Autoethnographic inquiry of professional identity within the occupational safety and health profession: A reflection on undertaking a professional doctorate

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This article explores key aspects of my professional doctorate (DProf) that focused on the construction of my professional identity as an occupational safety and health professional, using autoethnographic inquiry.

It promotes the use of the portfolio as part of the assessment for professional doctorates, and other further and higher education qualifications. The article investigates how, using autoethnography, this can be used as part of the research process.

It concludes with my reflections on how undertaking a DProf has been beneficial regarding the redefining of, and the construction of, my own professional identity.

Keywords: Professional identity; autoethnography; occupational safety and health; professional doctorate; portfolio

Definition: Professional identity is the ongoing critical reflection of the sum of the professional's values, motives, competencies, and contributions made within their community of practice.

Introduction

In 2021, I completed my professional doctorate (DProf) (Backhouse, 2021b, 2021d, 2021e). In this paper I will explore the meaning of professional identity within the occupational safety and health (OSH) profession, using the lens of autoethnography based upon my

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findings in my DProf and includes my reflections of completing a DProf. I will also reflect on my doctoral journey – asking the question, was it worth it?

This paper critically reflects upon the benefits of an insider researcher undertaking Higher Education (Mills and Stewart, in Chhabra, 2020, pp. 437–441), and in doing so I will describe how developing a portfolio can be used as reflective practice.

Rationale for undertaking a professional doctorate

In 2002 I entered the occupational safety and health (OSH) profession as a second career, leaving behind my first role as an accounts manager of an engineering company. I soon undertook a wide range of professional and academic qualifications.

The motivation for undertaking my professional doctorate was four-fold: 1) personal achievement being my primary focus – like other doctoral candidates this also incorporated the desire to be called doctor, and hopefully resulting in further career progression [to become an independent scholar] (Fulton et al., 2013, p. 5); 2) to contribute to my community of practice, i.e., to undertake a critical review of the role of Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) in supporting its members' professional development and improving their membership benefits; 3) like Caldwell (2022), I wanted to continue my education after gaining two post-graduate degrees (Backhouse, 2015a), and 4) gain credibility within my profession.

The professional doctorate, at Sunderland University, draws together professional practice with relevant academic theory, and applies this to the solution of a real workplace problem. In 2021 I submitted my 55,000-word thesis and 30,000-word portfolio and successfully defended my thesis: A Critical Review of the Role of the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health in Supporting their Members' Professional Development (Backhouse, 2021b), through an oral examination (*viva voce)*.

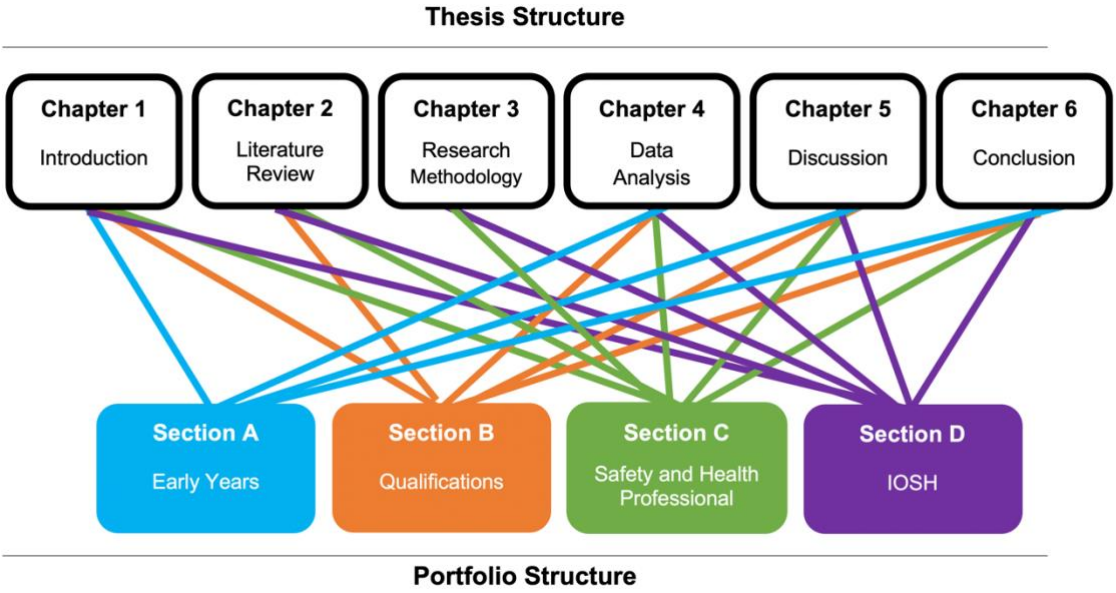

Figure 1: Structural linkages between Thesis and Portfolio

IOSH

IOSH is the largest professional body, and only chartered membership body for OSH professionals, with circa 49,000 members worldwide. The professional body was formed in 1945 as the Institution of Industrial Safety Officers (IISO), gaining charitable status in 1962. IISO was renamed to Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) in 1981 and was awarded a Royal Charter in 2002 (see https://iosh.com for further details). I am a typical member – male over 40; based in the UK. I joined the profession following a previous career in accountancy. I am currently working, predominantly, in the private sector. I have been a member of IOSH for over 15 years. I am an atypical member – I am a self-employed consultant/trainer/author, Chartered Fellow, and have been volunteering with a local branch for over 10-years.

Professional identity

During my professional doctorate I discovered that, even though the OSH professionals' role has evolved over the last 40 years, there has been limited research into their professional

identity (Bell, 2018; Provan, 2018). Therefore, the literature review, within my thesis, critically explored the theoretical understanding of professional identity in the context of the safety and health profession (Backhouse, 2021a), and my portfolio provided a personal narrative which I used in the construction of my own professional identity.

