

**Triumphs and Tribulations: Understanding Academia as a Site for
Social Activism**



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Declaration

I hereby declare that this PhD thesis is a presentation of my original research work and has not been submitted for another degree, either at South East Technological University or elsewhere.

Signature



Date

8/11/23

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Abstract

This PhD project explores academia as a site for activism in Ireland. By investigating the experiences of permanent and precarious academic-activists at varying career stages, this study considers the impact of the political, social and economic environment; its influence on the institutional environment and how these impact an individual's experience of academic-activism and academic freedom. This is accomplished through two core studies which inform best practice guidelines and recommendations for academic-activism within a Participatory Action Research methodology.

Study One involved administering an online survey which explores the perspectives of Irish academic-activists in relation to the influences of external environments on academic-activist engagement. Through a mixed-method research approach, participant insights informed the development of a scale instrument, offering a foundation for future investigations in other studies related to academic-activism, as well as the interview guide for the subsequent study. This study highlighted how external environments, especially in the case of working-class academics and women, influenced their experiences of academic-activism.

For Study Two, academics engaging with activism were interviewed so as to gather in-depth insight into their lived experience as an academic-activist. Through a reflexive thematic analysis, the findings from this study reveal both the benefits (e.g. the capacity to effect real-life change) and costs (e.g. career progression) of academic-activism. These findings were connected to individual motivations rooted in personal experiences and the barriers imposed by institutional constraints, encompassing precarious contracts and the lack of recognition for activist work within academia.

A triangulation of these findings was then utilised to inform best practice guidelines and recommendations (final chapter). The guidelines offer practical strategies for individual academic-activists to navigate personal challenges, from challenging negative perceptions to maintaining work-life balance. In contrast, the policy recommendations target institutional stakeholders, providing actionable steps to support academic-activism by eradicating precarious work, promoting collaboration and valuing diverse forms of activism within academia. The overall project contributes to a deeper understanding of the intricacies of academic-activism and its vital role in the pursuit of social justice within academia.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The rationale and purpose for the research is based on a clear identification of a significant gap in the literature relating to the experiences of Irish based academic-activists, in particular those who have experiences of the precarious nature of academia and those who come from disadvantaged and/or marginalised backgrounds. This research highlights the need to address the key challenges facing academic-activists within the current institutional climate in Ireland. Therefore, the primary objective of this research relates to recognising the critical role of activism in reshaping academia and advancing social justice through a participatory research approach. This is outlined further in this section.

The research aim is to improve the academic landscape for academic-activists by exploring how the academy can become more accessible and supportive, so that in turn, academic-activists can achieve their research and dissemination aims for the people and communities they seek to represent and support. By doing so, the research will explore the experiences of permanent and precarious academic-activists at varying career stages and experience levels from the intersectional perspective of gender, class and race using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology. This research acknowledges that activism has a vital place in academia as it challenges traditional power structures, mainstream narratives, promotes social justice and encourages wider-reach engagement with current societal issues. Hence, through the recognition of the value of academic-activism, this research aims to contribute to creating a more supportive and transformative academic environment for academic-activists.

In the context of this research, PAR plays a crucial role in ensuring that the insights and experiences of the academic-activist community are actively incorporated into the research process, leading to more effective and contextually relevant outcomes. By engaging with academic-activists throughout the research, the PAR methodology empowers academic-activists to create meaningful change, fostering a collaborative environment where diverse perspectives are valued resulting in best practices guidelines and recommendations that address the real needs and challenges of the community.

This aim is informed by the literature review, and is investigated in line with a critical realist ontological perspective (Yucel 2018) and weak social constructionist

epistemological perspective (Willig 2001). This philosophical positioning allows for the mixed-method research approach which aids in the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data to produce best practice guidelines and recommendations for academic-activists. As such, the research findings and subsequent best practice guidelines and recommendations are informed by Bronfenbrenner's and Morris's updated 2006 PPCT (Process, Person, Context, Time) model. This model has been chosen due to its relevance and function in understanding the dynamic interplay between individuals, their environment within the context of the importance of time in shaping the individual's experience within external environments (e.g. academia). By incorporating the PPCT model, the research outcomes aim to provide a comprehensive and contextually grounded understanding of academic-activism; offering valuable insights for academic-activists and informing evidence-based recommendations to aid this form of academic practice.

The subsequent sections of this chapter begin with a reflective preface that delves into the personal journey, motivations and experiences that have shaped my research approach. This is followed by an outline of the rationale for this research thesis, clearly stating the research questions which have guided Study One (an online survey of self-identifying Irish based academic activists) and Study Two (in-depth interviews with self-identifying Irish-based academic-activists); the methodologies used in this research; and an overview of the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Reflective Preface

The approach to this research has been coloured by my own sociopolitical identity and my life experiences primarily through both employment and education as a result of being a white, working-class man. While I became interested in a career in academia towards the end of my 2nd year as an undergraduate, I felt that building industry experience – in tandem with the development of my academic career – would allow me to work in communities similar to the one I grew up in. A fusion of different experiences with social care and advocacy work has driven my research career from undergraduate to PhD.

My educational and employment journey has made me aware of how varying sociopolitical identities impact upon your experience and interaction with societal institutions. In particular, my own experiences of navigating academic spaces as a white man have also prompted me to critically consider the role of power dynamics and inequalities within academia. Furthermore, through engaging with academic-activist

themed literature, it is apparent that your experience as an academic-activist varies dependent on your identity with gender, class and race in the current institutional environment, which has motivated my personal interest in the topic as a working-class academic-activist.

From a personal perspective, a combination of my own background and an arguable lack of attention afforded to diverse voices within the literature influenced my research processes. As a working-class, precariously employed academic (i.e. hourly paid Tutor and Assistant Lecturer) and a PhD Researcher, my experience within academia perhaps restricts the degree in which I can express my own academic freedom through academic-activism given a lack of protections at both a personal and professional level. Interestingly, the term academic-activism and the label of being an academic-activist was something that I was unaware of in the months prior to beginning the PhD project, as previously, I considered my academic work and activist commitments as being separate from one another.

Much of my activist experience comes from being involved in community-based projects either through: local politics, youth and community work, local fundraising and the running of a football club that operates under an ethos of inclusivity and accessibility in a highly disadvantaged area. While my previous research at Masters level and the subject areas in which I teach could possibly be considered activism, I never personally thought to combine both with activist endeavours or identify as an academic-activist. Evidently, this perhaps relates closely to the aforementioned restricted freedom I have faced in this precarious stage of my career due to concerns for potential career advancement and becoming increasingly aware of negative connotations associated with activism in the academic context in the early stages of my PhD journey. This initial assumption regarding restricted academic freedom was clearly met following a conversation with a former supervisor (a tenured academic) having applied for the PhD project where they had summarised academic-activism in a concise manner: 'basically I can do whatever I want, but someone in your position probably can't'.

While this conversation showed that activism in academia is a precarious engagement, it does not highlight the depth of who and what is impacted by engaging in academic-activism or who can engage in consistent, meaningful and impactful academic-activism more freely. Thus, the consideration of my own positionality within the research is

important for contextualising my research approach, but also offers insights into the exploration of my identity as an academic-activist in light of challenges facing those from disadvantaged backgrounds in precarious academic positions.

Throughout the research, I aim to actively engage with diverse voices and perspectives, seeking input from academic-activists in order to co-create knowledge with those both different and similar lived experiences from my own. This commitment to the participatory research approach allows for collaboration with participants, but also enables a consistent reflective approach to be adopted throughout the research which will enhance the validity and relevance of my research findings, further enabling me to contribute meaningfully to the field of academic-activism and aid in a systematic reimagining of how we do academia.

The following section provides a more detailed rationale of the research in line with a brief overview of the literature relating to academic-activism within the context of the current social, political and institutional climate at present.

1.3 Rationale for the Research

Recently, the term ‘academic freedom’ has been used more frequently in mainstream media given an apparent threat to academic freedom on a global scale (Humphreys 2021; Power 2020; Reville 2020). This is seen through an increasing trend of government censorship and repression of academic freedom in various countries. Specifically, academic-activists who engaged in research or promoted social change are facing surveillance, intimidation, and even legal repercussions which stifles their ability to pursue academic-activism (Acar and Coskan 2019; Donmez and Duman 2021). In Ireland, The Irish Universities Act of 1997 provides a clear definition and assurance of academic freedom. According to the act, academic staff members in universities have the right, while adhering to legal boundaries, to freely question and evaluate established knowledge, present innovative concepts, express contentious or unpopular views and engage in such activities within or outside the university. Importantly, the act explicitly states that exercising academic freedom should not result in any form of disadvantage or

unfavourable treatment by the university (Reville 2023). Through academic freedom¹, those within higher education can engage in the delivery of academic output that can encourage positive social change (i.e. academic-activism) (Baird 2020), but the conditions under which academic freedom and academic-activism can thrive is complicated.

