An Autoethnographic Study of my Career Path and the Implications for Practice as a Guidance Counsellor

Presented by
Margaret Golden
(13091735)

Under the Supervision of
Tom Geary

MA in Guidance Counselling and Lifespan Development
University of Limerick

Submitted on October 1st, 2015
Declaration

The author hereby declares that this thesis is entirely her own work. No element of the work described in this dissertation has been previously submitted for any degree in University of Limerick, or any other institution.

Signed: _____________________________
Personal Acknowledgements

I dedicate this thesis to the loving memory of my father.

There are a number of people that I want to thank.

The first is my mother. Thank you so much for everything. You are the strongest, most generous person I know.

I thank my supervisor Tom Geary for your expertise and guidance, but mostly for your understanding and good humour.

Thank you to my husband, son and daughter for your patience during the past two years. I’m back and looking forward to the future. To my family, thanks for your encouragement and interest in my project. I hope my return to education has inspired and not deterred the next generation. The rewards are worth the effort. I give special thanks to my Godmother for your unwavering support.

Thanks to the mentor I was blessed to meet, for your kindness and encouragement. To my fellow students, I thank you all sincerely for your support and friendship.
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of figures</td>
<td>(vi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Appendices</td>
<td>(vii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td>(viii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>(ix)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1: Introduction</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Research methodology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Aims of this research project</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Objectives of this research project</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Theoretical and practice context of research topic specific to Guidance Counselling</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Justification for research from literature</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Plan of the thesis</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Conclusion</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2: Literature Review</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 Introduction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-concept</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Communication, internal dialogue and messages received</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 The role of motherhood</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Career development from a female perspective</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Possible Guidance interventions</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Conclusion</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Chapter 3: Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.0 Introduction</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Research paradigm</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Autoethnography discussed</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Considerations of autoethnography as a research method</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Data Gathering</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Analysis of the data</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Conclusion</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter 4: Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.0 Introduction</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 The data – my personal journal (appendix)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Themes identified</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Analysis of themes</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Theme 1: Deep personal learning</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Theme 2.a: Communication with self</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Theme 2.b: Communication with others</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Theme 3: Self-confidence/efficacy</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8 Theme 4: Role conflict</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9 Conclusion</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter 5: Discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.0 Introduction</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Meaning making process of this enquiry</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Self-efficacy/self-confidence</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Communication, internal dialogue and messages received</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Role conflict</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Implications for Guidance Counselling for women, specifically mothers</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 Conclusion</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1</td>
<td>Pool of Themes</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1</td>
<td>Analogy of the Heuristic Process</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1 – pages 1 to 9</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2 – pages 10 to 18</td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3 – pages 19 to 27</td>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4 – pages 28 to 36</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 5 – pages 37 to 45</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 6 – pages 46 to 53</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 7 – pages 54 to 62</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 8 – pages 63 to 71</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 9 – pages 72 to 80</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 10 – pages 81 to 86</td>
<td>72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 11 – pages 87 to 92</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 12 – Confirmation of Ethical Approval</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary

IGC – Institute of Guidance Counsellors

IPA – Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

KCM – Kaleidoscope Career Model

MA – Master of Arts

NCGE – National Centre for Guidance in Education

STF – Systems Theory Framework
Abstract

This is an Autoethnographic Study of my Career Path and the Implications for Practice as a Guidance Counsellor. Using qualitative research methods I examine my own lived experience as a working mother, exploring such issues as self-efficacy, self-confidence, communication and role conflict. In autoethnography, the researcher is the focus of the analysis and to this end, I refer to the data from my personal journal.

This thesis is aimed at women, specifically working mothers, who may be dealing with role conflict. Exploring and sharing my own journey in this way has enabled me to address a number of issues regarding my career development. The Heurist process was instrumental in bringing me to the point of enlightenment. I give some attention to the effect that tacit knowledge has had on my career development, in the hope that this will be of use to other women.

My review of the literature in the area of career development for women shows slow progress since the 1960’s. I look at the role of the Guidance counsellor in relation to women’s career development and identify a number of Guidance interventions including the Kaleidoscope Career Model and Systems Theory Framework. I make a number of recommendations including addressing attitudes in industry towards women’s career development.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

In this autoethnographic research thesis, I will set out to examine my career development to date, with a view to informing my practice as a Guidance Counsellor. In this section I will give an overview of the contents of this study and explain why I have chosen the research topic and the methodologies that I will use. I will provide some background information that will give a context for this study and it is my intention to share some of my lived experience as a mother in the process of rebuilding my career. I want to use this opportunity for self-study to better understand some of my career-making decisions and relate my personal career development to the literature and theories on the subject. I am taking the opportunity to share my lived experiences regarding my career development to add to the research that is available on this topic.

1.1 Research methodology

I have chosen the qualitative research method that is autoethnography, as it will enable me to conduct a study on a topic that is of personal interest to me. My own career path has not been a linear one and I am attracted to the possibility of studying some aspect of my own career development, in order that I may understand it more clearly. Autoethnography presents a number of challenges, not least disclosure of personal thoughts and experiences but it offers the possibility for great insight into underlying issues. I will proceed by scaffolding my autoethnography with the phases of the Heuristic process, (Moustakas, 1990). Initial Engagement is the first phase in this process where the research topic is chosen. During this phase I felt compelled to follow my instinct that I needed to pursue a study of personal significance to me.

As is the nature of this process, I am unsure as to the direction this will lead me, but I will participate fully with each phase. I will set out the aims and objectives of my study but I am aware that other issues may arise as I embark on my research and analysis. The essence of this process is that it engages the researcher on an emotional level and requires deep personal reflection and reflexivity in relation to specific topics of research, (Sela-Smith, 2012). I will discuss this journey in detail and share any illumination that I
experience. I have drawn from my personal Journal for data gathering and for analysis purposes, (Chang, 2008, 36). I will use my writing from April 1st to July 31st as my data source. Photographs of these Journal pages are included in the Appendix. At certain times, I may use Poetry as a form of free expression to relay certain emotions. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is concerned with how we make sense of our lived experiences. It offers useful guidelines when analysing data from journals and I will detail how these work for me, in practice. One of the concerns that can arise in autoethnography is the issue of validity in analysis, (Chang, 2008, 54) and IPA helps to alleviate this by the rigour involved in thematic analysis, (Smith et al, 2013, 181). I will include a critique of how I experience each method of research.

1.2 Aims of this research project

My aim is to explore my career development to date, in order to gain new insight into certain aspects of my career decision-making. This is an opportunity for me to look at the history of career development and the theories that it is based upon in a way that offers new information with which to explore my own career development. Issues like career self-efficacy, communication and role conflict are of initial concern to me as I embark on this self-study.

1.3 Objectives of this research project

I am interested in unearthing why I have struggled to manage the roles of mother and career. I have experienced career fulfilment in the past, prior to my struggle in recent years, so I know that I am capable of achieving this again. I need to explore the area of career self-efficacy and this may explain some of my struggles in recent years. The messages that I received from others throughout my life is also something that I have identified as being of importance to this study. Also critical to my career development is the relationship between the roles of mother and professional. I believe that this is an area that I need to investigate in order to understand my career decision making to date. I am interested to discover if indeed these are the issues that will emerge from my research. Beyond my personal interest in this study, I wish to add something of value to the already existing research on these topics. Autoethnography is becoming more and
more recognised as a valued form of qualitative research, (Chang, 2008). The benefit to the researcher is the possible insight that can be achieved. The benefit to the reader in sharing this lived experience is also documented, (Chang, 2008, 53).

1.4 Theoretical and practice context of research topic specific to Guidance Counselling

This leads me on to look at how my research topic relates to Guidance Counselling. It is important to relate any self-discovery to society so as to avoid a therapeutic exercise, (Chang, 2008). I will discuss career development theories and relate my experience to them. I will identify certain aspects of the literature that I connect with and explore how I feel they would have been helpful to me in the past or indeed the present and also into the future as I continue my career development. I will also discuss the literature relating to career development specifically for women and relate my personal lived experience to it. This will allow for personal reflection and also inform my practice as a Guidance Counsellor. It was not until I carried out some research for an earlier assignment on this MA programme that I became aware of the existence of career development specifically for women. I want to share any insights that I gain in an attempt to inform the area of research into women’s career development. This leads me to discuss the implications that career development specifically for women could have on Guidance Counselling for women.

1.5 Justification for research from literature

There is much evidence in the literature that further investigation into this area is called for. My literature spans over three decades and is still calling for more developments in the area of career development for women. I will refer to a number of studies that have been carried out in relation to career development for women, looking at areas like career self-efficacy. In recent times the focus has changed slightly to considering the family as a unit rather than specifically on the women as the primary caregiver. However, clear recognition is given to the fact that when couples have children it is predominantly the woman's career that suffers, (O'Hagan, 2015). I will develop this point further and look at some possible interventions that may be helpful in addressing
the issues that families face in balancing work and home life commitments. It is my hope that I can make some contribution to this research through my exploration of certain issues or barriers that I have faced in my own career development.

1.6 Plan of the thesis

Having given a background to my motivation for undertaking this autoethnographic study, I will proceed to outline how I intend to present my thesis. It will be divided into the following sections:

Chapter 2. Literature Review: Self-efficacy, Communication, Role of motherhood, Career development from a female perspective and Possible Guidance interventions.

Chapter 3. Methodology: Research paradigm, Autoethnography discussed, Considerations of authoethnography as a research method, Data gathering, Analytical approach.

Chapter 4. Data Analysis: The raw data, Themes identified, Analysis of themes, Theme 1: Deep personal learning, Theme 2a: Communication with self, Theme 2b: Communication with others, Theme 3: Self confidence/efficacy, Theme 4: Role conflict.

Chapter 5. Discussion: Meaning making process of this enquiry, Self-efficacy/Self-confidence, Communication, Role conflict, Implications for Guidance Counselling for women.

Chapter 6. Conclusion: Overview of findings, Strengths and limitations of the study, Implications at a practical and research level, Recommendations, Reflexivity of personal learning.

Each chapter is laid out with section headings which are numbered in sequence. Each quote from the data in my journal is referenced to in the appropriate appendix page at the back of the thesis. There are 11 pages in the appendix comprising photographic evidence of my journal entries from April 1st to July 31st. I will provide a Reference List at the end of the thesis which will adhere to the Harvard referencing style to include all sources of literature that I refer to throughout.
1.7 Conclusion

I endeavour to deliver this thesis in an authentic and ethical manner. I am grateful for the opportunity to invest this time and effort into understanding myself on a deeper level. I am hopeful that my investment will yield a fruitful return and deliver some insight into my career decision-making to date. I am also keen to contribute something of value to the concept of career development for women.
Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The aim of this self-study is to gain greater understanding of my relationship to my career path and to examine perhaps why I made certain career related decisions in my life to date. The key areas that have affected my career decision-making are: self-efficacy, to include self-esteem and self-concept; communication – both my internal dialogue and the messages that I received growing up; and the role of motherhood. This study has lead me to explore career development from a female perspective and identify possible Guidance interventions. I will present my research under the headings as outlined above and will finish this chapter with a short conclusion.

2.1 Self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-concept

Self-efficacy is defined by Bandura (1997) as, ‘an individual’s belief in her capacity to cause an intended event to occur’, (Boyd and Bee, 2009, 281). This claim is echoed by Sharf (2010, 400), when he says that self-belief is a ‘major force’ that influences the career outcomes for an individual. This can not only dictate the types of career areas that an individual pursues, but also the levels they strive to achieve within a chosen career. This takes into account many factors that may be outside the influence of the individual. These are described as ‘contextual influences’ (Sharf, 2010, 400). Some of the criticisms of the Social Cognitive Theory are discussed and Skinner is identified as arguing that the term ‘perceived self-efficacy’ does not help in understanding human behaviour, (Olson and Hergenhahn, 2011, p. 350). Sumari (2003) also refers to Bandura’s work and emphasises the point that a person’s thoughts about their abilities can dictate their career choices and influence their career decision-making processes.

This reiterates the point that positive thoughts are crucial to our levels of self-worth and Engler, (2009, 244-246) also identifies the impact of self-efficacy on our thoughts and behaviours. She states that a person’s self-efficacy is related to their belief in their ability to carry out a particular task. Self-esteem is more concerned with our assessment of our value and is not to be confused with self-efficacy, (Engler, 2009, 244). According to Leary and Tangney (2012, 202) much research still needs to be done to draw clear relationships between certain personalities and levels of self-efficacy. They identify
that ‘psychological and emotional states’, affect a person’s perceived self-efficacy, (Leary and Tangney, 2012, 204).

