research is purely voluntary.
- Participants will have the right to withdraw at any time without providing a reason.
- The audio recordings will be deleted at the end of July 2019. However, the transcript data will be kept for three years to allow research to be written up and submitted for publication in conjunction with the focused research or for other subsidiary research.
- Electronic data will be stored on the university-secured network drive.
- The data will remain stored until November 2021 after the submission of PhD dissertation in order to address the post-submission questions (if any). At which point, it will be securely destroyed in line In line with the *Data Protection Act 2018* incorporating the GDPR
- The data collected will be available to the research and university staff for regulatory purposes only.
- The digital audio files will be coded and stored separately from transcripts.
- All data collected during the focus groups would be strictly used for research. The data would not be used for any other studies.
- Personal data shall be handled strictly in accordance with the provisions of the current Data Protection Act 1998, Marjon's Data Protection Policy v1.6 September 2017 Research Ethics Policy and Code of Conduct 2017 and The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

You can withdraw from the study by writing to the lead researcher, understanding that your decision will have no negative consequences. You can withdraw from participating in the study any time before 31 July 2019. However, your data can only be withdrawn following your participation until data analysis starts in January 2019.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a problem with any aspect of this study, you should contact the researcher or a supervisory team member, who will address the problem.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study will mainly be submitted in the form of a PhD thesis.
The results may also be published in a peer-reviewed journal.
The results may be presented at conferences in the form of a paper.
The results may contribute to a book.
The outputs or derivatives will not be commercialised.

Thank you for reading the information sheet. If you decide to participate, you will be given a copy to keep, and your consent will be sought.

Researcher:
Alison Milner
South Devon College, Vantage Point, Long Road, Paignton, TQ4 7EJ
01803 540348
amilner@southdevon.ac.uk

Dr Helen Goodall
Associate Director of Learning and Teaching
Plymouth Marjon University
T: 01752 636700 (ext: 6502)
hgoodall@marjon.ac.uk

Appendix 10 - Participant Consent Form

Focus Group – Bead Collage

1.   Research Title: Exploring the meaning of being an academic in College Higher Education

Name of Researcher: Alison Milner

- I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information sheet dated [24th January 2019] for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have these answered satisfactorily.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw anytime without providing a reason.
- **The audio recordings will be deleted at the end of July 2019. However, the transcript data will be kept for three years to allow research to be written up and potentially submitted for publication in conjunction with the focused research or for other subsidiary research. The data will be kept until November 2021 in line with the *Data Protection Act 2018* incorporating the GDPR.**
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study by writing to the lead researcher and that there will be no negative consequences for me making this decision.
- I understand that data collected during the study may be looked at by individuals from the University of St Mark & St John for regulatory purposes. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my data.
- I agree that my interview should be audio recorded. The recording will be transcribed and analysed for this research only. The data will be anonymised, and my data will be treated as confidential. The data will be stored securely.
- I agree to have my bead collage photographed. The photographic evidence of the bead collage will be anonymised and stored securely.
- I agree to the data (interview transcript and photograph of bead collage) being stored for the use of this research and until all analysis and reporting has been undertaken, which will be no longer than three years from the date the research took place.
- I consent to anonymise verbatim quotes being used in publications and conference presentations. I understand that there is a risk I could be identified, but the researcher will take all steps to protect the confidentiality of your data.
- I understand that the results of the study may be published and presented at meetings or conferences and may be provided to research funders. I give my permission for my anonymised data to be disseminated in this way.
- I understand that data will be stored on the university's secure drive.

- **I understand that I will not benefit from the commercialisation, if any, of data or derivatives as a result of this study.**
- **I agree to take part in the above study.**

Signed   …………………………………………………. (Research participant)

Print name ………………………………………………….

Date   ………………………………………………..

Name of person taking consent …………………………………………………..

Date   …………………………………………………..

Signature   …………………………………………………..

When completed: 1 for participant; 1 for researcher's file.

Appendix 11 - Participant Email Invitation

Email Message Inviting Participants to Join the Study

Hi xxx

As you will have heard during many of the recent meetings at the beginning of the semester. I am now able to commence my data collection having had my ethics approved by my university. I would firstly like to ask if you would like to be part of my study and secondly if you are willing to do so, when you are available to join one of the focus groups in the next couple of weeks.