The context of the economic, political, social and the institutional environment can create barriers to expressing academic freedom and potentially limit the individual's ability to engage in academic-activism (Altman 2018). Academic-activism has taken a reserved position within the academy, thus curtailing the prominence of academic research that is intended for matters concerning social justice (Choudry 2019; Sobande 2018). As a result, academic research is more likely to be conducted to aid the reputation of the academy or to contribute to performance metrics (Altman 2018; Pease 2015). This has revealed a significant disparity between academics experiences of academic-activism based on the individual's identity, academic role and the type of activism they can engage in from a professional perspective.

Central to this research thesis is an exploration as to whether academics are able to exercise their academic freedom in the form of academic-activism, or if they are restricted by the demands of their institutions, as well as the social and political climate in which the activism takes place. Social activism can be defined as a means for actively promoting social change (McConochie and Leung 2010). Therefore academic-activism, for the purpose of this research, is defined as actively promoting social change through writing, research, teaching, as well as more typical activism-based activities such as rallying, marching and protesting. By adopting a broad and flexible definition of academic-activism, the aim is to encompass a wide range of academic-activist practices and perspectives, acknowledging the diverse ways in which academics engage with activism within academia and beyond. By adopting a more flexible definition, the research aims to

¹ While the intention here is to discuss threats to academic freedom and academic-activism from a social, political, and institutional context, I recognise that the term 'academic freedom' can be interpreted in different ways and may be used by groups with diverse beliefs and values. Importantly, some may argue that academic freedom should apply equally across the ideological spectrum, including centrist, ultra-conservative, and liberal viewpoints. However, in practice, both ultra-conservative and liberal perspectives may encounter difficulties in being freely expressed within certain academic and social contexts. This acknowledgment aims to encourage a more nuanced understanding of academic-activism within this thesis, while being mindful of how varying interpretations and associations may arise across different political and disciplinary landscapes.

avoid excluding individuals or groups who engage in academic-activism, but may not fit within strict boundaries set by narrower definitions.

Academic-activism literature depicts the experiences of predominantly permanent staff struggling to overcome the barriers to engage in academic-activism, highlighting the specific barriers and complexities in navigating institutional structures and power dynamics through institutional policies, administrative barriers and potential backlash from colleagues or management. These challenges can discourage or limit both the scope and wider reach of activism (Cancian 1993; Flood et al. 2013; Harré et al. 2017; Maxey 1999; Routledge and Driscoll-Derickson 2015). However, these studies omit the voices of precarious workers and marginalised academics who may be limited in their ability to engage in academic-activism. Perhaps this is a result of an expectation that those in precarious positions do not possess the necessary security and autonomy to avail of greater opportunities to engage in academic-activism.

Although not directly framed as academic-activism, it is noted within the literature that given a lack of personal security (e.g. financial, social, etc.), precarious academics are suspected to be restricted in their expression of academic freedom given the nature of precarious work within academia (Allmer 2018; Marginson 1997, 2014). Those without job security are often expected to produce academic output in line with institutional expectations which diminishes their ability to engage in academic-activism (Merga and Mason 2020; Rahal et al. 2023). The existing academic-activism literature which relates to the experiences of precarious academics often presents theories and possible explanations without direct empirical assessment of outstanding issues. This further highlights the need for further research to explore these assumptions.

Additionally, the literature examining third-level institutes suggests that white, middle/upper-class men are afforded a range of advantages to exercise academic freedom while women in academia, working-class academics and ethnically diverse academics experience greater levels of precarity, a lack of support, and restricted access to avail of grants and research funding (Appel 2014; Bhopal and Henderson 2019; Clarke et al. 2015; Courtois and O'Keefe 2015; Crew 2020; Joseph 2020; Pease 2015; Papadelos 2015; Warnock 2016). However, the emergence of literature pertaining to the experiences of women academics, working-class academics and minority ethnic academics rarely incorporates experiences of academic-activism. Some notable exceptions consider the

specific experiences of academic-activism from a marginalised and/or disadvantaged academics perspective in relation to issues such as: finding employment in institutions that value specific forms of activism and dealing with personal threats as a result of the individual's activism (Grollman 2015; Sobande 2018). However, literature relating to these groups focuses on narratives of negative work experiences within academia (Crew 2021; Papadelos 2015; Sobande 2018). Therefore, similar to the experiences of precarious academics as noted above, marginalised groups also appear to lack the adequate support to engage in academic-activism or express academic freedom with potentially even more barriers.

While the experiences of marginalised academic-activists sheds light on the specific challenges they face within academia, their narratives underscore the growing importance and relevance of academic-activism in addressing systemic inequities and fostering positive change. Although there is a lack of academic-activist themed literature that addresses the above outlined issues comprehensively, it is evident that academic-activism is becoming an increasingly significant topic in academia on a global scale (Alakauvklar 2020). Through this Irish based study, the inclusion of academics at varying career stages and representing diverse sociopolitical identities, provides a more diverse and inclusive insight into the experiences of a wider range of academics as opposed to the privileged few. With that, it is important to acknowledge that while this study focuses on academic staff (ranging from PhD researchers to permanent/precarious lecturing staff), it does not include other support staff within the academic sector. Support staff, (for example, administrative staff), often play vital roles within higher education institutes and may also participate in activism. Although their engagement with activism is not covered within the scope of this research, it is worth noting that these individuals form a distinct group of potential activists within academia. This exclusion is a necessary limitation given the research focus, but it also highlights the broader landscape of activism in the academic environment.

Through the course of this PhD research (2020-to date-2023), the academic landscape in Ireland has changed rapidly. Within the past four years, there has been an increased awareness of the level of casualised, precarious work in academia which has caused concern for academics whose uncertain futures have limited their output capabilities, restricted their opportunities to mobilise their careers, and lead to a rise in instances of mental health issues amongst those in non-permanent roles (Simpson 2023). This

increased awareness has been accelerated by University and College Union (UCU) strikes in the UK (more notably in Northern Ireland) which has resulted in heightened media coverage of the current issues facing academics on the island of Ireland as a whole (Casey 2022; Donohoe 2022; Meredith 2023; Shearing 2023). This form of activism appears to have had a knock-on effect with the rise in the mobilisation of postgraduate workers movements and the forming of postgraduate workers unions which has resulted in Simon Harris (Irish Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science) launching a review into the supports offered to postgraduate Researchers (Gilbert 2022; McGuire 2022; O'Brien 2022; Postgraduate Workers Organisation 2023).

While academic-activist themed literature is limited within the Irish context, it is apparent there has been a spike in specific forms of activism (mainly workers' rights) which also reflect the current social climate (e.g. cost of living crisis; housing crisis, etc.) and which also appear to be in line with pre-existing issues with academia (e.g. prominence of precarious work, lack of staff diversity and wider representation, etc.). Additionally, the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic and increased immigration within Ireland has brought about recent forms of activism (e.g. demonstrations, protests, marches in response to far-right groups) again reflecting an increased understanding of the challenges facing those who are most marginalised and disadvantaged within Irish society (Wilson and Gallagher 2023).

At present, both nationally and globally, there is a heightened awareness of the current academic environment in a time where there is an evidently radical change occurring within society (e.g. rise of political activism, union-based activism, environmental activism, civil rights campaigns, etc.). This has resulted in calls from academic-activists to go beyond what is expected of academics with regards to traditional academic output (e.g. publishing a paper) and to do something meaningful and impactful within society (Rynor 2023). In this sense, there seems to be an increasing push for academics to express themselves in a way that is accessible to those external to academia (Rynor 2023). However, this call for greater expressions of academic freedom is restricted within the current institutional climate (e.g. by lack of tenured positions; inconsistent support for academic-activism; lack of collegiality amongst staff) which is perhaps further restricted by specific equality, diversity and inclusion aims that are typically agenda-driven (e.g. focusing on one specific marginalised or disadvantaged group) (Suissa and Sullivan 2022).

Sullivan and Suissa (2022, para 3) claim that a recent ‘overreach’ by higher education institutes to ‘reshape the university in line with a narrow ideological agenda’ related to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) having previously ‘contained activists’ is concerning. So, while there are broader claims to increase academic-activist work related to EDI (e.g. activist lobby groups; research on gender inequality, etc.) and increase diversity within academia, Sullivan and Suissa (2022) find that this ideological imposition is often misplaced and does not result in widened participation or equality within academia. Although there is an increase in the call for greater participation and representation within academia, Sullivan and Suissa (2021) believe this is set against current structures that have consistently suppressed activist research and resulted in blacklisting, harassment and smear campaigns on academic-activists. Given current issues with the promotion of EDI, higher education institutes (namely EDI staff and networks) need to reimagine the ways in which they promote genuine equality, diversity, and inclusion to allow for meaningful reform which can encourage greater promotion of academic freedom overall (Sullivan and Suissa 2022).

This research offers a much-needed exploration of such environments and movements from the diverse experiences of academic-activists in the Irish context. The guidelines developed as part of this research are intended to present recommendations that can aid future practice for academic-activists.