This discussion of self-efficacy is expanded to encompass a person’s ‘locus of control’, (Boyd and Bee, 2009, 380). This refers to an individual’s belief about how much control they have regarding events in their lives. If they have an external locus of control, then they believe that they have little control over their own life and that external factors will dictate their fate. An internal locus of control means that the person is in control of their own decisions and outcomes, (Boyd and Bee, 2009, 380). Noor (2002) discusses locus of control in relation to women’s well-being as they manage work-family conflict. According to Noor (2002), Cohen and Edwards (1989) a locus of control is a ‘personality characteristic’, by which we manage stress in our lives. An external locus of control renders us more susceptible to stress. Noor (2002) makes a distinction between locus of control for men and women when she refers to Sherman, Higgs and Williams, (1997), who say that in general, women tend to believe they have less control over life events than men. In my opinion, our locus of control is related to our outlook on life more so than our gender.

It may be interesting to examine our ability to trust our ‘gut instincts’ when faced with decisions around our careers. Gigerenzer (2007) looks at the area of self-esteem and decision-making. He talks about how, in certain circumstances, analysing a situation and weighing up the consequences of certain decisions in a systematic way does not always produce the best outcome. There are times when we need to just trust our instinct and go with what feels right at the time. He poses the question as to whether we can trust our gut or not and he suggests that optimists will say ‘yes’ and pessimists will argue ‘no’. This is linked to the area of cognitive behaviour and internal dialogue. It determines how we view the world – either from a positive or a negative standpoint.

2.2 Communication, internal dialogue and messages received

This leads me onto the area of communication and the role this has played in my career decision-making. In learning more about internal dialogue, it is interesting to note the link between job loss or change in career path to depression in people who struggle with change and who find it difficult to cope, (Boyd and Bee, 2009, 474). The need for career counselling is highlighted at this stage, as is the benefit of helping the individual to view this change as an opportunity to develop, personally and professionally, (Boyd and Bee, 2009, 474).
AWARE is an Irish organisation designed to support people with depression and related issues. They run a programme called ‘Life Skills’ which I completed in 2013, for personal development and with a view to informing future practice helping others. The course is based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and deals with the affect that negative thoughts can have on our emotions and behaviours. It explains the circle of energy that we create through our thoughts, feelings, physical symptoms and behaviour. Williams (2007) explains that if we change just one of these elements to a positive, then this will cause a positive knock-on effect and ultimately result in a cycle of uplifting energy. This helps to improve our self-esteem and self-confidence. Lent et al (2002) are credited with highlighting the point that a person’s reaction to a challenge to their career development is as important as the challenge itself. I have also found the work of Dyer (2004) very beneficial in focusing on positive thinking. In practicing this over a period of time, I have manifested a number of positive developments in my life.

When I look at my relationship with communication and the messages I received in childhood, I lean to the writing of Carl Rogers (1980). He discusses communication in some detail and his experience of different aspects of communication growing up. I can relate to much of what he says, for example, when he says, ‘I like to be heard’, (Rogers 1980, 12). Here he speaks about how he benefited from the times when he was able to speak to another person about how he was feeling, without fear of judgement. This allowed him to clarify his thoughts and progress. He acknowledges that he may have been luckier than many others to have people with whom he could confide.

Rogers (1980, 19) goes on to speak about being able to accept praise and positive responses from others. He describes how he found it difficult to accept positive feedback from others and how this, in turn affected his ability to form close relationships with others and to express his emotions in a genuine way. Rogers (1980, 20) describes making a real connection with another person and the freedom in expressing this positive feeling. The benefits are to be shared by both parties when we are able to express our care and even love for the other person, whether in a professional or personal relationship. He sums this up by saying, ‘Thus, prizing or loving and being prized or loved is experienced as very growth enhancing.’, (Rogers 1980, 23).

In terms of how the messages I received around decision-making may have affected my career decisions it is interesting to learn of the importance of communication in the Career Decision Making Process, (Sharf, 2010, 432-434). A cognitive approach to career planning as developed by Sampson, Peterson, Lenz and Reardon (2004), is called,
‘The Five Stages of the CASVE (Communication, Analysis, Synthesis, Valuing, Execution) Cycle of Information-Processing Skills used in Career Decision-Making’. The function of communication here is to recognise issues that exist in an individual’s environment that are influencing their career choices. This involves internal dialogue and also seeking opinions of others with a view to taking action and making decisions. External events can impact on career progression and a change of direction may be required. According to this model, recognition of a problem and willingness to change are the starting point for this process. Sharf (2010, 428) says that the cognitive approach to career decision-making examines how individual’s ‘thought processes’ impact choices they make regarding their careers. They not only consider a person’s value systems, strengths and preferences in relation to occupations but also place emphasis on a person’s ‘belief systems’, and how this impacts their career choices and decision-making. The cognitive approach is concerned with helping people to reflect on their own decision-making style and to learn effective career decision-making skills.

Looking at the discourse on this issue it is clear that society places a burden on women to take-on the familial responsibility of caring for children, (O’Hagan, 2015). It is interesting to read about, ‘the myth of motherhood’ as described by O’Hagan (2015, 92). Here she quotes Oakley (1974) who declares that children and mothers have a reciprocal relationship of needing each other and that becoming a mother, ‘is the greatest achievement of a woman’s life’, Oakley (1974, in O’Hagan, 2015, 92). This leads me on to examining this theme in the literature.

2.3 The role of motherhood

From this point, I will focus on how becoming a mother has affected my career development. All of the areas covered up to this point come into play here and each will be mentioned again in relation to managing multiple roles. In looking specifically at career development and Guidance Counselling for women, McAdams (1993, 119-120), describes the effects of the industrial revolution on traditional occupation structures and how work roles were carried out in society. There was a shift away from work and home life being totally integrated to a separation of roles, with the men, for the most part, taking on factory work outside the home environment and the women taking on the home-maker roles. He identifies that this spilt in public and private life occurred in the nineteenth
century and even then, people faced the challenge of having to adapt to different environments to fulfil different roles in their lives.

These challenges and conflicts are still in evidence today, and perhaps even more-so. The role of women in the workplace has changed a lot since the 1960’s, after much of the career development theories were established. Herr et al, (2004, 642) write in detail about self-efficacy, identifying the need to discuss career development theories specifically with women in mind. Franca (2012) discusses Work Family Conflict and the influence that external factors have on career planning. Motherhood is specifically examined here and how couples have to ‘negotiate their work and family’s obligation’, (Franca 2012, 53). Franca (2012), Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) write about the conflicts that occur when one role impinges on another. Time pressures can result in demands of one role not allowing for attention to the other role. Another pressure identified is that stress from one role can spill over into the other role and affect the person’s behaviour in that role. A third consequence of role conflict is that a person is unable to switch off from one role and does not adjust their behaviour according to the demands of the other role. Frone, Russel and Cooper (1992) state that family demands can impact on the work role and work demands can impact on the family role, (Franca, 2012, 54).

Franca (2012) refers to Greenhaus and Parasuraman (2002) when they say that women are more likely to suffer the impact of managing family responsibilities as they tend to relinquish their careers for the sake of concentrating on family life. This is seen as a social construct according to Williams and Copper (2004), (Franca, 2012, 55). Women are put under a lot of pressure to ensure that their children’s development is not adversely affected by their choosing to pursue a career. The point is made here that in work, a man is viewed as responsible and dependable when he has a family but a women with a family is regarded as being less dedicated or not available to give full commitment to the job, (Franca, 2012, 55).

Self-efficacy is seen as just one of a number of factors that can affect a woman’s career progression and not the main issue. Barnett and Baruch (1985) state that a woman’s self-efficacy and self-confidence levels rise when she is earning a living, (Franca, 2010, 65). Issues of guilt, fulfilment and societal expectations are addressed, all of which affect working mothers, (Franca, 2012). Boyd and Bee (2009) echo this when they identify that little seems to have changed in the last 30 years or so, in how households manage to balance work and family commitments. Women seem to put family obligations ahead of work duties and men seem to put work first. They both suffer guilt
at not being able to fully meet the demands of the other role in their lives, (Boyd and Bee, 2009, 425).

It has been identified that at around the time they turn age 30 ‘professional women’ experience a shift in their priorities, (McAdams, 1993, 99). They tend to re-examine the importance of the roles of mother and professional. He refers to a study by Levinston that identifies the conflict experienced by women in trying to juggle the varying roles they have at this time. Sugarmen (2001, 125) also refers to a study by Levinston (1996), that identifies that women tend to struggle more than men when mapping out their careers or their ‘dreams’ because of the desire to accommodate ‘relational and individual elements’. The women want to provide the role of caring mother at the same time as successful professional and this is a challenge.

A number of different types of career paths that women may experience are examined by Sharf (2010, 272-273). These were developed by Super (1957) and vary from home-maker to working full-time to broken or hap-hazard work patterns. In some cases women will choose to take a career break and their employer will facilitate this. In other cases this will not be a planned occurrence and it is often difficult to re-establish their career. Burke and Nelson (2002) echo the call that career paths are different for women and men. External factors such as family play a bigger part in dictating a woman’s career path, (Burke, 2002, 145-148). Ali and Graham (2000, 111-147) discuss with the aid of case studies, the implications that dealing with a number of external factors can have on a person’s career planning. Partners and children can influence career decision-making, for men and women, but it seems that women’s careers are often put on hold to prioritise family demands, including the man’s career.

While much of the literature on self-efficacy talks about women being lead into stereo-typically female occupations, Schreiber (2003) address the issue of struggling to maintain multiple roles e.g. mother and worker, regardless of the occupation area. I agree with Schreiber (2003) when she identifies this as one of the main barriers to women’s career development. She says that there is an assumption made about women who chose to have a family that, ‘.they are less career orientated and will inevitably face conflict between work and family roles.’ (Schreiber, 2003, 5). Here Schreiber talks about ‘career interruptions’ (Schreiber, 2003, 8) and calls for consideration to be given for planned breaks in an individual’s career – for men as well as women.
2.4 Career development from a female perspective

There is much written on career development theories that stretch across the lifespan. One of the first that I came across that specifically addresses the needs of women’s career development is that of Carol Gilligan, (Taylor, 1996). Gilligan (1982, 6) argues that, early developmental theorists, like Freud, identified males as being the normative standard by which human development was measured. She believes that women have a natural leaning towards ‘attachment’, where men tend towards ‘separation’, (Gilligan, 1982, 8). This leads to her saying, ‘Women’s failure to separate then becomes by definition a failure to develop’, (Gilligan, 1982, 9). The striking phrase, ‘Women’s place in the man’s life cycle’, is used to emphasise the point that the values of concern and caring, which women tend to express freely, are undervalued and even viewed as a failing, (Gilligan, 1982, 17). She talks about Ericson’s stage theory (1968) and refers to the fact that although Erickson acknowledged that there are fundamental differences between men and women, he did not reflect this in his stages of development for women, (Gilligan, 1982, 12-13). Women come to the realisation of the importance of caring relationships much earlier than men, but because it is seen as innate in women’s make-up, it is not accredited in their development and so not valued Gilligan (1982, 17). This is developed further when she says, ‘women bring to the life cycle a different point of view and order human experiences in terms of different priorities’, Gilligan (1982, 22). This is the point that I feel lends itself to the need for specific career development for women.

Career development and counselling for women is examined under a number of headings, including ‘family responsibility’, ‘gender socialisation’ and ‘employment inequities’, (Coogan and Chen, 2007). They recognise that women require specific career development due to these external factors that impact on the choices open to them regarding their careers. They highlight the point made by Friedman and Galinksy (1992, in Cook et al, 2002), ‘..many women who make the choice to have a family essentially forfeit advanced achievements in many careers because they are no longer considered serious about their work, or they must struggle to update their knowledge and skills.’ Coogan and Chen (2007) also recognise the negative impact that employment interruptions can have on women’s career development. They relate Super’s theory to the need that women have to fulfil a number of key roles simultaneously. They acknowledge the need for ‘various overlapping roles, particularly those of homemaker and worker’, (Coogan and Chen, 2007) and that this must be given consideration in
women’s career development. Recognition is given to unsatisfactory childcare as one of the key external factors identified by Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory (1982, 1986), that can result in women’s self-efficacy issues regarding their careers.

2.5 Possible Guidance interventions

Now I would like to identify some of the possible Guidance interventions that may be of specific interest to women’s career development. I will outline how my career development relates to these in the Discussion chapter. Before I outline these interventions, I feel it necessary to detail the role of the Guidance Counsellor and the ethical considerations for practice. In general terms, the role of the Guidance Counsellor is governed by ethics and policy in Guidance Counselling. A number of agencies inform the role, like the National Centre for Guidance in Education and the National Guidance Forum, (NCGE, 2007), the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC) and the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI). The primary code of ethics that Guidance Counsellors in Ireland work to is provided by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC, 2012). The four overall ethical principles as set out in this code are: Respect for the Rights and Dignity of the Client; Competence; Responsibility and Integrity. All of these apply when dealing with any client. The Codes of Ethics of these bodies must be adhered to at all times when dealing with people. The five basic moral principles as defined by Corey (1996, 54), are: beneficence; nonmaleficence; autonomy; justice and fidelity. Guidance Counsellors must endeavour to uphold these principles when entering every counselling session.