The term professional identity has been used, within this paper, to encompass the wide range of titles within the broader academic literature; for example, 'occupation identity' (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011), 'career identity' (Meijers, 1998, in Neary, 2014), 'work identity' (Illeris, 2014a, in Partington, 2017) and 'professional identity' (Provan et al., 2018) are all used interchangeably (Hughes, 2013; S. J. Schwartz et al., 2011).

The most common definition of professional identity has been attributed to Schein (1978) and Ibarra (1999) as 'one's professional self-concept based on attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences'. This definition is found in a wide range of academic literature (cf Sanders, 2011; Shaw, 2016; Provan et al., 2018). During the taught stage of the professional doctorate, I was reminded not to take anything I read at face value, and I was to refer to the source documents where possible. Therefore, I purchased Schein's book, *Career dynamics: matching individual and organisational needs*, to discover the quote was not there. Schein (1978) makes no direct reference to professional identity, rather he refers to three self-concepts he labelled as career anchors. He posits that these are continually evolving through actual work experience. They are an interaction between the individual and the work environment, i.e., talents and abilities (based on actual successes in a variety of work settings); motives and needs (based on opportunities for self-tests and self-diagnosis in real situations and on feedback from others); and attitudes and values (based on actual encounters between the self and the norms and values of the employing organisation and work setting) (Schein, 1978, pp. 125–126).

> *Career anchors reflect the underlying needs and motives which the person brings into adulthood, but they also reflect the person's values and, most important, discovered talents. By definition, there cannot be an anchor until*

> *there has been work experience, even though motives and values may already be present from earlier experience … The career anchor is a learned part of the self-image, which combines self-perceived motives, values, and talents. What one learns is not only a function of what one brings to the work situation but also reflects the opportunities provided and the feedback obtained. Consequently, the anchor is determined to some degree by actual experiences, not only by the talents and motives latent in the person (Schein, 1978, p. 171)*

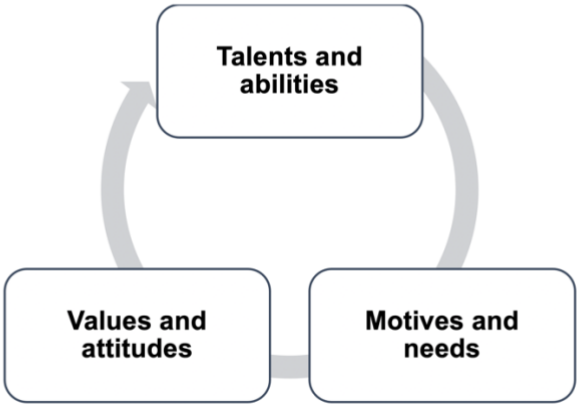

Figure 2: Self-concept career anchors of professional identity (based on Schein, 1978).

During my professional doctorate I constructed the following definition of professional identity, which honoured the original concept by Schein (1978), and provides a more accessible definition within the body of knowledge and for professionals

An ongoing critical reflection of the sum of the professional's values, motives, competencies, and contributions made within their community of practice (Backhouse, 2021b).

Research Approach

As the researcher I was aware how my research would be influenced by my approach (Watson, 2014, p. 50), which was based on my ontological assumptions which gave rise to my epistemological assumptions which, in turn, had methodological implications for the choice of particular data collection techniques adopted (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). Like

Gregersen (2019), the terms ontology and epistemology were first introduced to my lexicon during the first year of the professional doctorate programme (Hayes et al., 2019).

Within the context of OSH research, different paradigms are held. While it is not always the case that these research approaches are stated (see Ahmad et al., 2017; Crawford et al., 2017; İnan et al., 2017), there are examples when a positivist [realist] approach is adopted; for example, measurement of workplace parameters such as accident rates or levels of exposure to hazardous agents; or a subjectivist [relativist] approach is adopted; for example, addressing ethical dilemmas or evaluating issues arising in practice (Lundy, 2013, pp. 58–59).

Since the safety and health profession crosses many disciplines, this is consistent with the view that medical sciences have tended to adopt a positivist or post-positivist paradigm and in contrast, social sciences often adopt a social constructivist paradigm (Haigh et al., 2019). During my studies I discovered that a critical realist approach was used within safety and health research (Bell, 2018) and has become a more accepted social science (Lipscomb, 2011; Price & Martin, 2018). I identified with a critical realism world view (Wright, 2014) as a research approach (seeing the benefits from both a realist and relativist perspective).

Research Methodology

While surveys have been used successfully in safety and health research (Bohalteanu, 2016), there has been limited use of autoethnographic inquiry except being used to appraise vignettes within a doctoral thesis (Bell, 2018). It was hoped that my thesis would engage and encourage other OSH professionals and researchers to build upon this research method within their respected fields. Autoethnography has been defined as

[A]n approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno) (Ellis et al., 2011).

Walton (2020) posits that traditions of social investigation developed by pioneering anthropologists such as Franz Boas (1858–1942) and Bronisław Malinowski (1884–1942) incorporate autoethnography (Walton, 2020, cited in Smith, 2020, p. 6). There are also examples of qualitative sociological research that include autoethnographic elements dating back to the 1920s (Anderson, 2006, p. 376). The term autoethnography was, however, first referenced by anthropologist Heider (1975). Goldschmidt argued that anthropologists should engage with autoethnography by suggesting that "all ethnography, is self-ethnography" (1977, p. 294). An early example of autoethnography being applied to the writings of anthropologists conducting and writing ethnographies of their people was made by Hayano (1979, pp. 99–103). It was not until the 1990s that autoethnography became a method of choice for using personal experience and reflexivity [rigorous self-reflection] to examine cultural experiences (Adams et al., 2017).