In addition to this study’s timeliness, there are several reasons for this research:

(a) To improve academic practice focused on achieving social change

In line with the European Union, SETU’s and Irish Research Council’s priorities for research innovation and global impact, the findings will contribute to and support the target of stimulating a ‘Social Innovation Community’ whereby ‘researchers, social innovators, citizens and policymakers’ can effectively collaborate to ‘address national and global societal challenges’, which are often at the forefront of academic-activists’ interests and motivations. This research, which utilises Participatory Action Research (PAR), is conducted with a main objective of enacting social change with specific actions (MacDonald 2012). To this end, this project focuses on improving the landscape for academic-activists in their efforts to achieve social change across varying social movements. Therefore, this research is well-placed within these mandates.

(b) To consider the project's findings in light of gender equality, representation, and progression in academia.

It is apparent that the experience of an academic-activist varies dependent on gender, class and racial identity, within the current institutional environment. As a working-class academic-activist, this has influenced my personal interest in the topic. Identifying with the project puts me in an advantageous position to address issues relating to equality, representation and progression in academia. In this sense, the project has been designed to consider the experiences of as diverse a range of academic-activists as possible in the Irish context in order to produce research that identifies the challenges to engaging with academic activism, and additionally, offers potential solutions toward improving and addressing the needs of those involved (e.g. representation and progression).

It is important to note that throughout this thesis, references to gender will be used rather than biological sex. Terms such as 'man/men' 'woman/women' and 'nonbinary' are employed where appropriate to reflect gender identity. However, in certain instances, phrases such as 'white, male, middle-class institution' are used when discussing academia, as these reflect established terminology in the existing literature, even though they may not fully capture the complexities of gender diversity.

Furthermore, it is important to note that race and ethnicity are two distinct but interconnected concepts used to categorise and identify individuals and groups based on shared characteristics and cultural backgrounds (Kempny and Michael 2021). Race refers to the biographical classification of people based on traits such as skin colour while ethnicity refers to the social and cultural practices, as well as the beliefs and values of a group, such as language or religious beliefs. However, these definitions can vary across different societies and contexts which often results in the terms being used interchangeably given the complexity of the understanding of race and ethnicity which can be influenced by historical, social and political factors (Kempny and Michael 2021).

Taking this into consideration, and throughout this study, the term 'race' is predominantly used to reflect cultural and national identities as indicated in the survey categories in Chapter 5 and survey demographic data in Chapter 6 (e.g., White Irish, Asian, Black, any White background, etc.). Although 'race' and 'ethnicity' are often used interchangeably, they denote different aspects of identity. Race generally refers to physical characteristics and broader racial groups, while ethnicity relates to cultural and social practices. Given

the specific nature of the survey categories and the focus of this study, 'race' provides a more accurate framework for analysing the data. While some categories touch on ethnicity (e.g. any other ethnic background), the overall focus is on race to maintain consistency throughout both studies.

Given existing challenges with racial and ethnic diversity in higher education, particularly in relation to self-reporting, 'race' was considered more accessible for participants. Moreover, utilising broader racial categories in the survey helps protect participants by ensuring anonymity and minimising the risk of identification in a relatively small academic community. It is acknowledged that in wider discussions, ethnicity may be emphasised based on the specific focus of other literary sources. However, the choice to prioritise race within this study reflects the need to ensure clarity and consistency, given the complexities and overlapping understandings of these concepts in the context of academia.

(c) To validate a measure which can be used and tested in further studies.

Study One aims to validate a scale that can be used in potential future studies relating to academic-activism, contributing to the academic literature. At present, there is no validated tool which can be used for examining the experiences of academic-activists within relevant contexts (i.e. political, institutional, etc.). While there are scales that measure activist orientation (which have tested and used in other areas of activism, such as Black community activism and student activism) these scales do not adequately represent the complex experience of activism from a professional, academic perspective. Therefore, the validated scale from this PhD project, will provide a novel contribution to the academic literature that can both utilised and tested by others in this area.

(d) To produce a set of guidelines and recommendations for academic-activists which will improve this area of academic practice.

This final stage of this PhD research aims to produce guidelines derived from analysing the experiences of academic-activists to provide recommendations to aid academic-activist practice for academic-activists. The guidelines and recommendations will be contextualised within Bronfenbrenner's and Morris's (2006) updated PPCT model (i.e. Person, Proximal Process, Context, Time) and ecological systems framework (final chapter). In this sense, the proposed framework will offer critical insight into the structure

and practices of both wider society (e.g. political ideology, culture, societal attitudes and perceptions, etc.) and higher educational institutions (e.g. employment practices, demands on academics time, etc.) which has been highlighted within Study One and Study Two. This will offer insight into how academic-activism is impacted by interrelated systems while presenting guidelines and recommendations that can aid academic-activists in overcoming potential barriers and restrictions to their academic-activist work.

In addition, the guidelines and recommendations will aim to address a range of experiences in academia that speak to potential areas for policy development by articulating the needs of academic-activists activist academics (e.g. academic precarity, enhancing professional support, allowing time and space for activism, etc.). Overall, the guidelines and recommendations will provide a useful tool for academic-activists who are engaged in academic practice focused on achieving social change.

Therefore, the proposed project explores academia as a site for activism (and academic freedom) in Ireland. By investigating the experiences of permanent and precarious academic-activists at varying career stages, based primarily on their gender, class and race, this study will consider the impact of the political, economic and social environment; its influence on the institutional environment; and how these influence an individual's experience of academic-activism and academic freedom.

In building upon the rationale and background for the research, the following section outlines the specific research questions that guide this study, providing a focused framework for exploration and analysis of the experiences of academic-activists.

1.4 Research Questions

The present study aims to explore the experiences of permanent and precarious academic-activists at varying career stages and experience levels from the intersectional perspective of gender, class and race using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology. Through this research perspective and methodology, it is possible to learn from and work with participants to promote social change in this area.

The research aim will be achieved by addressing three main research questions:

- (i) How do academics' identification with gender, class and race, collegiate engagement, and perceptions of the political, institutional and social environment relate to their experiences as an academic-activist?

- i. This aim will be addressed in Study One (online survey) by examining the responses of academic-activists in Irish Higher Education Institutions about their views of a range of influences on their activism work in academia, including the political, economic and social environment; institutional environment; and the individual academic-activist's personal values, beliefs and motivations for their academic work.
- (ii) What are the motivations and barriers for academics who engage in activism, and how do these factors vary across different academic roles and types of activism?
 - i. This aim will be addressed in Study Two (in depth interviews with Irish academic-activists) by exploring the experiences of academic-activists and their understanding of academic-activism within their current institutional environment. This is achieved by investigating whether the focus of activist work effects the academic interviewees experiences of support or challenges they face in balancing activism with their professional responsibilities.
- (iii) The final aim of this PhD project is to consider how the findings of Study One and Study Two can inform guidelines that influence social change in areas of academic practice to support academic-activists.
 - i. This aim will be addressed in the final chapter which will consider the detailed analysis of Study One and Study Two to produce a set of best practice guidelines and recommendations to inform the development of institutional policies for academics.

1.5 Thesis Structure: Order of Presentation

This research thesis is presented over eight chapters.

Chapter Two consists of an extensive literature review which covers the following key topics: an overview of the impact of the economic, policy and social environments (namely neoliberal ideology) on the institutional environment; the impact of precarity

from a general, gender, class and race perspective and; the role institutions play in silencing academic-activism through business-led practices and demands on academic's time and output. The aim of the literature review is to highlight the complexity of engaging in academic-activism dependent on the individual's positionality within the higher educational setting. Thus, academic-activism is considered not only as an individual activity that is concerned with matters of social justice, but its impact is sensitive to external environments which determine the response to varying types of academic-activism dependent on the societal context, as well as the individual's positionality.

Following, informed by the literature review, Chapter Three will outline the philosophical, theoretical and methodological frameworks for this study. The philosophical framework (critical realist ontology and weak social constructionist epistemology), the theoretical framework (Bronfenbrenner's and Morris's 2006 updated PPCT model) and the methodological framework (PAR) provide insight into how the study was designed, as well as how the research aims and questions were addressed in line with each framework. Given that the literature review highlights the complex nature of academic-activism (in terms of the impact of the individual's identity within external environments), the utilisation of an intersecting ecological systems framework (the PPCT model) is justified by its ability to provide greater, in-depth insight into the experiences of academic-activists within the context of wider environments (e.g. political, institutional, etc.). Furthermore, the PAR framework is described in this chapter as a suitable framework for allowing participants to bring their own experiences and identity to the project in order to collaborate with the researcher so as to form solutions to the barriers and challenges facing academic-activists. This is outlined further in the final chapter.

Chapter Four outlines the methodology for Study One (online survey) which specifies the methods utilised in the data collection and analysis processes of this exploratory study. Specifically, this chapter outlines the justification of the mixed-method research approach when analysing survey data, the key ethical considerations involved, as well as the procedural steps taken for the recruitment and sampling of the survey study. Within this chapter, the processes undertaken within the various statistical analyses are outlined in the order shown here: scale and sub-scale development which includes both reliability and validity testing; hypotheses testing of categorical variables (gender, class, race and

contract type) with the scale variables and; the correlation and regression analysis. Following from the quantitative analyses of survey data, this chapter includes an overview of the analytical procedures related to the qualitative content analysis of the open-ended questions present in the survey.