Writers like Ali & Graham (2000) and Corey (1996) speak about the Person Centred Approach to guidance counselling, as developed by Carl Rogers (1958). Kidd (2006, 55-56), identifies some opposition to this approach in Guidance Counselling. It is criticised for not taking into account the full picture of the individual’s situation and how outside circumstances affect their decision-making. She goes on to talk about Cognitive Behavioural Theories and how they differ from the person centred approach in that they help people to identify unproductive thoughts and develop improved behaviour patterns. For the purposes of this research proposal, the role of the Guidance Counsellor is very much linked to the issues being addressed. With this in mind Sharf (2010) provides a comprehensive basis from which to refer, specifically the Social Cognitive Theory, as mentioned earlier. Coogan and Chen (2007) outline some positive approaches that can
be taken by Guidance Counsellors when working with women’s career development. These include taking action to achieve more of a balance between home and work life.

The term ‘work-family conflict’ appears frequently in the research that I have accessed. Bimbose et al (2013) discuss the need for career guidance that is tailored to fit the needs of women. Guidance Counsellors need to discuss the possible conflicts that can occur between roles in what has become known as, ‘work-life integration’, (Tajili, 2014). Here she describes the Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM) and Systems Theory Framework (STF). These allow for a more holistic approach to career planning for women and take into consideration external factors and allows for other roles in life to take priority at certain times in the life-span. According to Sullivan and Mainiero, (2006) the KCM is based on three guiding principles: Authenticity, Balance and Challenge, (Tajili, 2014). Authenticity refers to women wanting to be true to themselves, knowing their limitations and capabilities and working to these. It has been found that women may lean towards authenticity later-on in their careers, having compromised this at an earlier stage to accommodate other priorities. Balance has been identified as the most desired and most difficult to achieve of the three elements. This is where a women will compromise work progression, putting it on hold, to fulfil her role as mother or carer and resuming her career at a later stage. Challenge refers to a woman’s desire to continually develop and requires being involved in work of substance and meaning. This has been identified as a powerful motivation for women, even when it’s not the main priority.

This article concludes with a cry for more early intervention for career orientated women in terms of their career development. Tajili (2014) calls for an open acknowledgement that it is different for women as they face different challenges to men in career decision-making. Appropriate Guidance early-on, can allow women to plan their careers, allowing for life events to take priority at various stages throughout their career. The KCM and the STF are recommended in enabling women to identify their values and plan for their future in a holistic way. While recognising that young women may resist this style of Guidance as they may feel that they can easily integrate a number of life roles, she reiterates the importance of this approach and the long-term benefits to be enjoyed by employing it. Tajili, (2014) believes that if women are informed of these methods of career decision-making early-on, they will learn to refer to the models as they progress through their careers.

Practitioners need to be aware of the impact that chance events can have for individuals and their career paths. Kim et al, (2014) write about the concept of ‘Planned
The Happenstance Career Inventory’. Planned happenstance is seen as enriching the Career Guidance process, ‘to include the transformation and creation of unplanned events that become opportunities for learning’, (Kim et al, 2014, 240). They refer to Krumboltz (2009) and his Happenstance Learning Theory which examines a range of learning experiences throughout a person’s life and not just one career decision. Sharf (2010, 383) also outlines the five skills that have been developed through Planned Happenstance Learning Theory, to assist individuals in capitalising on chance events and create employment opportunities. These five skills are: curiosity – career investigation and tracking chance encounters; persistence – not giving up easily; flexibility – adapting to a variety of experiences and personalities; optimism – this grows as actions result in positive outcomes; risk-taking – having the confidence to pursue opportunities that may seem beyond the person’s capabilities. An interesting correlation is made between high self-efficacy levels and the ability to persist with a search for work, (Kim et al, 2014, 250).

A mentor relationship has been identified as an effective tool in career development. I will speak about the positive impact this had on my recent career development in later chapters. McAdams (1993, 98-99) talks about Levinson’s view of the importance of mentors in career development. A mentor is someone, usually of the same gender, who is well established in their career. This is a mutually beneficial relationship for both parties who are at different stages of development within the same career area. He expresses concern that so few people seem to establish mentor relationships in the workplace and he points out that it can be difficult for women, in particular, to identify suitable mentors as many professions are male dominated at higher levels, (McAdams, 1993, 203). This sentiment is echoed by Hansman, (1998, 63) when she identifies the lack of possible female mentors in the workplace as a barrier for women to utilise this tool to career development. This is unfortunate, as being able to access a mentor in the work environment, has been linked to increased self-esteem for women, (Nelson and Quick, 1985). Other benefits of a mentor relationship, as outlined by Dreher and Ash, (1990) are the introductions to influential colleagues and observational learning, (Hansman, 1998, 63).

Studies by Young (1992) and James (1990) in particular, show evidence that non-linear career patterns can be successful and fulfilling. More specific Career Guidance for women is called for to highlight the options they may have for flexibility within the workplace, Schreiber (2003, 11). Her point that work arrangements are changing is
increasingly true today and it is encouraging to think that women may be better placed to adapt to changes due to their diverse work patterns. In order for women to truly succeed at combining a successful, fulfilling career with the demanding and rewarding role of motherhood, society needs to adapt further, (O’Hagan, 2015, 195). After decades of gradual change to employment structures much transformation is still required to progress career development for women. O’Hagan (2015) makes a clear demand when she says, ‘Changing the way work is organised and structured requires a fundamental shift away from the traditional male bread-winner/female caregiver model’, (O’Hagan, 2015, 195). She argues that in practice families are combining their home and work lives in many different ways and employment practices need to adapt to accommodate these needs.

2.6 Conclusion

I have looked initially at specific areas that I have distilled from the relevant literature and have been of personal significance to me and my career development. These include self-efficacy, communication and decision-making. Then I broadened my research to incorporate career development for women and finally looked at some possible Guidance interventions to deal with women’s career development. It is empowering to realise that I am not alone in my struggle with career and motherhood. However, the reluctance of societal change and employment structures is somewhat unsettling. It poses questions around the effectiveness of possible Guidance interventions if required supports are not in place to scaffold women’s career development.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The aims of this study are to explore the role that dominant messages in relation to communication and career development have played in my life and aspects of my personality that stem from that. I want to look at my communication with others and self, growing up and how this has affected my career decision-making skills, my locus of control, self-esteem and self-confidence. Some of these issues seem to have been heightened for me on having my own family. I have experienced conflict in managing my career with motherhood and this has unearthed my experience of childhood growing up in a family business. I want to capture some of my understandings to date and reflect on these. My aim is to analyse my personal career development and relate that to career development theory. The following is a list of my objectives as set out in my ethics form:

- To look at the messages that I received from others in my life and the impact this has had on my career development, in terms of self-esteem and decision making.
- Using the Heuristic form of inquiry, (Moustakas, 1990) I intend to immerse myself into this self-study of my career path, with a view to gaining greater understanding of myself to inform my practice as a Guidance Counsellor.
- To explore the area of career development for women.
- To remain open to the possibility of new insights unfolding through this process.

I have found it empowering to explore the research and literature on career development specifically for women. Bimbose et al (2013) discuss the need for Career Guidance that is tailored to fit the needs of women and I believe that other women may find this research of benefit. I feel strongly that working mothers require specific career guidance and can be encouraged to develop career paths in their chosen fields with planning and consideration for the various roles they serve.

3.1 Research paradigm

Two of the main research paradigms are quantitative and qualitative research (Bryman, 2012). The former is scientifically based and takes a positivist stance, aiming to prove or disprove a claim, using scientific, measurable means. The latter, qualitative research is more open to interpretation and less scientific. The differences between these...
methods of research are discussed by Chang, (2008, 45). While qualitative research allows the researcher the opportunity to make meaning out of the research, it can be more difficult to analyse. It is more subjective and the validity of the research can be called into question, requiring transparent data gathering and analysis methods. Having considered both methods, taking into account the difficulties associated with the qualitative approach, I remain of the opinion that it is more appropriate for my research topic than a quantitative method. I wanted this assignment to be of personal significance to me. Chang (2008, 64) elaborates this point when she highlights the need to feel passionate about the subject matter and to feel that the process will enhance the researchers professional development. I felt that examining my own career path to date may be beneficial to my current development and also inform the wider research into women’s career development. This is also in keeping with the requirement of autoethnography to relate to the wider society and culture of the researcher. This is an appropriate subject of study for me as I pursue a career in the area of Guidance Counselling. As I have developed the habit, over a number of years, of keeping a personal journal, I was intrigued to learn of autoethnography as a research method. This study will provide me with an opportunity to give voice to something that has been very influential in my life in relation to my education and career choices.

3.2 Autoethnography discussed

The basis of autoethnography is that the author is the subject of the research. It is a valid form of educational research and much can be gleaned from an individual’s life experience, Hamdan (2012). This view is reiterated by Chang et al (2010) when they encourage the use of personal experiences in research and dismiss criticisms of it as a scientific research method. They applaud the array of subject areas that have been explored in this way and the insight that this research offers. Etherington (2004) emphasizes the need for authenticity in the autoethnographic approach and I understand that I need to share openly and candidly to engage the reader fully and produce a believable account of my experience. I like the idea that autoethnography is ‘a source of privileged knowledge’, (Hamden, 2012, 585).

A strong motivating factor to carry out my research using autoethnography is the possibility of gaining some fresh insight into myself which will inform my continued development, both personally and professionally. The link between personal and professional development within journal writing is examined by Moon (2006, 72).
says of the process of expressing inner thoughts in journal writing, ‘it has the potential to link personal and professional education and development’. (Moon, 2006, 72). Bylorn and Orbe (2014, 189) write about the concept of ‘sense making’ and how Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005) have identified that the process of autoethnography can facilitate this for the writer. It affords the writer the opportunity to engage in a ‘reflexive process’ to glean fresh understanding of their individual circumstances in the context of their external environment, (Bylorn and Orbe, 2014, 189). I endeavour to examine my own career path, addressing the effect that dominant messages have had on my career development. Hamden (2012) quotes Freeman (1991), when she describes autoethnography as, ‘a process of refiguring the past and in turn reconfiguring the self in a way that moves beyond what had existed previously’, (Hamden, 2012, 587 (as cited in Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004, 77)). This resonates with me and entices me further to accept the challenge of the autoethnographic process. This is an opportunity to examine closely events of the past and my reactions to them in order to make sense of my behaviours in the present and inform future decisions.

I have intentionally focussed my study solely on my own career development and have not enlisted direct participation from any other parties. I refer to an article by Ngunjiri et al (2010) that critiques various styles of autoethnographic writing. They include a description adapted from Ellis and Bochner (2000) of the autoethnographic Continuum. The three elements of this scale are ‘Auto’, which is concerned with study of self; ‘Ethno’ which deals with the culture; and ‘Graphy’ which focusses on the research process. This scale ranges from Autobiographic to Ethnographic. In this study, I have leaned towards the autobiographic end of this spectrum in that my personal Journal is the main source of data.

### 3.3 Considerations of autoethnography as a research method

It is important that the researcher is aware of a number of key factors involved in autoethnography. Adhering to the requirement of open disclosure, the researcher runs the risk of being labelled with certain difficulties in their lives, (Bochner and Ellis, 2002, 92-93). Emphasis is put on the benefit of writing and reading what has been written in order to gain fresh insight into the self. As we develop, certain issues that were prominent at one time in our lives, will be less so at a later stage. It is important for me to emphasise in my writing any progression made, in particular regarding career decision-making and
career self-efficacy. It is through the process of recording and analysing such progress that I hope to learn more about myself and my career decision-making processes.

Ethical issues require careful consideration in Autoethnography. With this in mind, I will be vigilant in giving an account of my narrative of significant others who may have influenced me, but who will not be direct participants. As Etherington (2004) identifies, their anonymity needs consideration and will be carefully guarded. All of the research literature that I have accessed emphasises the importance of ethical research. A number of fundamental ethical considerations are addressed. Cohen et al (2011), Denscombe (2010), Bell (2009) and Walliman (2011) all write about the ethical standards that must be adhered to when conducting a piece of research. Possible ethical issues will depend on the preferred research method. I am aware that in an autoethnographic study, the author's narrative is influenced and shaped by individuals and organisations. Out of this place of reflexivity, sensitivity and ethical consideration, I guarantee that the names of persons and/or organisations that may be pertinent to this study will not be disclosed at any point during the research process or in the dissemination of findings. Chang (2008, 68-69), emphasises the requirement of ethical research for autoethnographers and advise adhering to the ethical standards of the educational institution to which the researcher is linked. I attach a copy of my ethical approval for this research, see appendix 12.