If will provide further information once you have confirmed that you would like to contribute to the study.

Thank you

Alison

Alison Milner
Programme Coordinator for HE Education Section

(information has been redacted to protect the anonymity of the college in line with ethics approval)

Examples of Topic in the theme	Example Quotes
Theme One: CHE Role Expectations and Requirements	
Continued Professional Development and Scholarly Activity	
Pressure, Scholarship, HE in FE, Curriculum, CPD,	'…the stars on the outside …. represent the pressures…… each colour represents a different pressure, in terms of green was HE pressure, red was FE pressure…' (BC FG8,1) '…represents my sort of currency and CPD my own, sort of, like, developing kind of our current knowledge and understanding…' (BC FG1,3)
Influences on Practice	
Timetable, HE in FE, University Comparisons, Freedom in CHE, Different expectations in HE, Structure of the college, Team working, External Targets	'….I think it needs to be on, an accelerated bigger process of how we are allowing staff opportunities to research…' (CtR7,3) '… the research time, you know, I think the support for that is continually improving. But I think, you know, in the scheme of things looking forward to where we are going to be so the next 10 years, you know, we're still at the, kind of, the infancy of that, but we've come a long way…' (CtR7,2) 'We've also got 14 to 16, where you, you know, I think that FE mentality pervades everything….The HE conference was the day before. You know, not even remotely relevant to FE teaching, it just don't crop up, you know.' (CtR9,3)
Synergy of Practice	
Nurture, Small groups, Pedagogy Focus, Professional Updating (CPD), FDAP, Perceived or Real Pressures	'… if we were split from FE, the focus would just be on our skills and what we do. And, how far do we go that extra mile continually for our students and our knowledge?' (CtR5,4)
The Politics of College Higher Education	
Process and Politics, CHE Lecturer Responsibilities, Wider HE environmental context, Student body	'… the students that I did talk to wanted the different style community; they didn't want it to be a traditional University. They wanted the support we offer.' (BC FG6,4)
Leadership considerations in CHE	

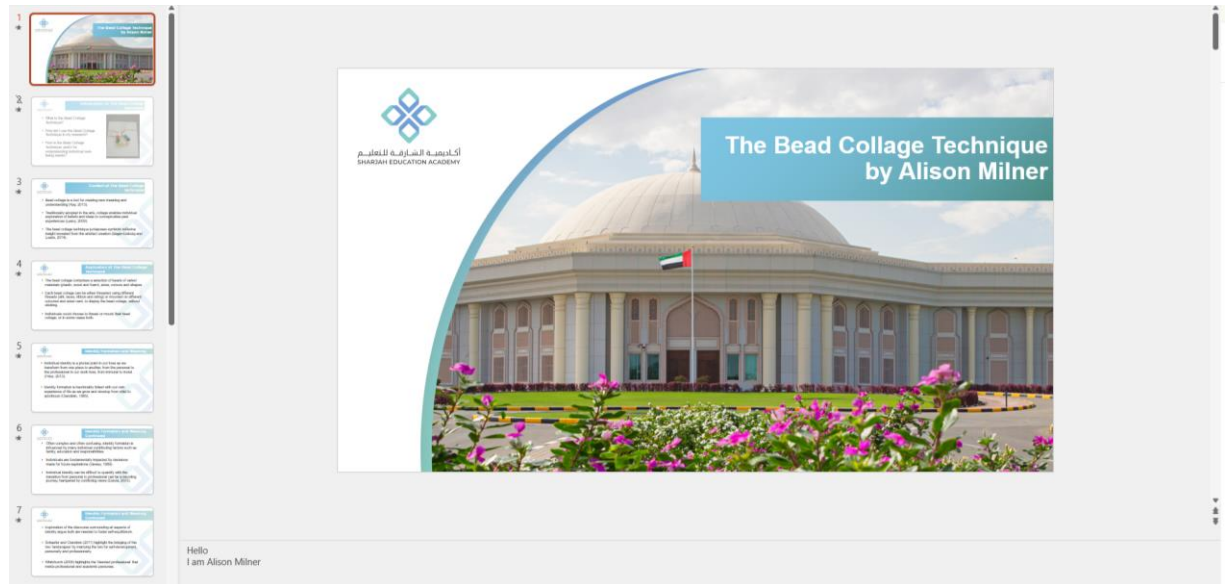|	
Pedagogy, timetable, HE processes, quality processes, accountability, challenges for recruitment, daily business, tensions, student retention	'When we were in the office, three quarters of an hour ago, talking about something that looked like a mermaid. So that must of triggered that off in my mind, and I was thinking, academic identity, HE in FE, sort of, between two worlds.' (BC FG6,1)
Contractual Agreements	
Timetable, student numbers, course viability, scholarship, college systems	'But there needs to be recognition that the job roles are different. And you could have two contracts; they need to look different. But not necessarily but try not to create one where there isn't a power imbalance because otherwise, you start creating the hierarchy within typical universities. And I think that's our strength, that we have here.' (CtR6,1)
Business needs of CHE	
Pedagogical focus, responsibilities, admin, rules and regulations	'I have to carry more admin and rules and regulations.' (CtR2,3) '... perhaps not on enough on currency of research or, and maybe that means, the students, possibly lose out a little.' (BC FG1,3)