Chapter Five presents the analysis and discussion of Study One (online survey) which was exploratory in nature. In this chapter, the results of the scale and sub-scale development are presented. Following from this, the results of the hypotheses testing, correlation analysis and regression analysis are reported. This is followed by the qualitative content analysis of the open-ended questions which consists of one inductively generated overarching theme: the practical application of academic-activism in line with two inductive sub-themes: academic “influencers”: connecting academia and the outside world through activism and “the tricky line”: barriers between academia and activism. Initially, the discussion of the statistical analyses is presented in the order of the guiding hypotheses of this study. This is then followed by a discussion of the qualitative content analysis in the order of the overarching theme and categories in line with the relevant literature.

Chapter Six outlines the methodology of Study Two (in-depth interviews). In this chapter, an overview of the qualitative research approach is described in line with the use of semi-structured interviews for this study. Within this chapter, the key ethical considerations involved within this study, as well as the procedural steps taken in the recruitment, sampling and data collection are outlined. This chapter also outlines the analytical procedures involved with Braun’s and Clarke’s (2022) guidelines for reflexive thematic analysis. This method of analysis is described and justified in line with both the theoretical and methodological frameworks of the PhD study, as well as the philosophical positioning of the research.

Chapter Seven presents the findings and discussion of the thematically analysed interview transcripts from the in-depth interviews with Irish-based academic-activists. The analysis is presented within three inductive thematic areas: “that kind of collectivism that we need”: negotiating neoliberalism and building solidarity, “academia doesn’t like activism”: the impact of the institutional climate on academic-activism and; “they have different senses of time”: finding the balance between academia and activism. Each of the three superordinate themes include two sub-themes respectively. The discussion

points which relate to the relevant local and global literature provides detailed contextual insight into the experiences of academic-activists in Ireland.

Chapter Eight, the final chapter, presents the best practice guidelines and recommendations for academic-activists. The final chapter triangulates the data and findings from both studies to produce a set of guidelines and recommendations which are considered in light of the theoretical framework (PPCT model). Thus, the final chapter considers the usefulness of the PPCT model in understanding the experiences of academic-activists based in Ireland responding to the final thesis research question. In addition, the final chapter includes a personal reflection within the context of the key findings and challenges presented to the researcher throughout this PhD project. The final chapter also highlights the significance of the research and the contribution it makes to an understanding of academic-activism and how current obstacles can be overcome to aid this area of academic practice. The limitations of both studies are acknowledged and recommendations for future research are identified.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

An extensive literature review, which entailed an exploration of research studies and relevant publications, reveals a number of key concepts relevant to framing and examining the experience of academic-activism, such as structural inequalities and neoliberal ideology, which demonstrate that engaging with activist work as an academic can be considered from a multi-layered and multi-systems framework.

The first section of the literature review provides a brief overview and context to the academic environment by arguing that the current economic, political, social and institutional environments are neoliberally influenced. Therefore, the research background and context section of this chapter serves to provide a framework to aid the interpretation of literature related to academic-activism. By providing a concise overview of the relevant academic discourse and concepts which are considered to impact academic-activism, this section aims to establish context for the empirical studies which proceed the introductory paragraphs.

The second section examines literature that highlights the impact of the wider environments (namely economic, political and social) on academia's structural conditions. In particular, focusing on the prominence of casualised employment and how this is experienced by people with differing individual identities, specifically addressing how precarity, dependent on personal background or identity, can inhibit the ability to engage in academic-activism. This is followed by an exploration of the economic, social and political environment, but with a focus on how it affects the institutional climate. Specific attention is paid to the influence of neoliberalism on creating an individualised and competitive environment which has reimagined higher education as a transactional environment that has implications for the delivery of education.

The final section of the literature review will offer a conclusionary overview of the literature and how it guides this current PhD research project.

2.1.1 Research background and context: the economic, social, political and institutional environment

The implementation of neoliberal theory in Irish and global academia since the 1980s has significantly shaped the academic (and research) context. Neoliberalism, driven by a

political agenda of limited government intervention and market-driven principles has transformed the educational landscape, shifting the focus towards entrepreneurialism, commodification and commercialisation (Lynch and Grummell 2018). This has created barriers to academic-activism by emphasising values of accountability, individualism, competition, and production which create barriers for collective action (Curry-Stevens et al. 2008). The emergence of new managerialism, influenced by neoliberalism, has replaced traditional academic principles with business-like models, where policy decisions are driven by institutional hierarchy and financial interests (Olssen and Peters 2005).

In Ireland, the impact of neoliberalism on education was accelerated by the 1980s recession, leading to public spending cuts and the promotion of a free-market ethos (Lynch and Grummell 2018). Education became aligned with market principles aiming to prepare students for competitive workplaces by mirroring business environments within academia (Collini 2012). This is primarily evident in the emphasis on market-driven degrees to attract revenue via student fees and industry funding (Collini 2012). This can potentially lead to a narrowing of educational focus and a neglect of subjects or disciplines that may not have immediate market or industry value, but are critical for intellectual and societal development (Fleming 2021). Furthermore, the discourse of new managerialism² which has infiltrated the educational (academic) field, promotes an ethic of efficiency and productivity as indicators of success within academia; further nurturing the marketisation of education (Lynch and Grummell 2018).

This has led to the commercialisation of higher education with business-led practices prioritising efficiency and productivity. Academics are expected to secure external funding, enhance institutional performance rankings, and engage in monitored academic outputs (Fleming 2021). Neoliberal restructuring has had a profound impact on the academic employment model with the prominence of job insecurity, limited contracts, and performance-based expectations (Allmer 2018). While this has become central in attempting to navigate the academic environment, the current employment model does

² New managerialism refers to a set of managerial practices and ideologies that have emerged in various sectors (e.g. education) which gears institutions towards a more business-oriented approach to managing these sectors. It is characterised by an emphasis on performance-based targets, accountability and a focus on efficiency, productivity and cost effectiveness which promote the commodification and commercialisation of sectors (Lynch and Grummell 2018).

not necessarily guarantee successful outcomes given a dearth in academic job opportunities (Ivancheva et al. 2019).

Precarity has been one of the key issues in the careers of academics in recent years. The current model relies on casual, short-term and fixed-term contracts which has been detrimental for job security amongst academics (ISE 2020). A direct consequence of a lack of adequate funding to secure posts has become a global issue within higher education (Fleming 2021). A lack of transparency regarding academia's career path has created a sense of insecurity amongst those at the early-career research stage (ECR's) (ISE 2020; Rhodes et al. 2017). Security appears in the literature not only as a condition to engage in activism, but to have a generally positive experience within academia in comparison to precarious staff.

Resistance to neoliberalism's implementation is hampered by limited security, particularly for early-career academics (Fleming 2021; Standing 2011). Within this context, the espousal of values such as individualism and competitiveness have undermined collective efforts which further erode resistance within academia and beyond (Allmer 2018). The neoliberal emphasis (mirrored by academic institutions) on accountability and external funding has led to a transactional view of education which prioritises increasing revenue over quality delivery of education (Villanueva and O'Sullivan 2019). Neoliberalism, as a political concept, is criticised for downgrading the public service aspect of education through promoting elitism and neglecting public-facing aspects such as inclusivity, wide-reaching engagement and accessibility (Power et al. 2013).

This research aims to understand academic-activism within the current climate where the purpose and focus of academic work is reimagined and job security is limited, therefore hindering the potential impact of academic-activist work. In this chapter it is not intended to suggest that there was a golden era where academia predicated itself on utopian ideals and academic-activism was commonplace, rather it will include an exploration as to whether the neoliberalisation of universities (e.g. marketisation of teaching, commercialisation of education, performance metrics, employment issues, etc.) impacts upon the ability of academics to exercise their academic freedom through academic-activism (Marginson 1997; Phipps and McDonnell 2021). By examining the impact of neoliberalism on the academic environment, this chapter seeks to highlight the challenges

faced by academic-activists who seek to use their privileged positions for the betterment of society.

In building upon the overview of the influence of neoliberalism which continues to shape academic-activism, the following section discusses the prominence of precarity within academia and the implications of this employment model for academics in a general sense. This is further elaborated upon by highlighting literature which relates to the impact of precarity in relation to academics with marginalised or disadvantaged identities within the current institutional environment.

2.2 The prominence of precarity in academia

To date, the literature has rarely linked the inability to engage in academic-activism to the academic role or contract type of the individual. This is perhaps linked to a lack of personal and professional security experienced by those in precarious role which restricts their ability to freely engage in public-facing scholarship. However, an emergence of literature that focuses on the general academic working experiences of permanent and precarious staff further highlights this initial assumption. Literature in this area echoes the importance of economic security as a pivotal part in the ability to exercise academic freedom in the form of activism. Therefore, this section discusses literature which considers the security of tenured staff in comparison to those in precarious roles who are suspected to be struggling both in a personal and professional sense on a global scale (Bone 2019; Courtois and O’Keefe 2015; Harré et al. 2017).