The issues of validity, reliability and truth are addressed by Etherington (2004, 147-149). She refers to a number of key questions to be considered, as identified by Richardson (2000). These are: does the thesis make a ‘substantive contribution’ to the understanding of the issue raised in society?; Does it have ‘aesthetic merit’, in a analytical and appealing way?; Is the work ‘reflexive’ in understanding the implications of undertaking such a study?; What is the ‘impact’ of the piece on the reader? Does it move and engage them?; Does the writing offer the feel of a ‘lived experience’. Does it feel ‘real’?’. (Etherington, 2004, 147-149). These are the questions that need to be at the forefront of the mind of the writer in the autoethnographic process. According to Chang (2008, 54-56), if autoethnography is to be carried out effectively these are the areas to be considered: remembering to study the self in the context of the wider culture and external environment; not sacrificing cultural analysis for the telling of the story; avoiding over-dependence on memory as a form of data collection; taking care to treat others implicated in the research in an ethical manner; and being clear about the scope of the research and that it does fit the true meaning of the term autoethnography. A number of definitions of autoethnography exist and Chang (2008, 49) proffers the following definition, ‘At the end
of a thorough self-examination in its cultural context, autoethnographers hope to gain a cultural understanding of self and others directly and indirectly connected to self”.

3.4 Data gathering

I will now look at some of the different styles of writing. Chang (2008, 35-37), talks about a number of ways in which ‘self-narratives’ are written. Among these is the personal essay which allows the author the comment on how they feel about certain societal issues. This has been criticised as a form of therapy for the writer. The personal journal is also identified as a means of gathering data on oneself and can frequently offer, ‘self-reflection and self-description’, (Chang, 2008, 36). A distinction is made between journals and memoirs. Memoirs are more thematic and focus on particular life events of significance. Journals are a means of recording every-day thoughts and reactions to daily occurrences. While journals may not be formally structured, Chang (2008) goes on to observe that journals and diaries are usually written purely for the writer and so contain personal insights and uncensored reflections. The practice of keeping a journal is something I have engaged in for as long as I can remember and to be afforded the opportunity to study it in this way is a privilege. For the purposes of this thesis, I will access data in my journal from April 1st to July 31st 2015, in keeping with the period that I have ethical approval for this research.

As with any research method, there are positive and negative aspects to autoethnography, as discussed by Chang (2008, 52-56). The fact that the researcher has immediate access to the primary data, in my case my journal entries, is a distinct advantage. This coupled with an innate understanding of the context of this data aids data analysis. The authethnographic approach allows the writer to present their thesis in a style that suits them and may be more accessible to a wider audience than other more typically academic research methods. One of the main attractions to autoethnography as a research method is that, ‘..self-reflection can lead to self-transformation through self-understanding.’ (Chang, 2008, p. 57). It can also be the case that the reader can gain some level of transformation or enlightenment from reading another person’s experience of a particular event that resonates with them.

As my chosen method of data gathering is focused on my journal entries, I feel it is important to add that Chang (2008, 72) talks about the usefulness of memory in the autoethnographic process. On the one hand, it can be unreliable as a form of recall and can be biased in relation to the writer’s perception of a past event that is, if an event was
pleasant or unpleasant this will colour the recollection. On the other hand, this subjectivity allows for deeper understanding of self as the writer reflects on their reactions to past events. Connecting experiences of the past to events of the present is acceptable in autoethnographic analysis, even though there is no scientific evidence to support such claims, Chang (2008, 134). This point is further developed when Chang (2008, 141) outlines that the autoethnographer is not merely recounting their life story, but examining it in order to make sense of certain aspects of themselves in their culture and gain new understanding. Brunton Derozier (2008, 78) takes this a step further when she claims that, 'The past can actually change.' The process of recounting the past by writing about it can help us to understand the situation clearer and therefore have a different view of the experience. Chang (2008, 145) refers to Ellis (1996, 2004) who says that, while confessional-emotive writing can evoke an emotional connection to the reader, Sparkes (2002) cautions producing a therapeutic document. This sentiment is echoed by Brunton Derozier (2008, 31), when she says, 'Journaling can be a powerful therapeutic tool when used in a balanced way'. It is important that the journal be used to capture the highs of life as well as the lows. My own writing includes some poetry, which I use as a means of expressing particular events or emotions. Thompson (2011, 165-167) writes about the use of poetry in journal writing. She explains that it can happen quite spontaneously and can allow for a free, creative flow of expression and this reflects how I experience it.

3.5 Analysis of the data

To add depth to the research, I am using the Heuristic form of research as developed by Moustakas (1990). The term heuristics comes from the Greek word heuriskein which means ‘to find out or discover’, Etherington (2004) and Sela-Smith (2012). This resonates with me as it relies on the emotional self and looks at imagery, dreams and a holistic approach to the individual, (Sela-Smith, 2012). Heuristic research is described as a method of getting the researcher to focus on how they feel in certain situations. This results when the researcher is embarking on a journey to the unknown. Etherington (2004) addresses the issue of having to let go of the outcome of the research and trust in the Heuristic process and the steps as outlined by Moustakas (1990). Sela-Smith (2012) echoes this as she describes how the researcher, on the one hand must follow each of the 6 steps as outlined, but on the other hand, must follow their instincts and go where their feelings take them on this journey of self-discovery. This seems like a
contradiction in terms and poses some questions around the practical working of this method.

I am struck by Sela-Smith’s (2012) explanation of the concept of ‘tacit knowledge’ and the impact that this knowledge has on us at a ‘feeling’ level. She refers to the old Chinese saying, ‘Once bitten, twice shy. Once bitten by a snake, a thousand times frightened by a rope’. This speaks to me as I reflect on my childhood experiences and how this has impacted and informed my view of career and mother role conflict. Moon (2004, 55) also explores the area of emotions and learning and this helps me to reflect on my earlier experiences and how they have affected my career decision-making. Moustakas (1990) is quoted as linking an individual’s tacit knowledge to deep rooted beliefs they hold throughout their lives and explains why people react differently in similar situations. I am attracted to this form of learning as I had a general feeling that I needed to examine this element of myself in order to make some progress with my career. Sela-Smith (2012) contends that we learn much of our tacit knowledge as young children, prior to the ability to speak and verbalise our thoughts and so any challenge to these beliefs requires change to occur at the deepest level, the ‘I-who-feels’ level. These early beliefs are not based on logic but on our feeling at the time of formative experience. So a reversal of these beliefs has to be approached in the same way, on an emotional level.

The Heuristic method allows for such investigation and intervention. The 6 steps of the Heuristic form of enquiry as outlined by Moustakas (1990) are: 1- Initial Engagement; 2- Immersion; 3- Incubation; 4- Illumination; 5- Explication; 6- Creative Synthesis, (Sela-Smith 2012). Here she explains each step. Step 1, initial engagement refers to the first tentative steps taken by the researcher in choosing a research topic. According to Moustakas (1990) the topic chooses the researcher. This occurs when a person is compelled to write about something of profound personal importance to them. Sela-Smith (2012) expands on this by saying that if the researcher does not surrender to the true issue that they need to examine, the heuristic process will not work. Authenticity is required in order to identify exactly the issue that needs to be addressed by the research. Step 2 is immersion. This requires the researcher to allow the research topic to consume their waking and sleeping hours. The contribution of dreams has been acknowledged here as significant and the absolute necessity to fully submerge oneself in the process is emphasised. According to Moustakas (1990), when this step is carried out effectively, then the topic of research is evident in all aspects of the researcher’s life. It follows them around in everything they do. There is a point of caution at utilising this method for an
assessed project, like a thesis, as this is a structured format with a deadline. It can be used, but the researcher must be fully connected to the research topic and willing to engage with all the steps of the heuristic process.

Step 3 is incubation and this requires the researcher to reflect on the work carried out to date, in the previous 2 steps. Once these steps have been completed adequately incubation will allow for some understanding to take place. It is noted that some researchers find it difficult to accept this stage as it suggests taking a break from the research and they fear losing focus at this point. However Moustakas (1990), encourages this space to allow for understanding of the tacit knowledge referred to in step 2. The incubation stage is not planned and will happen spontaneously if the previous steps have been fulfilled. Illumination is step 4 and Sela-Smith (2012) quotes Moustakas (1990) as saying that this happens when, ‘the researcher is open and receptive to tacit knowledge and intuition’. This step cannot be planned or scheduled to fit into a timeframe and it does not have to occur as a defining moment in time. It can be a realisation that the researcher comes to over a period of time as fundamental changes to long-held beliefs are unfolding or it can be a sudden moment of clarity and understanding.

Explication is the next step in the process, step 5. This involves the researcher incorporating the new developments in themselves into how they feel, think and behave. The fundamental, personal changes that took place in step 3, incubation find open expression in explication. The researcher lives the new alterations that have occurred within and so the environment around them accommodates these changes. Moustakas (1990) attributes this level of change to the fact that the researcher is the subject of the research. He claims that this level of development cannot be achieved if the research data is based on other people’s experiences. (Sela-Smith, 2012). The final stage in the Heuristic process is step 6, creative synthesis. This is the culmination of the successful completion of all previous 5 steps. It is the transformation of something fundamental within the researcher that was the main focus of the study initially, in step 1. It is identified as a creative expression from deep within the researcher that touches those who can identify with the research topic. It is not something that can be planned or forced and it occurs on an unconscious level.

Some shortcomings have been identified by Sela-Smith (2012), in her extensive review of Moustakas’ Heuristic research method. She points out that on the one hand the researcher is directed to follow a step-by-step process in a linear fashion and on the other hand encouraged to allow for natural enlightenment and development that cannot be
forced or planned. Possible confusion is highlighted when co-participants are mentioned. The introduction of co-participants by Moustakas seems to stem from a possible desire to make his qualitative method of enquiry more acceptable to the scientific analysts. Sela-Smith (2012) makes the point that one individual’s personal experience cannot be measured against an experience of another individual for the purpose of analysis. She argues that a lived experience is a valid piece of data in it’s own right and should not need to be measured further. A person’s emotional response to an event in their life cannot be judged as being more or less valid than that of another person. Engaging with the Heuristic process validates the research, according to Sela-Smith (2012). Brunton Derozier (2008, 69-74) discusses intuition and synchronicity which links in with some of the points made by Moustakas throughout his 6 stages of Heuristic research. Allowing a natural flow and trusting the process of the writing have been identified as important.

To assist with the analysis of the data gleaned from my personal journal, I will apply Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This is a qualitative research method that looks at how individuals come to new understandings of their lived experiences, (Smith et al, 2013, 1). It marries well with the ideology of autoethnography and also the flow of the Heuristic process. The steps outlined in IPA, which I will discuss in my analysis, provide an opportunity to give evidence of rigour and transparency in the analysis, (Smith et al, 181-182).

3.6 Conclusion

It is interesting for me to look back on how my research topic evolved. It was an organic process that developed and grew from a deep-seated desire within for greater understanding of myself and my career decision-making to date. This, as I have come to learn, is the basis of the Heuristic form of enquiry. As I realised that I could focus this study on myself, it became clear that the qualitative method of autoethnography was best suited to my needs. Having considered the implications of such a study, I felt that the benefits of learning more about myself in this way exceed any negative attention. Added to this, the opportunity to share my personal journal as a data source is both freeing and challenging. I am not sure where this process will leave me and I am doing it anyway. It is with a sense of anticipation that I embark on analysing my journals and I am open to any enlightenment that may follow.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis

4.0 Introduction

One advantage of autoethnography as a research method is that the data source is so easily accessible to the researcher, (Chang, 2008, 52). The challenge here is to maintain some distance from the data, in order to analyse it effectively. As I approach the analysis phase with sincerity and a belief that I need to do this now, for myself, I am fully aware that this is not a therapeutic exercise. Chang (2008, 54) identifies a number of things to avoid in autoethnography, including a lack of, 'cultural interpretation'. I conduct this study, in the spirit that sharing my own career development journey, will add to existing research on women’s career development. I will develop this further in my Discussion Chapter.

Journaling is my main source of data. Journals and their various uses are discussed by Moon (2006, 85), specifically for ‘exploring or widening experience or awareness’. Journals can be used to capture, ‘an internal mental journey’, (Moon, 2006, 85). In working through the Heuristic process, I am examining my thoughts and looking at my behaviours and their roots, in the hope of gleaning new insights. I will share any such insights with a view to informing others who can relate to the issues raised.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) offers a flexible structure to assist with qualitative analysis that is particularly useful to novice researchers, (Smith et al, 2013, 81). It can assist the researcher to gain fresh insight into past lived experience, through looking at the language used and the mood of the writing. Picking out key phrases and questioning are also features of IPA, (Smith et al, 88-89). The first 4 steps, as outlined by Smith et al (2013, 82-107), are relevant to autoethnographic research. They are: Step 1: Reading and re-reading; Step 2: Initial noting; Step 3: Developing emergent themes; Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes. Recurrence of a topic is described by Chang (2008, 132) as indicating areas of fundamental importance to the writer. Thematic analysis is a qualitative analysis method that not only organises the data but often leads to interpretation of the subject of the research, (Braun and Clark, 2006).
4.1 The Data – my personal journal

I will now describe how the initial steps of IPA worked for me in practice:

*Step 1: Reading and re-reading:*

92 hand-written A4 pages, dated from April 1st to July 31st, photocopied and numbered.