There are different autoethnographic approaches: indigenous/native ethnographies; narrative ethnographies; reflexive, dyadic interviews; reflexive ethnographies; layered accounts; interactive interviews; community autoethnographies; co-constructed narratives; and personal narratives (Ellis et al., 2011). The use of autoethnographic research and reflexive accounts as a methodology is a legitimate doctoral methodology (Armstrong, 2015; Bartlett, 2015; Gregersen, 2019) and has been viewed as an authentic methodology within social science research (Anderson, 2006; Chang, 2013; Ellis et al., 2011). There are advantages and challenges with using autoethnography, which are summarised by Costello et al. (2016).

Table 1: advantages and challenges with the use of using autoethnography (adapted from Costello et al., 2016).

Advantages	Challenges
(1) offers new perspective; (2) greater depth of insight, and (3) creates accessibility.	(1) analytical rigour; (2) difficult to evaluate, and (3) introduces ethical changes.

This authentic methodology is demonstrated in the academic literature and provides opportunities to reflect on one's professional identity through seeing it from someone else's perspective; for example, within teaching (Yazan, 2019); academia (Grant, 2019); OSH (Zolnikov, 2018); and business (Clarke et al., 2019). Within professional doctorate programmes that require a portfolio this provides an opportunity that is currently underutilised.

The use of a portfolio is becoming increasingly common as a means of assessment for professional doctorates (Fulton et al., 2013, p. 96). For a professional doctorate, the portfolio assessment is a valid approach to demonstrating advanced scholarship, particularly in the development of an autoethnographic evaluation (Holgate & Sambell, 2020, p. 57). Autoethnography within the professional doctorate context is argued to be an excellent way of linking theory to the practical situation (Hayes & Fulton, 2014).

Nevertheless, there is not a one-size-fits-all instruction manual on how to 'do' autoethnography (Gregersen, 2019, p. 80). These different approaches broadly fall into two types of autoethnography within qualitative research, that of 1) evocative autoethnography and 2) analytic autoethnography (Anderson, 2006).

The focus of the evocative autoethnographers' aim is to seek narrative fidelity; it creates an emotional resonance with the reader, drawing upon postmodern sensibilities. Evocative autoethnography requires considerable narrative and expressive skills—exemplified in well-

crafted prose, poetry, and performances. It takes the reader into the depths of personal feeling, leading us to be emotionally moved and sympathetically understanding (Anderson, 2006). Carolyn Ellis sets out the criteria of the steps she takes when evaluating evocative ethnographies, which she aligns to narrative autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). While not an exclusive list it appears that the key aspects she views as being essential to evocative pieces must include the following five features 1) engaging - requiring the reader to stop frequently to think about details of their experience, their memories or feelings; 2) educational - with regards to social life, social process, the experience of others, the author's own experience, the readers own life; 3) entertaining - with a developed plot, having a sense of verisimilitude [i.e., the appearance of being true or real]; 4) exposing - of the author's portrayal of themselves; and 5) [being] ethically sound - getting relevant permissions if others are identifiable within the narrative (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

In contrast, Anderson (2006) posits that the focus of the analytic autoethnographers' account is grounded in self-experience but reaches beyond it. They will draw upon traditional realist epistemological assumptions. He argues analytic autoethnography requires following five features 1) complete member researcher status; 2) analytic reflexivity; 3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self; 4) dialogue with informants beyond the self; and 5) commitment to theoretical analysis. These are described in the table below. The purpose of analytic autoethnography is not merely to document a personal experience, but to provide

an 'insider's perspective', or to evoke emotional resonance with the reader – as in evocative autoethnography. Instead, the defining characteristic of analytic social science is to use empirical data to gain insight into some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves (Anderson, 2006, pp. 386–387).

Table 2: Identifying as an analytic autoethnographer (adapted from Anderson, 2006)

Features	Description
(1) Complete member researcher status	(1) I have been actively involved with the safety profession for over 20 years.
(2) Analytic reflexivity	(2) The data presented is situated within my professional experience and sense-making.
(3) Narrative visibility of the researcher's self	(3) My visibility within IOSH has included representing the local IOSH branch for over ten years, speaking at local events and interviewing prospective chartered members.
(4) Dialogue with informants beyond the self	(4) I have been able to present on academic presentations/ posters (Backhouse, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d, 2018c). Data presented provides a self-narrative of analytic autoethnography to analyse safety professionals' professional identity formation.
(5) Commitment to theoretical analysis	(5) My self-narrative validity was founded by the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) using the self-concept career anchors of professional identity (based on Schein, 1978).

The reflexive nature of autoethnography provides an opportunity for the autoethnographer to critically reflect upon their various identities (S. H. Schwartz, 2012), which can be undertaken in various forms, for example, poetry can be used through the lens of autoethnography to make reflections and analyses of the situations in the authors constructed reality (Blinne, 2010, cited in Robinson, 2017, p. 2).