Within Irish academia specifically, Delaney’s (2020) three-part report series on structural issues and conditions in higher education highlights the impact of insecurity on academics. Delaney (2020b) found that the levels of job insecurity in academia restricted career progression and created overwhelming experiences of financial instability which increased the levels of stress and mental health issues for precariously employed academics. Delaney (2020b) also highlights the lack of institutional support and resources available for academics in helping to deal with the challenges that arise from maintaining a work-life balance in precarious working conditions. A study conducted by Fitzsimons et al. (2021), consisting of 80 participants, further supports Delaney’s (2020b) findings on academic precarity. Fitzsimons et al. (2021) research reveals that individuals experiencing precarity in academia often struggle with their identity as academic staff members, highlighting the discomfort associated with their precarious circumstances

(Delaney 2020; Fitzsimons et al. 2021). Precarity, in this manner, tends to lead to diminishing research outputs and personal issues such as mental health issues, isolation, and burnout resulting from an ambiguous relationship with their institute that obstructs a clear understanding regarding a precarious academic's duties in academia (Delaney 2020; Fitzsimons et al. 2021).

In the Irish context, there has also been a rise in personal accounts of academics in academic journals detailing their experiences of precarity and job insecurity impacts upon their quality of life; their physical and mental wellbeing and; consistent disruption of life milestones (e.g. buying a house) (Flynn 2020; Whelan 2021). Globally (although more prevalent in the USA, UK and Australia), there has been an emergence of 'quit lit' (Lee 2015). Typically, these are informally published pieces, such as blog posts, where academics detail why they are leaving academia. Commonly, aspects of 'quit lit' refer to the precarious nature of academic work and unrealistic institutional demands as their reasons for leaving. But, more interestingly, while these pieces are informally published, they refer to previous 'quit lit' publications in their own accounts. This indicates a commonality in experiences amongst both currently and previously employed academics regarding growing concerns about the normalisation of precarious work practices in higher education (see Lee 2015 and McKenzie 2021b for examples).

The academic literature similarly suggests that those in precarious roles are primarily concerned with gaining permanency, whereas those with secure employment can better afford to focus on typical academic duties, such as: teaching, research, applying for grants and funding, as well as outreach activities which are important for career progression (Byrne 2015; O'Sullivan 2018). More recently, the Irish Precarity Network (2022) estimate that 50% of lecturing staff are on temporary or part-time contracts. In Ireland's case, it is common for academics to be placed on short-term contracts or awarded an informal contract, placing the demand on precariously employed academics to almost out-perform others in order to gain permanency (Cush 2016; Delaney 2020b; McGuire 2015). Fitzsimons et al. (2021) highlight the challenge of accurately assessing the prevalence of casualised labour in Irish universities. While an exact estimation is difficult, based on the work of Cush (2016) and Loxley (2014), it is conservatively estimated that nearly half of lecturing staff and up to 80 percent of researchers are employed on a non-permanent basis (O'Keefe and Courtois 2019). Overall, it is expected that there are over

11,200 academics in precarious working conditions in Ireland (Cush 2016; McGuire 2015). In Ireland's higher educational institutes, around 40% of teaching hours are undertaken by part-timers, with only one to two year contracts offered in higher education facilities, in a situation regarded as a 'crisis' by TUI president, Gerry Quinn (McGuire 2015). The statistics and figures on academic precarity shed light on the extent of the problem. However, it is important to recognise that the prominence of precarity not only has implications relevant to job security, but also significantly curtails an individual's academic freedom and ability to engage in socially motivated academic work.

Within the context of engaging in academic-activism and expressing academic freedom, permanent/tenured staff are afforded certain privileges in comparison to precarious/junior staff (Alakauvklar 2020; Nkomo 2009). While there is an array of literature offering recommendations for permanent staff navigating barriers to academic-activism (Cancian 1993; Flood et al. 2013; Harré et al. 2017; Maxey 1999; Routledge and Driscoll-Derickson 2015), it is important to acknowledge that these recommendations often neglect precarious workers and marginalised academics who face additional obstacles that hinder their participation in academic-activism. The reality of precarious and marginalised staff is more complex than what is both suggested by those in permanent roles and what is recommend in the above listed publications, such as: doing activism 'out-of-hours', aligning your activism with your academic output and altering your research methodologies to better incorporate activist values. Instead, those in precarious roles are more concerned with a lack of institutional support, low self-esteem and inner-conflict which disproportionately affect this particular cohort, thus limiting their academic freedom and career mobility (Delaney 2020b; Marginson 2014; Merga and Mason 2020; Rahal et al. 2023).

The scenario described above is particularly apparent amongst the early-career stage, and those at PhD level in particular. Woolston (2019) reports the results of Nature's survey of 6,300 early-career researchers from Europe, Asia, North and Central America, Africa, South America and Australasia which highlights the challenges and issues faced by PhD researchers during their research journey. The survey responses highlight the emotional and mental struggles of PhD researchers, including loneliness, isolation, and anxiety and the need for institutions to provide better support systems (Woolston 2019). The precarious nature of PhD funding, the long working hours and the pressure to publish are

considered key contributions to nurturing a culture of overwork which often leads to burnout (Woolston 2019). This has resulted in calls for greater transparency and accountability in the PhD system, including providing more information about job prospects and career pathways for potential PhD graduates (Woolston 2019). The responses reported in the survey highlight the need for better recognition of the transferable skills that PhD students develop, such as project management, problem-solving, and communication skills, and the need to promote these skills to prospective employers (for both academic-based and industry-based careers) given current structural conditions in academia. Achieving change in this area is perhaps reliant on a cultural and/or attitudinal shift in the academic community towards valuing both the contribution and well-being of PhD researchers within their respective departments (and institutes) and acknowledging the challenges they face with useful solutions.

However, the limited availability of secure contracts augments this scenario. Neoliberal economic policy has further limited the security of precarious faculty to exercise their activist ideals (via academic freedom) from within the academy through constrained contracts, as well as reducing the possibility of building an academic career from an early-career prospective (Marginson 2014). A lack of appropriate space within higher education for those on insecure contracts has led to precariously employed academics feeling they are effectively silenced (Gill 2009; Rojas 2013). A combination of depleted funding post-2008 and a permanency cap in academia introduced by the Irish Government through the ECF (European Control Framework) signals to a continuation of differences between permanent and precarious staff (Delaney 2020b).

Currently, academic-activist literature does not rigorously incorporate the experiences of non-permanent staff. Instead, it is produced in line with the circumstances of tenured staff and regularly fails to address the key problems/conditions (such as precarity and performance metrics) that are hindering activism's inclusion within higher education and academic output (Phipps and McDonnell 2021). Furthermore, the academic literature depicts third-level institutes as environments whereby white, middle/upper-class men are given a range of advantages to engage in academic-activism in comparison to others (Lynch et al. 2012). Generally, women in academia, lower/working-class academics and ethnically diverse (in predominately white institutions) academics experience greater levels of precarity due to a lack of support and restricted access to avail of grants/research

funding via traditional forms of publication i.e. journals, conferences, etc. which are key for career progression (Appel 2014; Clarke et al. 2015; Courtois and O’Keefe 2015; O’Sullivan 2018; Joseph 2020; Pease 2015; Papadelos 2015). The following sections examine the impact of the current precarious and casualised employment model in further detail from the perspective of gender, class and race.

2.2.1 The impact of gender inequality on the academic career path

Permanent positions are traditionally dominated by academics who are men. Thus, casual contracts are more often a feature of womens’ careers in higher education in an individualistic and intensely competitive environment (Delaney 2020c; O’Keefe and Courtois 2019; Ivancheva et al. 2019; Zheng 2018). To overcome systemic barriers, women in academia report reconstructing their identities in line with the ideal academic depiction (i.e. childless and stereotypically masculine³) (Eschle and Maignashca 2006; O’Connor 2001; Lynch et al. 2012). HEA’s (2016, pg. 5) expert group indicate that “significant gender inequality remains” within higher education. Whilst there are more women than men in lecturing positions in Irish academies, this landscape changes with seniority where only 39% of senior lectures and 26% of professors are women (Delaney 2020c). A national survey conducted by HEA (2016) with almost 5,000 respondents highlighted these key areas in terms of standout issues within gender equality in higher education: (i) progression; (ii) childcare provision and support; (iii) culture and; (iv) gender balance at senior level and equal representation at board level.