*Step 2: Initial noting:*

Post-it notes to highlight certain words to identify themes, covering any people's names and place names and coding them with letters of the alphabet.

*Step 3: Developing emergent themes:*

Picked colours, at random, to represent each theme and re-read, highlighting each section of text for clearer identification.

*Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes:*

Arranged these pages, in date order, onto a long sheet of wallpaper liner. Cut this long sheet into 3 strips and hung them 1 under the other on the wall in an attempt to identify any patterns or links between the themes and to distinguish any key points of significance.

Grouped the pages onto flip-chart paper – see 11 photos attached, see appendix 1 to 11.

I will discuss the themes in the order as outlined below making reference to the secondary themes throughout.

4.2 Themes Identified

1 Common Theme:

**Theme 1: Deep Personal Learning**

3 Main Themes:

**Theme 2.a: Communication with Self**

**Theme 2.b: Communication with Others**

**Theme 3: Self-Confidence/Efficacy**

**Theme 4: Role Conflict**

There were a number of secondary themes:

- Being pro-active
- Decision-making
- Making time for myself / Busyness.
- Moments in Time
- Poetry
My current context as a researcher

It is with a heavy heart that I analyse the themes of my writing. I feel it is appropriate to pay respect to the passing of a significant person of influence in my life in May of this year. I am conscious as I reflect on the writing, the effect this bereavement has had and continues to have. Perhaps this grieving has brought me closer to the depths of my own life and has paradoxically given depth to my study. With respect to the ethical considerations of other family members, I will not refer to this further in this forum.

I have remained committed to the process of this thesis and am grateful for this opportunity.

4.3 Analysis of themes

In the early stages of my analysis, I stayed very close to the data and struggled with ‘reducing the volume of detail’ as advised by Smith et al (2013, 91). It is worth noting that the act of displaying my personal journal on my wall is both exposing and freeing. In letting go of these thoughts I no longer feel bound by them.

As I worked with these themes it became apparent that there was much overlap and connection between them. I describe this overlap like the ripple effect of dropping a pebble in a pool of water. The pebble could represent any one of the themes and it’s effect is felt by the other themes as the ripples roll out. So, for example, a pebble of Communication with Self, (positive affirmation), when dropped into the pool of themes can raise Self-Confidence which can improve Communication with Others, reducing Role Conflict and resulting in Deep Personal Learning.
This is represented in the following diagram (figure 4.3.1):

![Diagram showing the relationship between themes]

**Note:** The pebble can be any one of the themes and the order of the ripple effect can vary.

### 4.4 Theme 1: Deep personal learning

I have spoken about Tacit Knowledge, as explained by Sela-Smith (2012), in my Methodology Chapter. This refers to early beliefs that we acquire, which are not based on logic but on our feeling at the time of formative experience. Struck by the power of the Heuristic process, I achieve a fundamental level of understanding, in particular, regarding my experience of role conflict and communication with others, which I will discuss in a moment under these headings. I refer to moments of significant learning throughout my journal and use poetry as a means of expressing this learning, (secondary themes). Poetry is credited with providing a creative flow and a means of conveying deep emotions, (Thompson, 2011, 165-167).

There is an apparent conflict in my writing between a cognitive approach to dealing with life and a capacity and desire for emotional expression. The essence of the Heuristic process is the use of ‘feelings’, (Sela-Smith, 2013). On June 29th, as I become a little more reflective, I note not just needing to get my ‘head’ around certain things, but more importantly, my ‘heart’, (Appendix 6, 52). I begin to engage more on an emotional level here and eventually move to a deeper understanding of this on July 5th. I recognise
the need to slow down, ‘even my thoughts’, (Appendix 8, 65). It comes across in my writing that my thoughts are at times, frenetic. Again, I mention the need for meditation and then I pose the question, ‘How do I feel now?’ to which I give a busy response about feeling ‘fundamentally relaxed’ and go on to describe the improved circumstances, excellent job prospects and reflect on how I did it - very much a ‘head’ response, (Appendix 8, 67).

Then I do something which shows an instinct that deeper probing is required and I write, ‘And again, I ask ‘How do I feel now?’ My response is simply, ‘I feel relaxed’. This evokes a deep emotional reaction. As I surrender to it, I write through the feeling:
…..’Deep breadths to let that feeling sink-in.

As I write that, it’s seeping into me, through me.
What relaxation actually feels like.
I think I had forgotten.
I feel emotional at the thought.
It’s washing through me.
I’ve cried cleansing tears of pain, frustration and hurt before, but now I feel relief and relaxation.
Again, deep breadths….’ (July 5th, appendix 8, 67)

And the moment has drifted. ‘..it was fleeting, though beautiful.’ I acknowledge that I can experience this again if I allow myself to ‘let the feeling through’, (Appendix 8, 67). I have highlighted this as ‘A Moment in Time’ and I feel it created a significant shift within me. I notice that my writing changes slightly after this point. I seem to flow into a phase of reflection from July 15th,(Appendix 9, 72). There is a general sense of slowing down here and on July 20th, (Appendix 9, 76), I am drawn to write this poem, which I have highlighted as ‘A Moment in Time’ as it captures this sense of change of pace in me.
As I approach the end of my journal for thesis purposes, I write about my understanding of universal energy and that I am trusting my belief in this more and more. When I focussed my job search on Guidance related areas that matched my values, I attracted these opportunities into my life. I trusted this process and let go of the outcome. The key to trusting the process was trusting myself and this required confidence. I go on to write, ‘I feel like I have undergone fundamental changes over the last 2 years. But the outcome is not that I have changed but that I am becoming more of the person I have always been.’ (Appendix 11, 88). I ponder the reactions to my thesis of those close to me who may not have seen this side of me before. I sense that I would like to write a poem but it’s not flowing. Then I ask that simple but so effective question, ‘How am I feeling now?’, and I am compelled to write the following poem:

**TIME**

Time
In – out
Deep
Thoughts rushing
Slowing down
Keeping busy

Time
In – out
Deep
Emotions mixed
Slowing down
Keeping busy
Time

(Appendix 9, 78)
I write that it feels like ‘a wave of acceptance washed over me’, (Appendix 11, 88). This represents to me the deep learning that I am experiencing, emotionally. I feel that CBT is an effective tool that can be applied as required throughout life to improve general outlook and mood. However, I recognise in myself, a need and capacity for a more emotional engagement with life. I feel that the Heuristic process awakened an emotional response in me that had lain dormant for some time. I will return to this point in my Discussion Chapter.

4.5 Theme 2.a: Communication with self

Another term for this could be ‘self-talk’ or ‘that voice in your head’. This theme appears to be in 2 sections. The first section is laden with positive affirmations that have the effect of raising my energy levels. I seem to be operating on a cognitive level here, maintaining an optimistic outlook but lacking in deep reflection. On April 27th, I show some frustration with creeping destructive thoughts, when I write, ‘SHUT UP NEGITIVITY’ (Appendix 4, 35). I am unnerved by thoughts of uncertainty with regard to work and am determined to eliminate them. To put this into context, I have come through a period, approximately 12 months ago, where my thoughts spiralled quite low due to perceived lack of work opportunities. I felt consumed by this, resulting in low
energy levels and inability to take appropriate action. The fear of returning to this place is evident in my constant reinforcement using affirmations.

I note, on June 18\textsuperscript{th}, that I struggle to write, ‘I am proud of myself’, (Appendix 5, 41). I can remember the moment this thought came into my head but I hesitated before I consciously wrote the words. While reflecting on this, on June 22\textsuperscript{nd} I listened to some transformational affirmations and was inspired to write the following lines:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{l}
\textbf{ABUNDANCE} \\
It’s all in the mind.  \\
Clear thoughts.  \\
Effort,  \\
Application,  \\
Manifestation –  \\
Dreams become reality.  \\
Courage to face success.  \\
Sky’s the limit.  \\
Head in the clouds  \\
Open the mind  \\
Prepare for abundance Beyond Your Wildest Dreams.  \\
Endless abundance  \\
Claim your share  \\
Share your claim  \\
Be grateful & flourish.
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

(Appendix 6, 46)

I write that I am feeling more energetic on June 23\textsuperscript{rd} – the day after writing this poem, (Appendix 6, 47). This was a clear turning point for me and begins the second section of this theme, with deeper analysis, reflection and key points of learning. It is noticeable that the instance of affirmations has reduced and I seem more at ease. I am able to allow niggling doubts and recognise them as ‘just my old negative voice’, (June 24\textsuperscript{th}, Appendix 6, 48b and 49). It is intriguing that I didn’t realise that something
fundamental had changed in me until I had re-read these notes. This emphasises the benefit of analysis and self-reflection and also the power of a creative form such as poetry.

4.6 Theme 2.b: Communication with others

At the time of writing my journal, my confidence levels are high and I am being pro-active with regard to my career development (secondary theme). I have received positive feedback regarding my work and am progressing well with my studies. I am interested to see the effect of increased confidence on my ability to express myself with others. On June 20th (Appendix 5, 42), I begin to reflect on my achievement of securing work and in looking back recalled a letter of gratitude I sent to someone 15 months previous. I considered that it was easier for me to put pen to paper than to verbalise what was on my mind. This led me to recall the role that communication played in my life when I was younger and how this may have impacted on my interactions in adulthood. My recollection is that children were rarely asked for their opinion and this was my experience, growing up in the 70’s and 80’s. I feel that I was not encouraged to speak my mind or give my opinion and therefore didn’t develop these skills effectively.

This may have inhibited my decision-making skills and affected my ability to question authority, which led me to consider my communication style in dealing with conflict or intimidating personalities. On July 1st (Appendix 6, 53), I have written about a recent conversation with someone in authority and how I felt during and after it. It really upset me at the time but it was the catalyst for further reflection which led me to examine my reaction in conflict situations. On July 5th (Appendix 7, 61), I have identified that, I react emotionally, in the sense that I feel the response throughout my body. I consider myself to be intelligent, but when faced with confrontation, I seem to lose the power of speech and revert to the ‘child’. I was annoyed at myself for allowing this particular situation to develop. If I had been more assertive in a previous meeting this could have been avoided. I had fallen into the old role of child in the parent-child style of communication. As I reflect further on July 5th (Appendix 7, 62), I call this ‘compliant child mode’. I begin to comprehend that I can question authority to clarify what is being said and that being honest about what I am thinking or feeling is acceptable. This feels like a certain permission has been granted to me to speak my mind. This is an example of implicit learning and it is energising to find a solution that reaches me on an emotional level. This is also an indication of some resolution to the conflict I spoke about earlier.
It seems as if I have discovered a means of verbalising what I am feeling, regardless of who I am speaking to, including authority figures.

Also on July 5th (Appendix 7, 62), I relate that my communication in my personal relationships is improving and ‘I feel able to speak my mind’. My increased confidence has enabled me to give my opinion and instigate more conversations. This results in positive experiences and further boosts my confidence. I am enjoying being able to talk about work and my language is more empowering now. I am in an optimistic frame of mind and this comes across in my conversations with others. Then I wonder, ‘do I write too much?’, (Appendix 8, 64). It seems that I realise this now because I am talking more and can see the benefit of constructive interaction over the comfort of writing. It is something that I have considered in the past but never examined. But now I notice that I follow this question with the statement that, ‘..no-one would listen to all of this’, (Appendix 8, 64 and 65), which relates to my feeling of not being heard as a child. This is a belief I will need to give further attention to as I continue my personal development.

4.7 Theme 3: Self-confidence/efficacy

The link between self-confidence or self-efficacy and career decision-making was one of my initial motivations for undertaking this study. It is empowering to me to view my progress in this regard. Approximately 12 months ago, I made a conscious effort to change my thought patterns with a view to enhancing my mood to encourage pro-active behaviour. This was in line with the CBT training I had undertaken with AWARE, (Williams, 2007). There is clear evidence of the benefit of an optimistic outlook in my writing. On June 4th (Appendix 3, 23), I note that I am actively seeking Guidance work opportunities and being pro-active (secondary theme). While I am taking responsibility and looking for work, ‘I am trusting the outcome’, (June 15th Appendix 4, 28). Soon after this I am successful in securing an excellent Guidance post and this helps to strengthen my self-confidence further.