Dewey, who was among the first to write about reflective practice, (1933, in Cohen et al., 2018) posits that reflection in its most basic sense can be seen as learning from experiences (p. 60). Schön (1983), fifty years later, introduced concepts such as reflection-on-action, i.e., occurring after the event - thinking about what happened, what was seen and whether there was anything that would change next time that could have changed the outcome - and reflection-in-action, i.e., concerned with reflecting on practice while it is happening (Paterson & Chapman, 2013). Schön (1983) suggested that when a practitioner reflects-in and -on his practice, the possible objects of his reflection are varied [including] tacit norms, patterns of behaviour, and on the feeling for a situation which has led them to adopt a particular course of action, that when completed is constructed within a larger institutional context (1983, p. 62). These reflections will shape the practitioner's professional identity. In comparison, the adoption of critical reflective practice differs between sectors/professions and the seniority of the person involved (Mapletoft, 2019, p. 46). The process of reflexivity is standard within many professions as part of their continual professional development (Paterson & Chapman, 2013); for example, as an IOSH member I will write up autobiographical accounts (vignettes) of activities/critical incidents (using a Plan – Do – Reflect – Review model) (IOSH, 2020). This approach is broadly based on the Demin Cycle (Schmidt, 2019). Schön (1983) argues that a researchers' role is distinct from, and usually considered superior to, the practitioner's role (1983, p. 26). Therefore, I [as the researcher] should engage in rigorous self-reflection; typically referred to as “reflexivity” (Adams et al., 2017). It enables growth in capacity to understand the significance of the knowledge, feelings, and values (Attia & Edge, 2017). This process provides them with a set of transferable skills and transcribing the professional developmental journey within a portfolio (Watson, 2014, p. 62).

A professional doctorate programme frequently sees the researcher as an insider (Mapletoft, 2019). It is increasingly common for researchers to carry out a study directly concerned with the setting in which they work (Robson, 2002, p. 382), as is the case with this Professional Doctorate undertaken from an insider researcher perspective. As a member of IOSH, I follow their Code of Conduct (IOSH, 2013), which directs me as a

professional and researcher. As an established trust is the foundation upon which an insider researcher constructs their research (Attia & Edge, 2017).

Historically, insider research was undertaken in ethnographic studies in anthropology and sociology (Hellawell, 2006, in Fleming, 2018). Building upon this tradition, an autoethnographic analytic inquiry requires that the insider researcher approach has a complete member researcher status (Anderson, 2006). Using insider knowledge of cultural experience, it is possible to provide aspects of cultural life that other researchers may not know; however, this does not imply that an autoethnographer can articulate more truthful or more accurate knowledge than outsiders (Adams et al., 2017).

While the definition attributed to Schein (1978) and Ibarra (1999) as 'one's professional self-concept based on attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences', is erroneous I, therefore, analysed my own professional identity using three prescribed themes of self-concept career anchors (based on Schein, 1978):

1. Competency (talents and abilities)
2. Motives (motives and needs)
3. Values (values and attitudes)

This formed the construction of the following definition of professional identity.

An ongoing critical reflection of the sum of the professional's values, motives, competencies, and contributions made within their community of practice (Backhouse, 2021b).

Autoethnography (as a method)

Autoethnography used my personal experiences to expand the understanding of social phenomena (Chang, 2013, p. 108) of being a member and volunteer of IOSH. I examined my professional identity journey as a safety and health professional member and volunteer of IOSH through the lens of an autoethnographic inquiry.

The purposes of autoethnography, at least from the social science perspective, is in-part telling personal narratives, but to expand the understanding of social realities through the lens of personal experiences (Chang, 2013). There is a variety of ways to gather data; for example, recalling [bringing out memories about critical events, people, places, behaviours, talks, thoughts, collecting artefacts and documents, interviewing others, analysing self, observing self] and reflecting on issues about the research topic (ibid). Therefore, the compiling of my portfolio provided an opportunity during the professional doctorate to assemble my autoethnographic data.

Like Lee (2019), I had not kept a journal as autoethnographers commonly do. Instead, my narrative's starting point was to assemble an abundance of external data *(Lee, 2019, p. 4).* As with other autoethnographic researchers my starting point was my Curriculum Vitae [Résumé] (Bell, 2018; Costello et al., 2016; Humphreys, 2005). These contributions and reflections on my contributions, have been self-constructed out of memories; for example, I have critically reflected on crucial events of my involvement with IOSH reflecting on how this has shaped my professional identity formation and development (Campbell, 2018). Through my reflective practice, I have become the subject of my own research (Caldwell, 2019), it has guided me to a critical reflection of my professional values, motives, and competencies; it has been an ongoing critical reflection of the sum of my professional's values, motives, competencies, and contributions made within my community of practice. Using the vignettes within my portfolio it was possible to reflect on these real-life situations to provide opportunities to evaluate how my career has developed to date (Schein, 1978).

My journey to help me understand who I am, what I do, and why, in the context of my work, i.e., my professional identity, was part of the formation of my 55,000-word thesis and 30,000-word portfolio for my Professional Doctorate. Through my doctoral research, my autoethnographic inquiry helped me to construct my identity (Campbell, 2018) and guided me to a critical reflection of my professional values, motives, and competencies. Within my this section of my Portfolio I examined my professional identity journey as a member of IOSH (over the last 15 years) through the lens of an autoethnography. This section documents a range of vignettes, using an analytical autoethnographic lens. I continued to embrace a reflexive first-person narrative approach (Humphreys, 2005, p. 844), i.e., through narrative autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). In doing so I argue for the validity with higher education of using vignettes as it has already been demonstrated within

Professional doctorates, for example(e.g., Bell, 2018 (within safety and health); Gregersen, 2019 (within law)).

The headings and main sections of my portfolio were as follows:

SECTION A Early Years

The first section provided background information describing how, after leaving school with two GCSE passes, I was then diagnosed with dyslexia. It chronicled my early professional career, and how I became an OSH professional.

SECTION B Qualifications

In the second section I evaluated the main qualifications I had gained, which demonstrated my commitment to enhancing my skills, knowledge and training to enable me to continue to make a valuable contribution to the safety and health profession.