Therefore, this section discusses the systemic barriers and gendered expectations that hinder women’s career progression through studies relating to academic precarity which signal towards the persistence of gender inequality in higher education which, in turn, affects the experiences of women academics. These studies highlight the role of insufficient workplace support and a lack of institutional adaptation in forcing women to

³ Current structural conditions within academia tend to favour masculine, neoliberal values which relate to individualism, assertiveness, autonomy and competitiveness which are considered more tailored towards individual success in the pursuit of economic goals (Garlick 2021). This means that academic work related to administration, teaching and/or emotional labour is often allocated to or associated with women in light of socially constructed gendered roles (Atkinson and Standing 2019; Burford 2017; Connell 2005; Newcomb 2021; O’Connor 2001; Strunk 2020).

make choices between career advancement, family commitments and future planning thereby impeding their research careers and academic freedom. This is followed by a discussion of feminist activism in response to the especially pronounced issues for women academic-activists who engage in feminist-based activism as a means of challenging the masculine nature of academia.

In their study on academic precarity, Courtois and O’Keefe (2015) explore the extent of precarious employment in academia and how this impacts the individual’s ability to exercise their academic freedom. Within this study 63% (n=142) of the respondents were women and 36% (n=81) were men, which lead to conclusions that women were prone to longer periods of precarity in comparison to colleagues who were men. From the study, Courtois and O’Keefe (2015) found that the typical precarious academic was a woman, earned €10,000 per annum or less, was a part of the School of Humanities and worked in academia for almost a decade. Courtois and O’Keefe (2015) state that precarious academics must “carry the teaching burden of their departments” which is often done for free regardless of increased class sizes/student enrolments (Courtois and O’Keefe 2015, pg. 57). While institutes place high demand on academics to avail of funding to engage in research to aid advancement, precarious academics are excluded from this given increased teaching workloads and personal concerns (e.g. financial) which reduce both the time and security necessary to focus on career progression (Flynn 2020).

Additional studies have further contextualised women’s vulnerability to extended periods of precarity. Ivancheva et al.’s (2019) which originally conducted 102 semi-structured interviews with men and women academics on insecure contracts in higher education provides an interesting insight into lived experiences of women in academia. For the purpose of their paper, the 102-person data set was reduced to the experiences of 3 women in academia: Róisín, Sarah and Aoife. Similar to existing narratives of women in academia, Róisín and Aoife felt overworked by increased teaching workloads in their hourly paid lecturing posts, whereas Sarah experienced this form of exhaustion as a woman Vice President who needed to constantly justify her position as it was rarely afforded to women (Ivancheva et al. 2019).

The precarity of their positions in academia meant that childcare or gendered expectations (e.g. starting a family) appeared a common issue for the 3 participants. Róisín suggests

regretting having children soon after completing her PhD and favouring the flexibility that a part-time contract offered (Ivancheva et al. 2019). Increased teaching hours for less money and minimal job security has granted Róisín extended family time, but this trade-off between career progression and family commitments has meant that her research career and academic freedom has been hindered (Ivancheva et al. 2019).

From the perspective of women in academia, this trade-off also has both personal and professional impacts where women have chosen to pursue career interests instead of starting a family. Sarah and Aoife noted that not having children has resulted in some career advancement. However, this inevitably meant being exploited with regards to teaching arrangements and administrative duties which have limited their chances to pursue careers in activist research (Ivancheva et al. 2019). This trade-off between family and career appears the norm for women in academia, which may lead to an inner-conflict regarding personal planning (such as starting a family) and career progression (Delaney 2020c). Women in academia are fearful of “enduring the baby penalty” that may obstruct mobility and permanency due to an institutional-based lack of understanding regarding childcare arrangements and needs (Delaney 2020c, para 45). Additionally, from an academic perspective, women are often given the bulk of administrative and teaching work (“the housework of the academy”) which restricts their career mobility (Delaney 2020c, para 6). In order to progress it appears women face a trade-off between family commitments and career mobility (Connell 2005; Courtois and O’Keefe 2015; Ivancheva et al. 2019).

De Paula and Scoppa (2013) state that hiring procedures largely favour applicants who are men with many employers, particularly academic employers, not seeing any value in investing in women. This is often based on the preconceived expectation of a woman’s role and duties in the home (e.g. baby penalty) (Harré et al. 2017). Moreover, a decrease in the importance of the family institution and an increase in the demand for childcare facilities to combat the lack of a present parent in the household during working hours has presented challenges for employers (MacGreil 2011). With both men and women participating in the labour market, in an effort to maintain a ‘individualistic cosmopolitan’ lifestyle (MacGreil 2011, pg. 542), employers are still in a process of adapting to the needs of families who seek to prioritise workplace flexibility. However, the inclusion of flexibility and accommodation in employer/employee arrangements appears to favour

men with a lack of consideration for women, as it often results in women shouldering a disproportionate burden of caregiving responsibilities, impacting their career opportunities (Ivancheva et al. 2019).

There is a notable gap in the literature when it comes to the experiences of voluntarily childless individuals in academia, particularly women, despite extensive research on gender and family status in academic careers. While much of the existing literature focuses on women balancing motherhood with academic roles, far less attention is given to those who choose not to have children. With this in mind, it is also important to move beyond the sole focus on childcare and consider the broader scope of gendered roles that women may hold within families and society. Women often take on caregiving responsibilities not only for children, but also for elderly family members, disabled relatives, or others in need of support. These roles can have a profound effect on their academic careers which limit their ability to engage fully in research, teaching and career progression opportunities (Llorens et al. 2021; Ulvestad 2024).

Moreover, recent data emerging from the post-COVID period demonstrates that women in academia, regardless of whether they hold caregiving roles, were disproportionately affected compared to men. This suggests that the structural inequalities and expectations placed upon women in both their professional and personal lives have been exacerbated in the post-COVID context, further deepening the gender disparity in academic settings based on care-giving expectations perpetuated through societal norms (Hands et al. 2024; Kwon et al. 2023; Llorens et al. 2021).

The reality of the situation presents as a systemic neglect towards women in terms of career progression and promotion with distinct advantages afforded to colleagues who are men as it is consistently shown that women fail to reach the 'Top 50' positions within higher education, even though their presence is certainly felt in statistics surrounding full-time roles, awarding of undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications (Monroe et al. 2008). The prominence of academic precarity amongst women means that specific challenges and inequalities (as a result of academic precarity) impact upon feminist academic-activist endeavours and various expression of academic freedom. As a result, academia has faced feminist-based criticism for its perceived masculinist nature which have created an increasing divide between academia and activism (Eschle and

Maignashca 2006). This has led to the oppression of women academic-activists, especially those with feminist ideals (Eschle and Maignashca 2006).

In a study conducted by Atkinson and Standing (2019), interviews with 11 academic-activists (10 women, 1 man) revealed that feminist academic-activists often find societal attitudes and institutional norms to be restrictive of their activism. The small sample size allowed for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences in feminist-based academic-activism, which involved adopting alternative pedagogical approaches and mobilising other feminist academics. Participants questioned the effectiveness of their activism outside of teaching, particularly grassroots movements, due to a lack of support from colleagues and management. This lack of support can be attributed to societal perceptions that view feminist activism as disruptive to the dominant masculine discourse in the public sphere (Burford 2017).

Atkinson and Standing (2019) highlight that resistance from women academic-activists is increasingly common, as they challenge the masculine structure of academia and resist institutional strategies and norms. They propose various strategies, such as workarounds and advocating for slow university principles to sustain their academic-activist practices. Similarly, Eschle and Maignaschca (2006) suggest the need for women academic-activists to create their own spaces for knowledge sharing, separate from those who do not fully understand or support their processes, such as women-only reading or study groups and increased gender studies classes.

Precarity studies often draw conclusions that primarily impact women which neglect the potential to discuss precarity from the perspective of men, as well as highlighting intersectional issues in relation to class and race as examples (see: Courtois and O'Keefe 2015; De Paula and Scoppa 2013; O'Keefe and Courtois 2019; Fitzsimons et al. 2021; Ivancheva et al. 2019; Monroe et al. 2008). The depiction of higher education as a white, middle-class, male institution has meant that the experiences of other marginalised or disadvantaged academics such as working-class men have been dismissed due to broader narratives of hierarchical success (Crew 2020). Irish-based research, in particular, is limited in that the experiences of precarious men (who have participated in studies on academic precarity) are often ignored in published texts and instead the experience of women is compared to that of men in senior positions.

While it is not the intention of the researcher to suggest that the women's working experience in academia is directly comparable to men who are academics, condensing the dialogue to compare men in superior positions to women faculty limits the opportunity to explore the experiences of both men and women in varying stages of their academic careers. However, it is apparent in the literature that there is an emergence of women academic-activists as a direct response to the current institutional climate and societal attitudes regarding gendered expectations. In this sense, the individualised and competitive nature of academia appears to conflict with the commonly-held objective of women academic-activists which seeks to promote collective and transformative change within academia and society through various pedagogical or research-based approaches, as well as the formation of grassroots movements.

Overall, this section highlights the systemic barriers and gendered expectations prevalent within the social, political and institutional environment which limit women's career advancement. Gender inequality remains a significant issue within higher education, particularly in senior positions, impacting on the working experiences of women academics. A lack of workplace support and a failure to adapt from an institutional perspective means that women can face trade-offs between family commitments and career mobility which hinders their research careers and academic freedom. This brings about distinctive challenges for women academic-activists who pose resistance to the masculine nature of academia through feminist-based activism. Similar to the above, the following section highlights the prominence of precarity from the perspective of class. This focuses on the overall life experiences of working-class academics and the challenges they face when attempting to navigate what is broadly considered to be a middle-class institution (Fleming 2021).