Examples of Topic in the theme	Examples Quotes
Theme Two: Being a Professional College Higher Education Lecturer	
A Space to Think About Being a Professional in College Higher Education	
Temporal and real spaces, HE in FE crossover, Cultural space, Time, Teamworking	'I used the smaller beads just to represent the kind of the crossover from FE to other kind of work commitments.' (CtR7,2) '.., all mine is a HE and we're moving into an era, and kind of, a field of very, um, HE specialism now with regards to approved education, institution, accreditation, so and it feels that its much bigger than we are,' (BC FG8,4)
College Higher Education Lecturer's Attributes	
Resilience, problem solving, adaptation, decision making processes, empowerment, research scholarship, nurturing students, compassionate, student focus. Imposter syndrome	'I've got jumping through hoops. I've got continuous frustration so that just goes upon, on this kind of hill of never-ending targets, never-ending, things that you've got to do and accomplish, some of it feels wasted.' (BC FG5,1)
Self-Perception and Self-Worth	
Valued, not values, HEA fellowship recognition in the sector, comparisons with others' and trad uni. Motivation, confusion, contracts	'... teaching-focused lecturing is going up in terms of its recognition...' (CtR6,1)

Examples of Topic in the theme	Examples Quotes
Theme Three: The Creative Benefits of the Bead Collage Technique	
Artful Research	
Therapeutic, play, cognitive, choice, agency, representation, self-awareness, reflexive, bead collage Reflection/s, exploration, tangible, conceptual, beads, symbolism, metaphor	'I would only have considered exploring academic identity in the organisation through contextualised visual engagement with the bead collage. Once it is laid out in front of me, I can begin to understand the different ways that I interact with and visualise an analysis of the role we play here at the college. The process has helped me see the different perspectives and made me think about what and how I engage with my role.' (BC FG4,3)
Self-Knowledge Development	
Academic identity, group working, CHE community, group ethos, discussions, fresh insight	'I think the format of doing it in a fairly small group like this; I think is a, is good, like you say, allows you to feel like in other words I suppose if you're in a bigger group doing the activity, you probably feel less able, to be honest.' (BC FG4,3)
Personal Interaction	
Environmental, reflection, mood dependent, trust, sharing, care, roots, group ethos, values, community of practice, language, belonging, reflexivity, engagement, disengagement	'… my academic identity is somewhere around here. Because I've taught in HE, I still identify as an FE teacher. Um, that's kind of where I'm looking at it. I still feel like I'm looking from the outside in.' (BC FG3,2)
College Higher Education Reflexive Pedagogy	
Reflexive, reflective helpful, authentic, metaphor, togetherness , shared experience	'… a little outlet. It's helpful.' (BC FG5,1)

Appendix 13 – Presentations

I have provided the first pages of the recent presentations I have presented to National and International Academics.

Sharjah University in UAE 23rd February 2024

BERA/WERA 12th September 2024