On July 5th, I identify an important element of the turn-around in my career was that I made some ‘selfish decisions’, (Appendix 8, 63). I will examine this point further in my Discussion Chapter as I feel that it may be of interest to other women who find themselves in a similar situation. I took the decision to focus specifically on roles that related to Guidance in some way. I became selective about work environments, considering only those that matched and recognised my person-centred values. In looking back now, I feel that taking this stance required tremendous courage and self-belief, which
I had been lacking in the months preceding this decision. My experience was that once I became focused on my goal of working in Guidance and determined that I could succeed, opportunities started to present themselves. This coincided with the development of a very positive Mentor relationship. To have someone take an interest in me and in my development, personally and professionally, just at the time when I needed it most, was powerful. I believe this relationship is a case of Happenstance and maybe even divine intervention! I will progress this point in my Discussion Chapter.

Embarking on the Heuristic process, (Moustakas, 1990) and IPA (Smith et al, 20130), I am aware that emotional depth is required for greater understanding to occur. It is interesting to observe a natural movement in my writing, from focusing on my thoughts to engaging with my emotions on a deeper level. The simple statement, ‘It feels great’, (July 6th Appendix 8, 69), acknowledging an emotion rather than a thought, stands alone and as such exudes confidence. This appears to be linked with a stronger sense of focus on what I want in terms of work. Having worked in a Guidance role for a number of weeks to a high standard and securing further work, my confidence is based on evidence of competence. However, the most significant realisation for me was that I could achieve a balance between work and family life. I believe this was where my career self-efficacy stemmed from and I will develop this point as I look at Role Conflict.

On July 12th I am reflecting and note a ‘real sense of achievement’, (Appendix 11, 89). I am experiencing the rise in confidence on a deep level. The poem ‘Abundance’, written on July 30th, referred to under the theme of deep personal learning, captures this. I say that it is ‘an acceptance of my achievements and an acceptance of who I am’, (Appendix 11, 89). The overlap of the themes of self-confidence and communication is evident, where an improvement in one area sends a ripple of positive influence onto the other. This effect can be felt in other themes also, including Role Conflict.

4.8 Theme 4: Role conflict

This is where the underlying theme of busyness is most evident. I note on April 26th and 27th feeling, ‘pulled in a number of different directions’, (Appendix 2, 10), which reflects managing multiple roles. I write a lot about the day-to-day demands on my time for example, completing a job application after the bed-time routine, (Appendix 3, 24). A recurring sub-theme appears on June 18th when I note that, ‘I have the whole day to myself’, (Appendix 5, 40). This stems, I believe, from a lack of work-leisure boundaries when I was growing up. There was an imbalance of workload that impacted family life
and this skewed my experience of work demands on motherhood. I felt the effect of these demands on an emotional level, but never communicated these feelings. The overlap of the themes is again evident here. Researching the Heuristic process (Moustakas, 1990), led me to examine my relationship with the roles of mother and professional in a new way, from an emotional point of view. It seems that engaging with this process has brought me in touch with these concealed emotions.

On June 23rd, I felt a surge of energy and ‘a light bulb moment that calmed a spot within me.’ (Appendix 6, 48a), where logical explanations and counselling had previously failed. I understood for the first time that my early experience of the impact of the role of professional on that of mother was negative and this was the implicit message that I have carried with me. It seems that awareness can bring great peace to the soul. It was empowering to realise that because I felt this so deeply, on an emotional level, logical reasoning was not going to assist me in dealing with my current struggles, as a mother. I needed to provide an emotional explanation and learning about tacit knowledge seems to have done that. As I continue to digest this new insight, I recognise this as a key point of learning for me. I have gained great comfort from it and feel it has released a huge burden. The emotion that surrounded this belief has finally been soothed, not just placated, but soothed and comforted. I have highlighted this as ‘A Moment in Time’ and use a technical analogy, where I say, ‘This was perhaps not a switch that had to just be flicked, but rather a whole piece of programming that had to be re-written. This was just the final act of uploading the new data’, (Appendix 6, 48a).

I note, on June 23rd, that my favourite time to work on the thesis is late at night as there is, ‘no associated guilt’ at this time of night, (Appendix 6, 48b). I am reminded of a poem I wrote in February with this in mind:
On July 5th (Appendix 8, 65), I draw a spider diagram of how my life will look in September and I noticed that it was very work focused. It struck me that I need to be mindful of maintaining a balance between roles. My career self-efficacy is addressed when I show concern that my desire to establish a successful reputation as a Guidance Counsellor will impact negatively on my commitments as a mother. As I approach the end of my journal for the purposes of the thesis, I naturally move to reflection and on July 12th (Appendix 9, 75), I consider the impact that role conflict had on my career-decisions. I worked in part-time positions that were, at times, not in line with my values, where my strengths were not appreciated. My justification for this was that I was more available as a mother, but in reality, my confidence was depleting in these environments and I was not fulfilling my potential. I cannot change the past, but I can ensure that this does not happen in the future. My concerns now seem to be more about the logistics of managing work and home rather than the emotional aspect.
4.9 Conclusion

I have found it enlightening to extract themes from my writing in this way and to realise the inter-relationship between them. I feel that I have developed emotionally and intellectually through this process – I have certainly been stretched in both areas. Learning about how I picked up on unspoken messages in childhood was a profound experience for me. It is my hope and intention that I will reflect on this as a life-changing moment. Now I will move on to the Discussion Chapter where I will relate these insights to what I have discovered in the literature.
Chapter 5: Discussion

5.0 Introduction

In this section I will endeavour to link what I have learned from the literature to what I have uncovered through my analysis. This discussion will be structured into the various themes of research, namely: Self-efficacy/Self-confidence, Communication and Role Conflict. Deep Personal Learning was a dominant theme that emerged from my analysis and it is my aim to harness what I have learned and apply it to Guidance Counselling for women, specifically mothers. Firstly, I would like to describe my experience of the Heuristic process, (Moustakas, 1990) and how it has enabled me to reframe elements of my past.

5.1 Meaning making process of this enquiry

The Heuristic process offers the researcher the chance to examine some deep seated aspect of themselves, with a view to gaining new insight, (Sela-Smith, 2012). The Illumination that I experienced on learning about Tacit knowledge was like a spark that ignited a flame of understanding within me, as illustrated in the following diagram, (figure 5.1.1):
The match represents my development by phase 3 of the Heuristic Process, (1. Initial Engagement; 2. Immersion; 3. Incubation). Just like a match, I held the power to cause a spark to initiate the next phase. The spark signifies my experience of the Illumination phase, where I learned to embrace the emotions of formative experiences. The flames symbolise the Explication phase and my outward expression of acceptance and understanding of myself on a deeper level. The energy emitted by the flames captures the essence of how I have experienced Creative Synthesis. The flame that was sparked shines a light on underlying beliefs that I had learned in childhood regarding role conflict and communication. The effect was not only to bring these beliefs into view but to gently warm and comfort them, changing how I recall them. I now see the relationship between work and motherhood in a different light. Communicating my views has become easier and I feel less threatened by possible conflict situations. Our ‘personal myth’ is discussed by McAdams (1993,102), where he says that in looking back on our lives with a fresh viewpoint, we can ‘rewrite the past’, as our understanding of it changes. This captures the Deep Personal Learning that I have experienced through the Heuristic Process (Moustakas, 1990).

5.2 Self-efficacy/self-confidence

My initial research into the area of self-confidence in relation to career decision-making led me to the concept of self-efficacy. This refers to an individual’s belief of their ability to carry out certain tasks (Bandura, 1997). The following four ways that self-efficacy are learned have been identified by Bandura (1997): 1. Performance Accomplishments - the feedback we receive for performance in certain tasks can be very influential on career-related decisions; 2. Vicarious Learning - we model our behaviours on those around us, in our families and in society at large; 3. Verbal Persuasion - encouragement to pursue our chosen career area increases our career-related self-efficacy; 4. Physical/Affective Status - an environment with low stress levels is more conducive to healthy self-efficacy. A detailed analysis of career self-efficacy is presented by Sumari (2003), where she looks at women’s career decision-making. This paper is representative of the research in this area, in that it focuses on the notion of women’s place in male dominated professions. In an attempt to understand my own career development more, I feel this does not adequately explain why I have struggled to manage the roles of career
with motherhood. My career self-efficacy appears to be linked to role conflict more-so than to my chosen career area.

An interesting point is made by Olson and Hergenhahn (2011, 336/7) when they write about ‘Bandura’s concept of perceived self-efficacy’. They say that individuals work best when their capabilities match their expectations of themselves. If we think we are better than we actually are then this can lead to failure and irritation. However, if we do not push ourselves enough and not reach our potential, we hinder our development. I can relate to feeling that I was not fulfilling my potential but I couldn’t unearth the true stumbling block that was preventing me for developing my career further. Studying the Social Cognitive Theory resonated with me on an intellectual level, but I felt there was something missing that did not explain fully why I had made certain career related decisions.

Engler (2009) comes a little closer when she talks about how past experiences can have an impact on our actions into the future. Our thoughts and behaviours can influence our self-efficacy (Engler, 2009, 244-246). I have described in the Analysis chapter how my thoughts regarding role conflict were based on my childhood experience where the demands of work were prioritised. This resulted in a work-life imbalance. My career self-efficacy was hinged on the fact that I was tightly bound by my concept of role conflict of motherhood and professional. This hindered my ability to make effective career decisions. If a person has a negative emotional connection to a particular action, they will be likely to have a low self-efficacy around this activity, (Leary and Tangney, 2012, 204). I will discuss this further under the heading of Role Conflict. I note in my analysis that I am currently feeling more confident and attribute this to a number of things, including actively engaging in a practice of positive thinking. I can see that an optimistic outlook improves self-confidence and aids more effective decision-making. The simple, yet powerful statement, ‘It feels great’, (July 6th Appendix 8, 69), captures my growing confidence.

Overall, I felt that my investigation into the area of self-efficacy did not comprehensively address my experience of self-confidence and role conflict. However, Leary and Tangney (2012, 204) resonate with me when they talk about the individual’s ‘psychological and emotional states’, which link low self-efficacy to a negative emotional connection to a particular circumstance. I am drawn to the writing of Gigerenzer, (2007),
who talks about the value of trusting our gut instincts when making decisions. There are times when we need to operate on instinct and not rely solely on information and analysis. The effect of my optimistic thoughts is seen when I say, ‘I am trusting the outcome’, (June 15th Appendix 4, 28). Individuals with a positive outlook will tend to trust their instincts more than those with a more negative approach, (Gigerenzer, 2007). I relate to this and will examine it further as I look at the role that communication played in my career decision-making.

5.3 Communication, internal dialogue and messages received

In my analysis, the theme of Communication emerged from the data, comprising two elements – communication with self and communication with others. For the purpose of this discussion, I will look at communication as one theme. As I have said, my writing during the period of analysis – April 1st to July 31st was predominately positive and there is a sense of conscious self-encouragement with affirmations like, ‘I am pro-active. I am open to all opportunities….’ (Appendix 2, 12). I have also eluded to the fact that I have come from a darker place of uncertainty and poor career decision-making. I am struck by what I learned on the AWARE Life Skills course in relation to CBT (Williams, 2007). I find it energising to consider the effect that a positive thought can have on our mood and the resultant effect that this can have on our behaviour. This led me to read about how powerful our thoughts are and the impact that positive thinking can have, (Dyer, 2004). Harnessing the energy of positive thoughts has enabled me to raise my own energy levels. This had the effect of improving my confidence and regaining my trust in my gut instincts, as Gigerenzer, (2007), suggested it would. I can see a connection between this and our locus of control, (Noor, 2002).

Locus of control of working mothers is discussed by Noor (2002), in particular the relationship with work-family demands and general wellbeing. She argues that our perceived levels of control over our situations can have either a direct effect, a moderator effect or a mediation effect on our wellbeing. I can relate to the mediation effect, where she says that, ‘control would influence perceptions of conflict’, (Noor, 2002, 649). The messages that I received growing up led to my perception that work-life conflict was inevitable and this manifested itself in my struggle to manage the roles effectively. I have
compromised my career development in order to avoid repeating the work-life imbalance that I experienced as a child.

I have taken some comfort from the words of Carl Rogers (1980) when he speaks about his experience of communication growing up. He says that having someone to talk to is one thing, but enjoying the feeling of being really understood is another entirely, (Rogers 1980, 13-14). I cannot recall a memory of enjoying this feeling growing up, in school or at home. This, perhaps, shaped my relationship with open communication from a young age and raises the question of trust and how this is affected. This may explain why, as a teenager, I decided to keep a Journal. It is striking when I write, ‘..no-one would listen to all of this’, (Appendix 8, 64 and 65). I believed this when I was younger also and so used this space to express my thoughts and feelings without having to entrust them with anyone else. According to Brunton Derozier (2008, 31), ‘Journaling can be a powerful therapeutic tool when used in a balanced way’. I think the process of writing was beneficial for me at times but as I learn more about methods of writing and analysing I realise that it was often imbalanced and so of little real value to my progression and understanding of myself.