2.2.2 The precarious experiences of working-class academics in a 'middle-class' environment

Due to a dearth in comprehensive studies relating to working-class academics, this section focuses primarily on the personal reflections of working-class academics found in book chapters and journal articles which are specifically targeted at working-class academic audiences. Across sources, working-class academics are consistently framed as marginalised within the academic context, due to a lack of opportunities and a presumption by working-class academics' that their own personal experiences, insights,

values and beliefs are not appreciated within higher education (Crew 2020; Pease 2015). Therefore, this section considers how academia, as a middle-class institution, sits in conflict with working-class academics' ideals. In light of challenges presented to working-class academics within academia, this section explores how an apparent exclusion of working-class academic ideals contributes to the precarity of working-class academics. This is followed by exploring examples of how working-class academics respond to elements of exclusion within the current institutional environment and challenges presented to their academic work. Although the responses to these restrictions can be successful, this section will also outline the nature of this exclusion and how elements of a working-class academic's background can provide consistent barriers to their success as an academic.

Academia is widely regarded as a white, middle-class institution that is predicated on middle-class values (Binns 2019; Forsey 2015; O'Brien 2018; O'Neill 2020; Papdelous 2015; Power et al. 2013; Reynolds 2018). A culture of elitism regarding research and publications (i.e. what is deemed institutionally acceptable or valuable) risks potentially further separating working-class academics from their areas of interest, and communities (O'Sullivan 2018; Rhodes et al. 2017; Reynolds 2018). This assumed culture of elitism is viewed by working-class academics as a limit to their engagement with public-facing scholarship, as academia is perceived as elitist and unaware of class inequality in society (O'Sullivan 2018; MacCionnaith 2015). In a study conducted with working-class activists in Crumlin following the Water Charges Movement, MacCionnaith (2015, pg. 152) found this misalignment of values to be apparent in working-class communities regarding academic/political representation:

Just because they [elites] went to university or they went to wherever it doesn't actually make them capable of doing anything ... they don't know anything about us, they don't know how we live, who we are ... they have no connect with us as ordinary people.

This middle-class orientation presents challenges for academic-activists who seek to engage with the public and effect social change. In their efforts to pose resistance to institutional norms regarding traditional forms of academic dissemination, working-class academic-activists encounter a variety of obstacles related to their motivations for academic work.

From a working-class academic's perspective, research interests are broadly informed by their own lived experience which means that working-class academic-activism is conducted for the benefit of those from similar communities to their own (Byrne 2015; Pease 2015). However, at present, academic-activism is deemed to be restricted as the role of an academic is now primarily concerned with performance outputs, writing almost exclusively for colleagues/peers and devoting research interests to the demands of governmental organisations rather than those at a societal disadvantage (Altman 2018; McKenzie 2017). As such, the use of academic language and access to published materials is publishing generally reserved for the "initiated and elite" (Altman 2018, pg. 3) and acts as a further barrier for those who may find access to public-facing work useful in combating issues of social justice (McKenzie 2017).

These described barriers imposed by institutional management and further nurtured by the current academic culture have hindered academic-activists and disadvantaged groups in attempting to build collaborative relationships (Choudry 2020). The undervaluing and restrictions placed on activism has meant that activism must be conducted on an out-of-hours basis for those who seek to preserve their chances of career progression (Flood et al. 2013). This is contradictory to the objectives of some working-class academics who have sought to educate themselves so that they could use their privileged academic position in order to combat social injustices in their communities (Brook and Michell 2012; Granfield 1991).

The challenges faced by academic-activists with regards to academic dissemination prompt working-class academic-activists to develop alternative strategies and approaches through both traditional and non-traditional platforms for knowledge dissemination. By leveraging their lived experiences and tapping into their own communities, working-class academic-activists are able to overcome barriers and make their voices heard outside of conventional academic channels.

Although there are apparent pitfalls to being a working-class academic in relation to traditional forms of academic dissemination and the type of academic work you can engage with, class identity can be an advantage in some instances. In this regard, class identity can provide opportunities to avail of grants/funding to partake in research activism that aligns with matters of social justice in disadvantaged communities. Class

identity, in this sense, is considered a strength as it highlights a relatable lived experience that adds relatability to potential project (Lund and Nabavi 2008; Simic 2015). A rise in academic communities, publication platforms and conferences both in Ireland and globally hints at a shift in how working-class themed academic work is becoming increasingly more valued in the academic context. However, the theme of such conferences and publications indicates that the working-class experience within academia is generally negative for a variety of reasons as suggested previously (see: *Journal of Class and Culture*, *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, etc.).

Working-class academics typically note that they do not “fit in” (Crew 2021, pg.53) and struggle to adapt to an environment they feel possesses different cultural values, expectations and norms to what they are used to (Crew 2020; Crew 2021; Papadelos 2015; Warnock 2016). This provides some indication as to why working-class academics tend to publish their work through non-traditional forms of dissemination and are currently establishing communities of their own to do so in both a formal and informal manner (see: *Working Class Academics Wordpress*; Grollman 2015; Sliva et al. 2019).

The few available studies on working-class academics outline the nature of this exclusion. However, these studies are often ongoing or are limited with regards to either levels of participation or consideration of the individual’s identity beyond their socioeconomic status (see: Barker 1995). In the area of working-class academics, Teresa Crew and Deborah Warnock are widely cited. In Crew’s (2020; 2021) study, which draws upon the experiences of 90 working-class academics based in the UK, there are notable similarities with Warnock’s (2016) analysis of autoethnographic essays written by working-class academics over a 32-year period. The findings from these studies show that working-class academics are more vulnerable to feelings of isolation and loneliness; attacks/complaints on their academic work and physical appearance (i.e. microaggressions; stereotyping, etc.); and longer periods of precarity in comparison to their middle/upper-class colleagues (Crew 2020; Crew 2021; Pearce 2020; Warnock 2016).

A combination of feeling out of place in the work environment and typical means of career mobility (e.g. publications) not being valued leads to instances of precarity amongst working-class academics (Gardner 1993; Reynolds 2018). Factoring in the individual’s family background can prove to be detrimental for those with marginalised identities. Traditionally, working-class families did not see value in education and considered “real

work” to be related to manual or unskilled labour; those who chose the academic career path appeared as outsiders for not conforming to class expectations of work and gendered performances (Coston and Kimmel 2012; Forsey 2015; Irving 2015 Pease 2015; Warnock 2016, pg. 34).

In the current context, those who cannot avail of financial support from their immediate networks (e.g. family/friends, work relationships, etc.) regularly struggle to build a career in academia (Coston and Kimmel 2012; Forsey 2015; Pearce 2020). Crew (2020) states this often leads to a rushed approach to a career in higher education in order to combat financial fears associated with a working-class background. This results in working-class academics being vulnerable to exploitation through precarious work (Crew 2020, Irving 2015; Warnock 2016). Working-class academics have therefore had to overcome systemic and attitudinal barriers to access higher education, which has resulted in having to ‘out-work’ others so as to convince colleagues that they have the necessary cultural capital to be a successful academic (Simic 2015; Warnock 2016).

This section highlights the challenges facing working-class academics and how these challenges provide a barrier to engaging in public-facing scholarship. While there is a dearth in traditionally published studies, the literature is comprehensive in the autobiographical experiences of working-class academics as shown above. It is interesting to note that both the studies and personal accounts outlined in this section are from academics based in the UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand indicating that these countries in particular are, at the very least, considering the experiences of working-class academics in an institutional context and an awareness of the potential benefits of working-class academic communities. The next section highlights how a similar lack of attention is paid (in the Irish context) to the experiences of racial and ethnically marginalised academics and how this affects career mobility.

2.2.3 The lack of racial equality, diversity and inclusion in higher education

While Ireland is becoming an increasingly diverse nation (McGinnity et al. 2018), it is difficult to obtain comprehensive insight into the experiences of ethnically diverse academics or reliable statistics regarding non-Irish/non-white academics in higher education (Delaney 2020c). Ireland’s institutional racism; racial attacks committed by Irish people towards ethnic minorities; difficulties regarding educational attainment and

progression, as well as issues relating to employment and navigating the labour market are well documented in the literature (Fanning 2002; Garner 2004; Lentin and McVeigh 2006; Loyal 2011; O’Connell 2019; Kuhling and Keohane 2007). This section considers the complexities facing minority ethnic academics through global studies that detail their experiences in higher education. The lack of research focusing on the experiences of ethnically marginalised groups in academia in Ireland is highlighted based on the poor availability of suitable studies within this context.