SECTION C Safety and Health Professional

In the third section I reflected on the key contributions I have made as a self-employed safety and health professional. It documented four areas of my work

C.1 Safety and Health Consultant

C.2 Fire Risk Assessor

C.3 Qualified Teacher

C.4 Writer

SECTION D Institution of Occupational Safety and Health

The fourth section reflected upon the key contributions I have made as a member and volunteer of IOSH [whilst coming to terms with my diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis], i.e., my community of practice. The chapter documented eleven vignettes.

D.1 Joining IOSH as a technical member TechIOSH (2005)

D.2 Gaining graduate membership GradIOSH (2008)

D.3 Joining the Tees branch committee (2010 – [2022])

D.4 Gaining chartered membership CMIOSH (2013)

D.5 Organising events and workshops

D.6 Delivering presentations and workshops

D.7 Mentoring branch members, and other safety and health professionals

D.8 Interviewing members for chartered membership (Peer Review Interviewer)

D.9 Nominating two members for presidential awards

D.10 Gaining fellowship CFIOSH (2018)

D.11 Undertaking [my] profession doctorate.

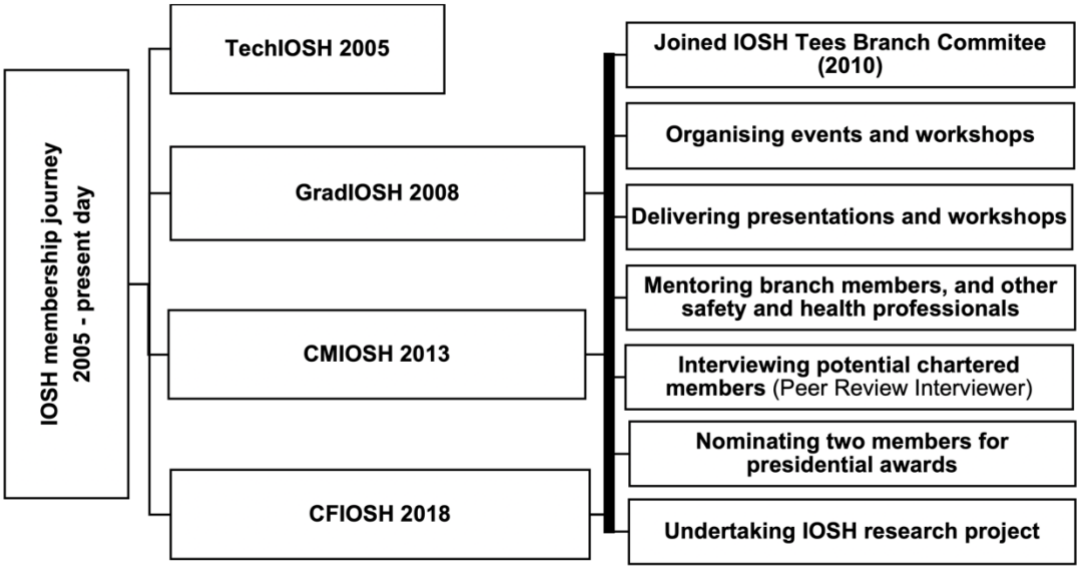

Figure 3: IOSH membership journey (used in Portfolio)

I am a typical member – male over 40; based in the UK. I joined the profession following a previous career in accountancy. I am currently working, predominantly, in the private sector. I have been a member of IOSH for over 15 years. I am an atypical member – I am a self-employed consultant/trainer/author, Chartered Fellow member, and have been volunteering with a local branch for over 10-years. I would also choose to remain a member even if my job did not require it, even post-retirement.

Reflecting upon my own professional identity, through Schein's (1978) self-concept career anchors of talents/abilities (aka competency), motives/attitudes and values/needs, I am aware that IOSH has helped develop my competencies, i.e. while being a member of IOSH through gaining knowledge by attending branch events. However, the significant growth has come through the experience gained being a member of the executive, organising events, delivering presentations, mentoring, nominating members, and undertaking this research project (see **Figure 3:** IOSH membership journey). As for my values and motives, IOSH helps me achieve my social focus and personal focus.

The following are short extracts from each section of my portfolio.

In section A, I described leaving the engineering company, after I had successfully completed my National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH) General Certificate, in 2000.

> *The time spent at the engineering company was not pleasant; there had been times when I wanted to leave earlier than I actual did, but, on reflection, I realise it provided me with significant experience that has become invaluable to my current role as a self-employed safety and health professional. Prior to leaving the engineering company I was able to utilise my new skills to develop and implement a safety and health policy. It was days after completing this that there was a visit made by a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Inspector to the engineering company. On [examining] of the safety and health policy and our procedures he was satisfied with our workplace. This provided me with an amazing sense of achievement.*

In section B, I reflected further on my NEBOSH General Certificate.

> *In 2000, when I passed the NEBOSH General Certificate, I realised I had the capability to undertake further training. While I may not be able to [fully] overcome my dyslexia, I realise[d] that it would not stop me gaining [my academic potential].*
>
> *...*
>
> *[It] was the first step that ultimately lead to a Masters of Research in Occupational Health, Safety and Environmental Management, helping in the acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge.*

In section C, I evaluated how part of my motivation was the support I was given in my early studies, and how this became a key aspect of my values and motives – to help people achieve their potential.

For many years my focus of consultancy work has been to have more engagement in the classrooms, i.e., providing relevant examples, etc. I am able to refer anonymously to situations my clients, and I, have encountered. I have also engaged in other consultant work; as an expert witness (Backhouse, 2020i).