Rogers (1980, 14-19), speaks about the importance of ‘realness’ and ‘congruence’ in communication with ourselves and with others. There is an honesty required here and I think, a level of understanding and trust. Rogers (1980, 18) cautions the suppression of annoyance we feel with others and the inappropriate expression of this, which can cause hurt. Sensitivity to the other person’s feelings is required when communicating on such an up-front level. Rogers, (1980, 160) speaks about how this ‘may involve confrontation’. For me, this is linked to allowing another person ‘to be his own realness’, (Rogers, 1980, 18). There were times when I didn’t feel that I could express myself freely and explore values or opinions that differed from the norm. When I didn’t conform, this would lead to confrontation and ultimately, supressed emotions, thoughts and ideas. The message I received here was that if I didn’t behave in the way that was expected, my behaviour was wrong. My memory is that there was no discussion where I could air my view or argue my point. In many ways, this hampered my decision-making skills as I was not offered options to choose from. Life skills are described by Sugarman (2001, 215) where emphasis is placed on effective communication skills, with self and others. I recognise the importance of effective communication skills and feel the benefit of overcoming fear of conflict. Realising that I was communicating in, ‘compliant child
mode’, (Appendix 7, 62), has allowed me to reconsider my position when faced with conflict and to realise that, ‘I am entitled to speak my mind’, (Appendix 7, 61).

Rogers (1980, 18) speaks about ‘realness’. This struck a chord with me, as I feel that, at times, I didn’t communicate my true feelings in order to avoid confrontation. I turned to writing a journal as a means of self-expression. Learning about implicit childhood messages, helped me to address my emotional reaction when faced with confrontation and in my analysis I have identified a number of strategies to deal with it. I am mindful of staying true to myself and feel free to express my own opinion, (Appendix 7, 61). Addressing this issue from an emotional standpoint has helped me deal with this behaviour on a deeper level, where logical explanations have failed in the past. It is worth noting that my increased confidence levels have contributed to improved communication and a willingness to address the issue of my reliance on writing in preference to conversing with others. I am able to ask the question ‘do I write too much?’, (Appendix 8, 64). I don’t feel as dependant on writing and have begun to enjoy the alternative, open communication.

On reflection, I feel Rogers’ honesty freed me to acknowledge that my own experience of communication with others, particularly figures of authority, did not promote free self-expression or encourage decision-making. Having been through this process of analysing my career decision-making, I can relate more closely to the cognitive approach as outlined by Sharf (2010, 428). It is interesting to note the recognition of the importance of a person’s belief systems when faced with career decisions. In my analysis, I note that I experienced a marked improvement in terms of my career progression, when I made some ‘selfish decisions’, (Appendix 8, 63). These decisions included staying close to my ultimate goal of working as a Guidance Counsellor. I took a decision to be more selective about the types of work environments I would consider working in. Previously I undertook part-time work on the basis that it provided an income and allowed me some flexibility to be at home and fulfil my role as mother. The Kaleidoscope Career Model and the Systems Theory Framework are recommended as enabling women to identify their values and plan for their future in a holistic way, (Tajili, 2014). My belief that I could not manage a successful, meaningful career and be fully available as a mother blocked me from taking these ‘selfish decisions’ sooner. I will now proceed to examine how I overcame this as I look at role conflict.
5.4 Role conflict

My research into this area has taken me back to the effect that the industrial revolution had on career development for women, (McAdams, 1993). This provides a wider view of this issue, highlighting it as something that has effected countless women for decades. It is evident from my reading and from analysing my own career that there is overlap and inter-relationship between the themes being discussed. Franca (2012), talks about the ‘social construct’ of family responsibilities falling more onto mothers rather than fathers. She cites that women face certain pressure to prioritise their children’s development over the pursuit of a successful career. There is evidence to suggest that inadequate maternal attention can hinder a child’s early development, (Craig, 2007, 70). If children require full-time care then it is not possible for a mother to successfully pursue a full-time career. It seems that fathers don’t experience the same pressures, perhaps due to the fact that they don’t have the weight of the same societal expectations that women have.

Social context is cited as the reason for different treatment of career development for women, (Schreiber, 2003,5). The fact that women give birth dictates that they are the primary caregiver and as such are expected to prioritise this role over their career. The work of Super (1957) is accredited with identifying the woman as the ‘homemaker’, (Schreiber, 2003, 9). This view still remains to some extent in addition to managing a career. A study by DiBenedetto and Tittle (1990) is referred to, where it was identified that women were frequently faced with having to choose between work and family demands. Role conflict often results in women having to choose to prioritise family commitments, (Schreiber, 2003, 8). This can result in appearing unreliable in work and may lead to career interruptions where a work-life balance cannot (or will not) be accommodated by the employer. The implications of breaks in the woman’s career include loss of promotional opportunities and missing out on training and development, (Hite and McDonald, 1995). There is a call for incorporating the demands of multiple roles into women’s career development to allow for the realisation of a successful career path, (Scheen, 1990, as cited in Swanson, 1992; Schneer and Reitman, 1995).

Franca (2012) refers to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), who identify three main aspects to work-family conflict. Time based conflict is the first of these and is the one that I relate most to. Growing up in an environment where the family business was
prioritised left little time for family pursuits. Understandably, it was our livelihood but it left me with an unhealthy attitude towards the impact that work can have on the role of motherhood. Examining this issue as I have through my analysis, has afforded me the opportunity to attend to the underlying emotional impact and allow for healing to take place.

5.5 Implications for Guidance Counselling for women, specifically mothers

It is evident in the research that there is recognition of the need for specific Guidance Counselling for women and mothers. Coogan and Chen, (2007), recognise that external influences can determine women’s career choices and that breaks in employment can damage their career development. There is a need for specific accurate information for women in relation to their career development to counteract, ‘sociological and psychological barriers’, (Coogan and Chen, 2007, 199). Guidance Counsellors must, ‘focus holistically on the person’, in an attempt to create, ‘work-life integration’, (Patton & McMahon, 2006; Rees, Luzzo, Gridley, & Doyle, 2007 as cited in Tijlili, 2014). In the Literature Review chapter, I identified a number of Guidance interventions. I will now explore some of these, highlighting where appropriate, how they impacted my own career development.

The importance of striking a balance between work and home life is discussed by Coogan and Chen (2007). This may involve some negotiation skills, both at work and at home. The writing of Ambundson, Harris-Bowlsbey and Niles (2005) is referred to here. They say that the Guidance Counsellor can help women to ‘define and prioritise the dimensions of each role’, (Coogan and Chen, 2007). They do concede that a perfect balance most likely does not exist and helping the woman to see this will enable her to let go of parts of each role and be more flexible with role demands as they arise. The term ‘work-life integration’ has been coined by Slaughter, (2012) in recognition of this fact. In striving to achieve the elusive ‘balance’ women’s confidence was being diminished, (Shapriro et al, 2008, as cited in Tijlili, 2014).

These challenges are examined by Sharf (2010, 273), who refers to an interesting study carried out by Jackson & Scharman (2002), which looked at women who did manage to successfully combine motherhood with career. They developed 6 strategies that can help women in this situation. These involve: 1. being pro-active about arranging
schedules; 2. adopting a positive attitude; 3. good communication; 4. joint decision-making with partner; 5. adaptable plans to allow for changes as required; 6. compromising financial gain for extra time with the children. Effective communication with their partner is identified as being of key significance in the successful implementation of these strategies. I feel that I have developed and improved in a number of these areas, for example, adopting a positive attitude and improving my communication skills. These have been transformative in my career development and are steps that can be taken by any woman in managing her career.

It is suggested by Tajili, (2014) that two models of career development be combined to assist women with effective, holistic career development. These are the Kaleidoscope Career Model (KCM; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005) and the Systems Theory Framework (STF; Patton & McMahon, 1999). According to Sullivan and Mainiero, (2005), KCM is based on three guiding principles: Authenticity, Balance and Challenge, (Tajili, 2014). Authenticity refers to women wanting to be true to themselves, knowing their limitations and capabilities and working to these. As the model suggests, I have leaned towards authenticity later-on in my career. I have described how I took, ‘selfish decisions’, focusing on work environments that matched my values and appreciated my qualities, (Appendix 8, 63). I did compromise this at an earlier stage in my life, as Tajili (2014) suggests can happen. Balance has been identified as the most desired and most difficult to achieve of the three elements. I can identify with this, as I compromised work progression, to fulfil my role as mother and now I am resuming my career. Challenge refers to a woman’s desire to continually develop and requires being involved in work of substance and meaning. This has been identified as a powerful motivation for women, even when it’s not the main priority. It is important to me that I reach my potential, not only as a mother, but also in my career and so I have challenged myself to complete a master’s programme and progress my career development. A Guidance session can be led by these 3 elements with steps identified to enable individuals to manage their career path and achieve their goals. The KCM recognises that women manage their careers differently to men. Women tend to give greater consideration to other aspects of their lives when making career decisions, giving priority to different roles at different stages, allowing for flexibility and compromise where required, (Tajili, 2014).

The Systems Theory Framework (STF) was developed by Patton & McMahon, (1999). It is an inclusive approach, based on ‘content and process influences’ (Tajili,
2014). It considers the individual in a holistic way and looks at the person over their lifetime, taking into account past experiences and how these impact on current decision-making processes. This type of intervention would have been beneficial to me in identifying what was blocking me from progressing with my career. It is also forward thinking and looks at how the present can influence the future.

A number of studies are referred to here, including one by Grady and McCarthy (2008) which was carried out in Ireland. One of the findings of this study was that the issue of balance was identified by the women’s decision not to pursue promotion at work in order to fulfil the demands of the role of mother and home-maker. This reflects the KCM where the issue of balance is a key consideration for mother’s mid-way through their careers, (Tajili, 2014). It is encouraging that this article calls for early Guidance intervention for young women to enable them to plan their careers effectively. I am struck however, by the caution that they may resist such assistance, believing that they can manage many roles. I can relate to this, as I did not consider what impact motherhood would have on my career. Having been through the experience, it is apparent to me that motherhood impacts a woman’s career hugely and disruption can be managed with some forward planning.

Another intervention that can be applied to women’s career development is Krumboltz Planned Happenstance Theory (2009). This can be used to encourage women to seize chance opportunities in order to enhance their career decision-making. There are five skills involved in this theory. They are outlined by Sharf (2010, 383) as follows: 1. Curiosity – career investigation and tracking chance encounters; 2. Persistence – not giving up easily, following up on job opportunities and being pro-active; 3. Flexibility – adapting to a variety of experiences and personalities; 4. Optimism – this grows as actions result in positive outcomes; 5. Risk-taking – having the confidence to pursue opportunities that may seem beyond the person’s capabilities. In the past, when I was engaged in fulfilling work, I exercised these skills. I was open to opportunities and remained optimistic, including during redundancy. I am returning to this outlook and I feel that being pro-active in searching for opportunities that match my values has been a key aspect of my career decision-making success, (Appendix 8, 63). The importance of identifying values is emphasised in the STF, (Sullivan and Mainiero, 2008). It is important for women to be encouraged to view their career in a holistic way, giving consideration for all their roles in life and the values that are connected to these roles.
The importance of an effective mentor relationship is discussed by McAdams (1993). I have written about my positive experience of a mentor relationship. This is also an example of Happenstance, as it was an unplanned connection that developed naturally, through a voluntary work opportunity and resulted in paid employment and enhanced career prospects. This is an excellent example of a career development tool that can be applied by women. However, Hansman (1998, 63) recognises that it may prove difficult for some women to identify a possible mentor in male dominated work places. This is ironic as these are the women who are in most need of this type of intervention.

I note in my review of the literature that as far back as 1998, Schreiber is calling for recognition of the need for more flexibility in the workplace to accommodate women’s career development. It is somewhat disheartening then to see that society has still not changed sufficiently to accommodate these needs. More is required in terms of the roles that men and women traditionally fulfil in society, (O’Hagan, 2015). Personally, I am quite happy with the role of caregiver. I want to be the primary carer of my children. This is a point that I feel is lost a little in this discussion of ‘work-life integration’. I agree that working full time does not offer the balance so desperately sought by mothers. So, there should be some realistic alternatives for women to allow them to earn sufficient income while working less hours. Of course this will depend on their earning potential but part-time or job-sharing options must become more available and not be seen to reflect a lack of commitment to the work. Families are managing their work and home lives in various ways now and O’Hagan (2015) calls for employment practices to align with these needs. This requires progressive employment legislation that will support individual’s decisions in how they manage this balance between work and home.