> *The writing of the Expert Witness Report was possibly the most challenging work I have undertaken to date. In January 2020 I wrote my first Expert Witness Report concerning a claim for noise-induced hearing loss from Claimant's alleged exposure to noise for over 30 years in his employment with the Defendants being a commercial tyre fitter. I was required to apply my understanding of the case to various publications, including ... 'Guidelines on the diagnosis of noise-induced hearing loss for medicolegal purposes' (Coles et al., 2000). and being able to [apply my understanding to] calculate and apply the Noise Immission Level:*
>
> $NIL_i = (L_{EP,d})_i + 10 \log_{10} T_i \qquad (1)$

While I did find this interesting and challenging,

> *I realised the main reason [I take on such work] was to become a better [OSH trainer]. I am a dual professional in the sense of working in the professional field so that I can teach (Davies, 2007).*

The training I received, and support, was outstanding, however at the time I was struggling with my health (MS) and took far too long to complete the Report. I hope to have another opportunity in the future to undertake such work again.

In section C4 I provided a short summary and reflection of the publications I had authored to date. These included one journal article on manual handling (Backhouse, 2014c), 3 books published by Taylor and Francis (Backhouse, 2013b, 2018a; Backhouse & Ferrett, 2017), in addition to contributions and book sections (Backhouse, 2014a, 2014b; RMS, 2014, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2017). I also discussed my role as Editor-in-Chief, then Co-editor-in-Chief, between October 2019 – July 2020, for Risk Assessment & Compliance (RAC), with regards to the 26 articles I authored, (Backhouse, 2019e, 2019f, 2019g, 2019h, 2020c, 2020e, 2020f, 2020g, 2020h, 2020k, 2020l, 2020m, 2020n, 2020o, 2020p, 2020q, 2020r, 2020s, 2020t, 2020u, 2020v, 2020w, 2020z, 2020aa, 2020ab; Backhouse & Crossland-Clarke, 2020), along with other magazine and web articles I authored (Backhouse, 2008, 2013a, 2013c, 2014e, 2014f, 2015b, 2015f, 2015g, 2016a, 2016c, 2016f, 2017a, 2020b, 2020d, 2020x, 2020ac; Backhouse & Hayward, 2015)

> *As I read back the above contributions and reflect upon **who I am,** (self-employed safety and health professional) and the **work I do** as a writer, (having three books published by Routledge; contributed to six others and having written over 30 articles) I critically reflect on **why I do** this. At one point, it was the desire to become an author – perhaps naively I thought this was an achievement being dyslexic. A few years ago, I turned down the chance to write my fourth textbook. It is clear that these three books have made a contribution (see the Amazon reviews above), but this is, I believe, only at a superficial/basic level; it is not as though these textbooks appeal to a broad audience. Their scope is limited, as are the contributions to other books. Over the last three years, as I have read countless papers and textbooks, I have come to realise that their contribution is narrow and shallow. Likewise, the 30+ articles, including the peer-reviewed one, I consider to be hardly worthy of note within this portfolio individually; hence grouping all my writing together to demonstrate that the above learning outcomes evaluate their worth. I realise that I thought far more positively about my work than I ort, and this has, more probably than not, prevented me from reaching my potential. On reflection, I realise that my publications have made*

> *a positive contribution to the safety and health profession. However, I have not produced scholarly work that has added to the body of knowledge, or within my community of practice, i.e., IOSH, thus far.*

While it is suggested that the highest contributions are generated from writing textbooks or technical monographs, which add to the body of knowledge within the community of practice, (Stinchcome (1990): Reason and Rationality in Cook and Levi (eds), 1990, p. 300), I look back at my contributions and acknowledge they are limited; i.e., alone they do not provide adequate scope, and depth, for a portfolio used in a professional doctoral programme as they have limited impact within HE.

I summed up my vignettes, in part C, with the following recalled memory

> *In concluding this section, I am reminded of a piece of writing I submitted for my church's newsletter back in January this year (Backhouse, 2020a), which ended with: 'It is an honour to help hundreds of people on their journey to reach their professional potential and to be able to help safeguard peoples' health, safety and welfare; which is, arguably, an outworking of the principle of loving my neighbour (Matthew 19.19).' My aim, in my safety and health consultancy role (as with other safety and health professionals), is outward focused, and has been to prevent harm, improve workplace safety and improve culture, and aid in the development of others.*

Since my DProf, I have continued my desire to write, authoring the following (Backhouse, 2020b, 2021e, 2021c, 2022a, 2022c; University of Hull & Backhouse, 2022; University of Sunderland & Backhouse, 2021), non-scholarly work.

Sections A – C facilitated my understanding of my values, motives, competencies. Although I had considered the impact, I had made within, and beyond the OSH profession through my earlier publications it was in section D that I focused on my contributions made within my community of practice, i.e., IOSH. This section reflected on the key contributions I have made as a member and volunteer of IOSH [D1 – D11]. Gaining Chartership (CMIOSH), was not a goal I had personally set myself, but I realised, during an interview, how this was to be crucial for my future as an OSH professional.

> *I had gained TechIOSH in 2005 and GradIOSH in 2008, only as the result of gaining NEBOSH Diploma, which enabled me to become an examiner for NEBOSH - the only time I could remember ever being asked for the membership grade I held. Well, it was, until I attended an interview, Friday 13th April 2012, to become involved in course development and training work for a new client. The subsequent work enabled me to travel to Angola, and the USA, ... I felt I had answered the questions to the best of my ability, and I had given a mini-presentation that was clear and engaging. It was all going so well. As the interview was drawing to a close, the interviewer said: "Jonathan, I don't understand something from your CV." He paused and looked at me. I gave no reaction (I think). "With all this experience, I don't understand - why are you not a chartered member?" Now it was my turn to pause, caught in the headlights of his question - in my mind I was asking myself 'Why not?' 'Why should I be?' I was confused. Call it selective amnesia, but I cannot remember my answer - a babble of excuses. "Jonathan, you should be chartered. You are more than capable of becoming a chartered member." A second pause, time to focus. "Yes, you are right, thank you. I will work towards gaining my chartership, thank you." And I did! From April 2012 to August 2013, 16 months, something that I could have completed in a quarter of the time. I enrolled in the Initial Professional Development (IPD) scheme. ...I had to complete a Skills Development Portfolio (SDP) requiring selection of seven performance criteria, from five elements. It took far too long as during the IPD and SDP I suffered from bouts of ill-health, caused by my Multiple Sclerosis, ... Eventually, I was successful, and my SDP was passed.*

> *I provided enough detailed CPD activities, and it was now time for the Peer Review Interview (PRI); at which I was successful. In August 2013, over 5-years since gaining graduate membership, I was awarded chartered status.*

My Chartership has provided me with opportunities to reach my potential as an OSH professional, beyond anything I could have imagined. It has become crucial in my ongoing critical reflection of the sum of my values, motives, competencies, and contributions made within my community of practice.

Most of Part D, rightly, focused on my contributions at both a local level, i.e., Tees Branch, and national level – becoming a peer review interviewer, nominating members of presentational awards, etc.

Table 3: Events orgainsed at IOSH Tees Branch, referenced in Portfolio

Date	**Event**
26 January 2021	Setting up as a Health and Safety Consultant – Zoom Meeting.
15 June 2020	Covid-19 open forum – Zoom Meeting.
10 September 2019	Career Development – Workshop Teesside University.
14 May 2019	CPD – Workshop, Teesside University.
18 December 2018	Civil Court – Mock Trial, Teesside University.
5 June 2018	Asbestos Awareness – Seminar, Teesside University.
27 March 2018	Ageing Workforce Risk Assessment – Seminar, Teesside University.

Date	Event
23 January 2018	CPD – Workshop, Teesside University.
4 April 2017	Construction Management – Seminar, Teesside University.
13 September 2016	Auditing Management Systems – Seminar, Teesside University.
15 March 2016	Criminal Court – Mock Trial, Teesside University.
15 December 2015	Fire Safety – Seminar, Teesside University.
15 September 2015	Professional Development – Seminar, Teesside University.
23 June 2015	Environmental Management – Seminar, Teesside University.
4 November 2014	Visit to Hartlepool Nuclear Power Station, Teesside University.
10 June 2014	Accident Prevention – Seminar, Teesside University.
10 September 2013	Noise and Vibration – Seminar, Teesside University.
19 December 2011	Lighten the Load – Seminar, Teesside University.

I also provided detail of the key presentations I made at local branches (Backhouse, 2011, 2014d, 2015c, 2015d, 2015e, 2015h, 2016b, 2016d, 2016e, 2016g, 2018b, 2018d, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d, 2020j).

> *While it is true that I, and others, who attended these meetings/seminars will have gained knowledge about the topics presented, I also developed my soft skills (e.g. social, management, subjective, cognitive, and strategic skills) (Tino & Grion, in Nägele, Christof & Stalder, Barbara E., 2018, pp. 339–247) from*

> *organising [and presenting at] these numerous events. It is only through being a member of the IOSH Tees Branch that I have been able to organise such events and gain a wealth of experience.*

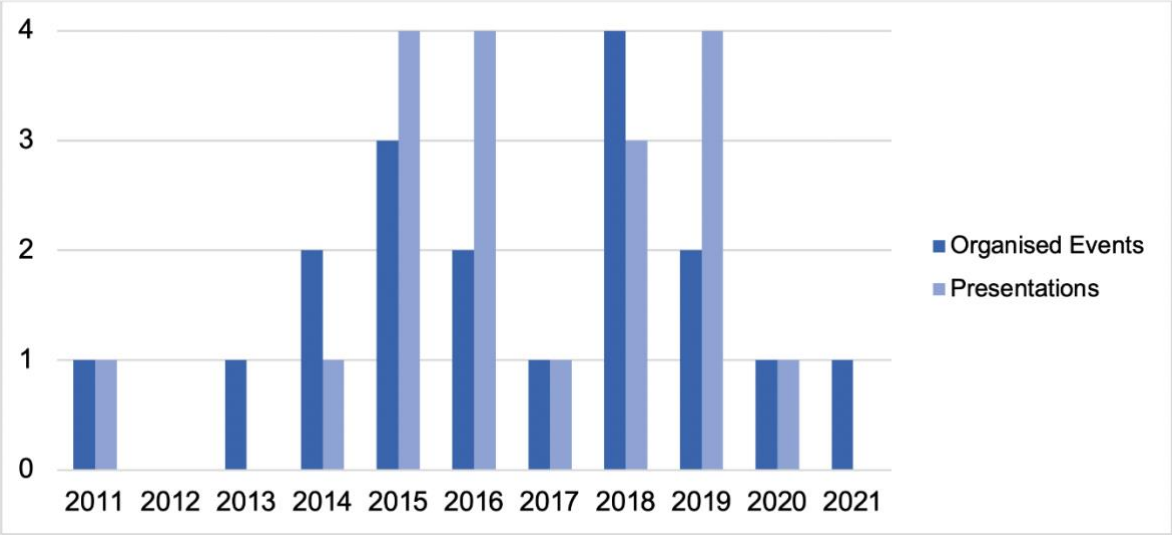

Figure 4: Organised events and presentations

After analysing my vignettes for section D, I summarised by thoughts as follows.