This has serious implications for Guidance Counselling. Advising a mother to look at, for example, the KCM may be met with some frustration if the opportunities for flexible work arrangements are not available. Organisational cultures need to address the attitude that a woman is not taking her career seriously when she prioritises family commitments. Another consideration in using the STF with women, is that the Guidance Counsellor must be skilled in implementing it. They must be aware of their own bias and ensure that it does not influence the client in their decision-making. Some clients may resist the in-depth nature of this approach and may view it as un-necessary or
inappropriate. This will test the skills of the Guidance Counsellor in encouraging the client to engage with the holistic process of career development, (Tajili, 2014).

5.6 Conclusion

By it’s nature, an autoethnographic study focuses on the researcher. However, the findings and analysis are expected to inform the greater body of research, (Chang, 2008). I feel that I have gained from this process and have developed personally and professionally as a result of doing this research. It has been most interesting to relate my personal lived experience to the literature and to recognise myself in some of the writing. I felt however, that the research on self-efficacy did not reflect my situation. My career self-efficacy was bound to my tacit knowledge of role conflict rather than any doubts of my ability to carry out the required tasks. I knew from the outset that this investigation could have led me anywhere or nowhere. I feel that it has led me closer to myself. It was one of my aims to harness what I have learned and be able to apply it to future work in a Guidance setting. I feel that women’s career development is not given sufficient attention and I am grateful for the opportunity to add to the research in this way. Progress in terms of employment legislation is required in order that families can take a holistic approach to how they integrate the demands of work and home. Work practices are constantly changing and work places need to adapt to these changes. The importance of women’s contribution to the workforce is recognised worldwide. This needs to be supported in employment legislation and organisational cultures in order to enhance women’s career development.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.0 Introduction

In bringing this study to a close, I will relate the findings of my research to the aims and objectives as outlined in the Introduction Chapter. I will take this opportunity to reflect on the strengths and limitations of this autoethnographic study, making reference to the Heuristic process and IPA in my review. Then I will discuss some implications at a practical and research level and suggest some recommendations in terms of policy, practice and research. Finally, I will reflect on the level of personal learning that I have experienced through this process.

6.1 Overview of findings within the context of aims and objectives

One of my main aims was to examine my own career development and relate it to career development theory. I feel that gaining significant understanding of my relationship with role conflict, in particular, has strengthened my belief that there is a need for specific career development for women. Perhaps, if I had sought out Guidance Counselling in 2008 that dealt with my needs of managing multiple roles, I could have planned my career and avoided years of unnecessary stress. It is important to point out that part of the reason I did not engage with this type of counselling was because I was not aware that specific career development for women was a reality. At that point I had worked in the area of Guidance for adults but had no exposure to the concept of career development for women. This makes me wonder why I didn’t know about it. Why wasn’t I aware of this, given the amount of literature available on the topic? I will make a recommendation in regard to this issue in a moment.

I began by looking at career self-efficacy because I had experienced a drop in my self-confidence. The focus of much of the literature in relation to self-efficacy, is that women feel less capable in certain careers. Through my research and analysis, I realised that my career development was bound by my tacit knowledge of role conflict. This has been the fundamental issue that has hampered my career development rather than doubts about my ability to carry out the job. It is apparent in the research that there is a perception that women are less committed to work when they seek flexible work arrangements to
accommodate family obligations. Perhaps I actually believed this. I think I doubted my own ability to commit fully to a career when I was so determined to prioritise family life. Meaningful part-time work appears to be something of an oxymoron and in my experience, the two seem to be mutually exclusive.

6.2 Strengths and limitations of this autoethnographic study

I refer to Chang (2008) for these points of information and relate how I have experienced them in my study.

Strengths:

- Direct access to the data – I was not dependant on third parties and so could access the data (my personal journal) as and when I needed it.
- Contextual understanding of the data – I knew the data intimately and didn’t need to speculate as to the meaning.
- Personal benefit of the deep learning that took place – I have gained personally through the illumination of this process.
- Positive impact on the reader – reading about another person’s experience can have a profound effect on the reader.

Limitations:

- Difficult to separate self from the data for analysis – initially feeling very attached to every entry in my journal, fearful that the essence will be lost if anything is omitted.
- Balancing act of analysis and discussion – difficult to prevent moving between these elements.
- Working to a schedule is not ideal when engaged with the Heuristic process – for the most part, I moved from phase to phase organically, but I would have liked more time to dwell between Analysis and Discussion.
- Cannot generalise from my account – my data is personal to me and does not reflect the experience of another.
- Ethical considerations of others restricts analysis, to some extent – It is important for me to state that this is not a blaming exercise, but an opportunity for further insight into myself for career development purposes.
6.3 Implications at a practical and research level

My motivation for undertaking this autoethnographic study was to gain a greater understanding of my own career development, with a view to informing my practice as a Guidance Counsellor. Through this process I have gained greater insight into the impact that communication and my experience of role conflict have had on my career decision-making. I am reminded of the role that empathy plays in the Person Centred approach to counselling. Rogers is quoted as saying that, ‘...when therapists can grasp the client’s private world, as the client sees and feels it, without losing the separateness of their own identity, constructive change is likely to occur.’ (Corey 1996, 207). I understand that my specific need for career development was bound by my tacit knowledge of role conflict.

As outlined in the Methodology Chapter, I have concentrated my study on my own career development, resulting in a more Autobiographic than Ethnographic thesis. I have related my career development to the theories in the research and discussed it in terms of career development specifically for women. Examining the cultural aspect of this research topic may be for another study at a later date.

Realising that there is a wide recognition for the need for career development for women was illuminating for me. I was surprised to learn that so much has been written on this topic and yet so little seems to have changed in terms of flexibility of work arrangements to accommodate work-life integration. The most recent literature I found is O’Hagan (2015) who is still calling for more to be done to support career development for women. She makes an interesting point when she calls for a shift away from the view that men are the main breadwinners and that families are managing their time in different ways now. In my opinion, this issue needs to be seen less as a woman’s issue and more of a family issue, that impacts on men just as much as women.

For me it’s not so much about equality as recognising difference. I have referred to the work of Carol Gilligan (1982) in my literature review. Gilligan (1982) says that these differences in men and women’s development were ignored. This was done to the extent that career development theory was established, by people like Freud and Erickson, based on men’s development and women were judged against this. When I reflect on my personal learning in this Heuristic process, I can see a clear link between my personal development and my career development. I was holding onto tacit knowledge in relation to role conflict, for example, and this hampered my career progression. Gilligan’s writing
struck a chord with me the first time I read it, almost 2 years ago, and again I feel a connection to her message. There are times when I reflect and feel that I have lost 20 years of career development due to lack of appropriate Guidance Counselling. However, a more helpful outlook is that my life experience has led me to this profession. My non-linear career path has the effect of informing my practice and motivating me to assist others with appropriate intervention and information.

6.4 Recommendations for policy

My exploration into the research spans from Gilligan (1982) to O’Hagan (2015) and I have only touched the surface of this issue of women’s career development. Perhaps the time for practical supports for families has come. There has been some movement in this regard with recent discourse on the provision of parental leave to be extended to fathers or divided between both parents, (Burton, 2015). It will be interesting to see how this measure will be supported in industry. Another area is the cost of appropriate childcare and the provision of a free pre-school year addresses one of the barriers faced by women who want to pursue a career.

My own issue was always less about the provision of childcare and more about wanting to be the primary carer for my children. This is why I am most interested in any provision in employment legislation that recognises women’s desire to manage their career in creative ways, allowing for flexibility to prioritise different roles at different times. I would like to see an appreciation of the importance of career development specifically for women, in a constructive way that can benefit society as a whole. Barak Obama delivered a speech earlier this year in India in which he made reference to the valuable contribution that women make to the economy and the importance of supporting them to pursue their careers. In it he said, “When women are able to work, families are healthier.”, (Obama, 2015) Perhaps this is an indication that we may see some progress in this area.

6.5 Recommendations for future research

I feel it would be of benefit to survey organisational and employer attitudes to women’s demands for more flexible workplaces. There is a piece of work to be done in
addressing how women are viewed in the workplace when they choose to prioritise family commitments at certain points in their lives.

6.6 Recommendations for practice

Dissemination of information in relation to career development for women needs to be improved. This could be carried out by Guidance Counsellors at second and third level, providing a framework for career decision-making that will serve throughout the lifespan.

6.7 Reflexivity in relation to personal learning involved in the process

I found it intriguing to read about the first phase of the Houristic process (Moustakas, 1990), known as Initial Engagement. I can relate to Sela-Smith’s (2012) explanation of this phase when she says that, ‘..someone feels as internal draw and hears the call from the deepest recesses of the self.’ On reflection, it seems that some part of me, perhaps intuition, knew that I needed to address my experience of a fractured career path on a deep level. I recall my surprise on learning that I could in fact be the focus of this study. As I learned about autoethnographic research, I began to appreciate the opportunity that had been presented to me.

The Heuristic process (Moustakas, 1990) allowed for immersion into my career development on a deep emotional level, where I came face to face with tacit knowledge of role conflict and dealing with conflict in communication with others. This process enabled me to move my learning from an intellectual level to a more emotional level which I required in order to deal with these issues. I did, however, find that I moved through the phases of Immersion, Incubation and Illumination a number of times throughout the process.

I think I underestimated the impact that this study would have on my personal development and I can see now a fundamental link between my personal development and my career development. To say that I am grateful for this experience is an understatement. Being granted permission to conduct an autoethnographic study tells me that I am worth the effort that this process requires. In my analysis, under the theme of
Communication with Others, I refer to a note in my journal where I say, ‘no-one would listen to all of this’, (Appendix 8, 64 and 65). I realise that this stems from a feeling of not being able to express myself when I was younger. It strikes me now however, having been granted approval to conduct this research, that perhaps someone does want to listen. This is empowering for me as I recollect that initially, the concept of a self-study seemed extremely self-indulgent to me and I have felt self-indulgent at times, throughout the process. I can relate more to Freeman (1991), when she describes autoethnography as, ‘a process of refiguring the past and in turn reconfiguring the self in a way that moves beyond what had existed previously’ (Hamden, 2012, 587 (as cited in Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004, 77)). I have a real sense of adjustment within myself which feels like I have not changed but moved closer to who I really am. It is as if a silent part of me has been given a voice and now I am learning to sing.

I wrote a poem in 2013, as I naively embarked on this journey. When I read it now I have a real sense of coming full circle and realising the sentiment of that poem:

Looking in, finding out
What always was.
Making good my promise
Trusting the reasons.
Spectrum awakening
Beautiful hope.
Exciting zest
Being.....me.

6.8 Conclusion

This autoethnographic method of research worked well for me, personally and professionally. I feel that I have gained significant insight into the blocks I experienced in my career development and this has enabled me to progress my career in a focussed direction. Professionally, it presents an opportunity to share what I am learning about the area of career development specifically for women. In many ways I think that I engaged with the phases of the Heuristic process over the past 2 years, since commencing the MA programme. It has been an adventure of academic and personal learning for which I am most grateful.
Reference List


*Pensamento & Realidade*, 27, 4, pp. 51-70, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, [viewed 22 September 2014.]


Gilligan, C. (1982). In a different voice. Psychological theory and women’s development. USA:


Obama, B. (2015). Nations will only succeed if women are successful, Obama tells India. Available at: http://in.reuters.com/article/2015/01/27/india-obama-women-idINKBN0L01H620150127 [Date accessed: 13/08/2015]


Psychological Reports, 74, 371-379).


Psychology and Health, 12,239-248.

Sparkes, A.C. (2002). *Autoethnography: Self-indulgence or something more?* In A. Bochner & C. Ellis (Eds.), *Ethnographically speaking: Autoethnography, literature, and aesthetics*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.


Appendix 2, pages 10 to 18:
Appendix 5, pages 37 to 45:
Appendix 9, pages 72 to 80:
Appendix 11, pages 87 to 92:
Appendix 12

E-mail confirming ethical approval:

From: Anne.OBrien  
Sent: 06 May 2015 10:39  
To: Tom.Geary  
Subject: 2015_03_26_ EHS

Dear Tom

Thank you for your amended Research Ethics application which was recently reviewed by the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

The recommendation of the Committee is outlined below:

Project Title: 2015_03_26_ EHS An Autoethnographic Study of my Career Path and the Implications for Practice as a Guidance Counsellor.

Principal Investigator: Tom Geary

Other Investigators: Margaret Golden

Recommendation: Approved until October 2015.

Please note that as Principal Investigator of this project you are required to submit a Research Completion Report Form (attached) on completion of this research study.

Yours Sincerely

Anne O’Brien

Anne O’Brien
Administrator, Education & Health Sciences
Research Ethics Committee
Ollscoil Luimnigh / University of Limerick
Guthán / Phone +353 61 234101
Facs / Fax +353 61 202561
Ríomhphost / Email: anne.obrien@ul.ie
Gréasán / Web: http://www.ehs.ul.ie