> *I [became] aware that IOSH has helped develop my competencies, i.e., while being a member of IOSH through gaining knowledge by attending branch events. However, the significant growth in my career has come through the experience gained being a member of the executive, organising events, delivering presentations, mentoring, nominating members, and undertaking [my] profession doctorate.*

Limitations

My professional doctorate addressed both the academic and pragmatic, rather than focusing on addressing a real-world project (Fulton et al., 2013; Lundy, 2013; Mapletoft, 2019; Riggs, 2014; Watson, 2014). Although this paper focuses on the redefining of, and the construction of, my own professional, it has not reflected upon the primary data source

used within my professional doctorate. The research utilised a mixed method approach, which comprised of a survey given to IOSH members (n = 159) and an autoethnographic inquiry (which has been summarised in this paper). My professional doctorate's research aim was to address a real-world project by undertaking a critical review of the role of the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) in supporting its members' professional development and improving their membership benefits. It answered the research question '*What does it mean to be a member of IOSH, and how can IOSH support their members' professional development?'.* The three objectives constructed to address the research question were as follows: 1) Explore the theoretical understanding of professional identity. 2) Evaluate membership benefits provided by IOSH. 3) Examine professional identity in the context of IOSH Membership. These have been explored, evaluated, and examined within the thesis. The findings and recommendations have been forwarded to IOSH. However, the survey given to IOSH members falls outside the scope of this paper.

The biggest regrets were asking the wrong questions during the early stages of the taught part of my professional doctorate. First, "Should I start keeping a diary?" – I was told there was no need. Granted at the time I had not heard of autoethnography. Following on from the taught modules my literature review included the doctoral thesis *The lived experience of a university law clinic supervisor: an autoethnographic inquiry* by Gregersen (2019). Her thesis was instrumental in my appreciation of autoethnographic method and provided an instant regret of not composing a diary at the start. Second, "Since I am already published do I need to have some journal articles published between now and completing my DProf?" – again I was told there was no need. I agree this was not a requirement, however, the benefit to myself and, hopefully, other doctoral candidates is evident (Caldwell, 2019a; Campbell, 2018).

Discussion

Understanding more about who I am, what I do, and why has helped me to gain a deeper appreciation of the profession to which I belong. It has enabled me to realise both my potential and limitations and focus my efforts on making further contributions to the OSH profession. I have learned through my experiences, and the contributions I have made to the profession, that the areas of work I want to focus my time and effort on are those which align with my values, motives, competencies. I had initially thought that gaining a doctorate would be the ultimate goal; now I realise it is only the beginning of a new chapter.

The development of a Portfolio, using an autoethnographic lens has provided an opportunity to evaluate my values, motives, competencies within the current scope of my role as an OSH professional, and to identify the way forward. My next chapter. The primary motivation for undertaking my professional doctorate was the desire to be called doctor, and, hopefully, resulting in further career progression (Fulton et al., 2013, p. 5). The secondary motivation was to enter a new chapter of my multi-disciplined role, i.e., within HE.

I am proud to be part of a profession that, while OSH is one of the newer professions (Belcher, 2016), it provides a significant contribution to all of humanity, and therefore would warrant a place alongside the core disciplines. Alluding to the earliest professions – law, medicines and theology – Freidson (2001) emphasises the significant contribution which they make.

> *There are a few disciplines whose tasks bear on issues of widespread interest and deep concern on the part of the general population. They might be called* ***core disciplines****, bodies of knowledge and skill which address perennial problems that are of great importance to most of humanity (Freidson, 2001, p. 161 emphasis in quote).*

Yet I am conscious that my professional status is continually evolving – I called myself, in my portfolio a dual professional (Davies, 2007) – but I am a multi-disciplinary professional, spanning both the OSH profession, teaching, and now entering higher education. As an OSH professional I need to be aware, and keep updated with technological, economic, legislative, social and cultural changes (Brun & Loiselle, 2002, p. 510); for example, the health issues associated with nanotechnology (Canu et al., 2018; Schulte et al., 2014) and more recently COVID-19. There needs to be a state of continual professional development (see Brun and Loiselle, 2002; Schulte *et al.*, 2014; Bamber *et al.*, 2017); after all the OSH profession has evolved significantly over the past 30 years (Provan et al., 2018) and there is no signs that this will change. Caldwell writes that 'my identity has evolved during my time working in higher education' (2022, p. 1). I can corroborate her assertion - as I look over now my career I realise my values, motives, and competencies are evolving and interacting with other aspects of my identity. In the same way my work is impacted by and impacts other aspects of my life; for example, I have been prevented from working for clients due to both my Multiple Sclerosis and my dyslexia (Backhouse, 2020y); however, my dyslexia and Multiple Sclerosis are part of who I am and have not stopped me achieving my goals (Backhouse, 2015a; Backhouse & University of Hull, 2022; Backhouse & University of Sunderland, 2021).

Conclusion

In my professional doctorate, and this paper, I have attempted to define professional identity as

> *an ongoing critical reflection of the sum of my professional's values, motives, competencies, and contributions made within my community of practice (Backhouse, 2021b).*

I have used the lens of autoethnography – providing personal and professional insight into the construction of my own professional identity. I was able to critically explore the contributions I have made to IOSH and the wider OSH profession as I constructed my

portfolio. This highlighted opportunities for professional growth and further contributions to my community of practice.

My professional doctorate journey has led to the self-realisation of who I am, what I do, and why and has helped me gain a deeper appreciation of the profession to which I belong. It has enabled me to realise both my potential and limitations and focus my efforts on making further contributions to the OSH profession. I have learned through my experiences and the contributions I have made to the profession that the areas of work I want to focus my time and effort on are those which align with my values, motives, competencies (Backhouse, 2022b).

This article, which transpired from reading Caldwell's reflections on her professional doctorate (2019b, 2022), has provided me an opportunity, almost one year on from gaining my professional doctorate, to reflect on my own journey. I, therefore, conclude with her sentiment that undertaking a professional doctorate is worth it and I too would encourage others to do the same (Caldwell, 2022, p. 8).

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