Academia has nurtured a culture of white, Eurocentric, upper/middle-class male dominance with anything that deviates from this identity considered as “other” (Lynch et al. 2012, pg. 135). In a highly competitive and individualised environment, meritocracy is considered a myth (Courtois and O’Keefe 2015) given that race, similar to gender and class, can place you at a disadvantage. Career mobility and general working experience within academia is impacted by discriminatory attitudes and barriers which hinder progression of minority ethnic academics. Although conducting research focused on the lived experiences of individuals does not directly solve race inequality issues, it contributes to a knowledge base from which change can be enacted. In Ireland’s case, basic reporting of the lived experiences of ethnically marginalised groups within academia is not readily or easily available (Delaney 2020c).

In the UK, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff (42%) are more likely to be on casual/hourly-paid/temporary contracts than white colleagues (31%) (Bhopal and Henderson 2019; UCU 2020). Similarly, in the USA, only 23% of BAME academics were in full-time positions compared to 76% of white academics. Progressing beyond precarity is part-reliant on publishing (Bosanquet and Rytmeister 2017; Flood et al. 2013) and the ability to engage in scholarship that aligns with the institute’s strategy, as well as its reputation (Dolhinow 2017). In this sense, the prominence of precarity for minority ethnic academics may be reflected in the differing values and beliefs attached to their scholarship where their research-based academic interests and outputs (e.g. teaching) are simply not valued by the academy (Grollman 2015; Huerta 2018; Papadelos 2015), thus highlighting the necessity of inquiring into the experiences of BAME academics and their relationship with their institutions.

In the UK and the USA, BAME researchers experience a disparity in the number and size of grants they receive compared to their white colleagues (Laland 2020). In a 2019 study conducted by Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), it was found that discriminatory practices, mass-invalidation and racism were among some of the key reasons why minority ethnic staff resigned or left their departments (Dutt-Ballerstadt 2020). An apparent toxic working environment often led to situations where minority ethnic staff felt excluded and under-appreciated (Bhopal and Henderson 2019; Dutt-Ballerstadt 2020). Within this study, it was found that it was common for minority ethnic staff to receive hate mail or death threats regarding their research, publications or work (Dutt-Ballerstadt 2020). Minority ethnic staff promoting gender studies or race and ethnicity modules were often ostracised by colleagues and resigned to facing sustained periods of precarity or unemployment (Glausiusz 2019; Dutt-Ballerstadt 2020). The unequal distribution of grants among BAME researchers and the prevalence of discriminatory practices and toxic working environments for minority ethnic staff highlight the need for systemic changes within academia to address these disparities and create an inclusive and supportive environment amongst staff.

These challenges faced by minority ethnic staff in academia, characterised by disparities and discrimination, often result in unintended engagement in activism within their academic pursuits. Minority ethnic academics, similar to working-class academics, often find themselves inadvertently engaging in “accidental academic activism” when their research interests are perceived by colleagues as being driven by their personal experiences (Sobande, 2018, pg. 83). This dynamic can lead to a struggle in how individuals navigate their identities within academic spaces and may present complexities in their roles as academic researchers (Pecorelli 2015). For instance, Sobande (2018) discovered that her mixed ethnicity and middle-class background afforded her a certain level of low-visibility or a ‘pass’, enabling her to navigate the academic environment more seamlessly. This experience highlights the interplay between identity and activism within academia, raising questions about how individuals negotiate their identities as academics and accidental academic-activists.

When minority ethnic academics find themselves labelled as activists due to the personal impetus behind their research, it can shape their experiences and perceptions within the academic community. This recognition prompts further exploration of the challenges

faced by minority ethnic academics as they navigate the complexities of their identities and engage in academic-activism.

With the above question in mind, Maryam Nabavi, a middle-class, Canadian-Iranian academic felt that her privileged background provided some advantages through passing as white in areas of academia, but being able to use her distinct identity to avail of highly sought-after opportunities regarding academic research relating to race (Lund and Nabavi 2008). Nevertheless, Sobande (2018, pg. 89) mentions that her activist research is regularly dismissed by colleagues, with peers advising her to not become the person who does the: “ghettoised, controversial race work”. Comparably, Grollman (2015) claims, in a blog post, that his identity as a working-class, gay, black man has presented similar challenges. Grollman (2015, para 10) states that his scholarship (researching Black and LGBTQI+ communities) was regularly devalued with a former mentor declaring that “we need to beat the activist out of you”. Consistent undermining resulted in Grollman (2015) leaving his role and finding a position in a more supportive research-centred university.

In a study that conducted 30 semi-structured interviews with racial justice activists, Gorski and Erkat (2019, pg. 795) found that the academic-activists involved attributed their burnout to the ignorance and insensitivity of white colleagues:

It’s just crazy to me. How can you represent a community that you don’t derive from or have done some extensive work in—fieldwork, on the ground grassroots work? I don’t understand it . . . They just read a couple books and did a couple of workshops and it validates their expertise. That’s crazy to me.

In the academic context, minority ethnic academic-activists had experience of colleagues infringing on their work when it was deemed as appropriate research by the institute (Gorski and Erkat 2019, pg. 799):

You know that whole dynamic of, “I need a black best friend.” Now for academics, they need [to be] published with a person of color who could teach whiteness so that they end up [looking] like a racially just worker . . . So these are [white] people who just want to get their name published with someone who is recognized for doing racial justice.

Research and personal insights on the experiences of minority ethnic academics (or academic-activists) are not broadly available in the Irish academic context. This has been highlighted more recently in light of a potential diversity problem within Irish higher education whereby a report from the Royal Irish Academy and the British Council in Ireland found that there was only one full-time black professor in Ireland (McGuire 2020).

In the report it is noted that Ireland's lack of data in relation to staff representation may be harmful to the career opportunities of those from minority ethnic backgrounds. With relevant data monitoring, proposed issues such as underrepresentation of groups can be addressed more effectively as visual statistics can identify potential areas to be addressed (e.g. number of minority ethnic staff on permanent contracts in comparison to White Irish colleagues) (Royal Irish Academy and British Council in Ireland 2020). A lack of specific data in this context means that studies and reports must refer to broader employment-based figures outside of academia to draw conclusions (Royal Irish Academy and British Council in Ireland 2020). This limits the extent to which Irish higher educational institutes can address diversity issues when compared to countries like the UK who have established various measures of monitoring staff representation (Royal Irish Academy and British Council in Ireland 2020).

More recently, a HEA survey found that in the Irish higher education sector, minority ethnic staff are more likely to be paid significantly lower wages and be on precarious contracts when compared to their Irish colleagues (Kempny and Michael 2021). The survey which collected responses from over 3,000 higher education staff shows that 77% of respondents from minority ethnic backgrounds were earning less than €60,000 per year when compared to White Irish staff (45%). Kempny and Michael (2021) found that only 48% of respondents from minority ethnic groups had permanent contracts when compared to those from other White backgrounds (60%) and White Irish backgrounds (71%). This meant that minority ethnic staff members were more likely to be on precarious contracts (44%), in comparison to other White backgrounds (32%) and White Irish backgrounds (20%) and consequently vastly underrepresented in senior positions in the sector. These figures are considered to be consistent with the profile of the Irish academic being "overwhelmingly white and settled" which calls for greater representation of diverse staff (Kempny and Michael 2021, pg. 63).

While the survey indicates that working relationships between colleagues are positive within Irish higher educational institutions across ethnic groups, there is an agreement that racial inequality exists within the sector. Interestingly, the report is driven from the findings of the first ever racial equality survey in the Irish context which signals to the lack of attention paid to the issue in recent years (O'Brien 2021b). From its findings, recommendations are made to address issues regarding reported employment-based

segregation given higher incidents on minority ethnic groups on precarious contracts and incidents of discrimination of staff based on their identification with race and ethnicity. Briefly, the authors present a number of recommendations to target these issues: better communication between management and staff; enhanced implantation of policies involving racial or ethnic discrimination from a senior or managerial level; improving the transparency of hiring procedures and increasing staff diversity; implementing sufficient reporting mechanisms of both incidents of racism and discrimination and data collection procedures (i.e. staff representation); improving the availability of mentorship and support for minority ethnic staff; and running workshops which improve awareness of racial and ethnic discrimination amongst staff and students (Kempny and Michael 2021).

While the survey results discussed above begin to address an outstanding issue within the Irish context (more notably through a lack of monitoring and reporting), the experiences of racially diverse academics are still neglected. In an interview, Dr Ebum Joseph (the coordinator of the first Black Studies module in Ireland) stated that: “you are labelled a troublemaker” for speaking out against incidents of racial and ethnic inequality within Irish higher education (McGuire 2020, para 22). Beyond the survey outlined above, studies focusing on minority ethnic faculty are not present in the context of Irish academia. Joseph (2018) concludes that the negative experiences faced by minority ethnic academics in the workplace are representative of societal attitudes present in Ireland which have a knock-on effect within the academic environment which bears some similarities to the gendered experiences of women in academia as discussed above.

Through conducting 32 semi-structured interviews with Spanish, Polish and Nigerian migrants in Ireland within the context of the 2011 census figures, as well as an analysis of employability programme databases, Joseph (2018) draws conclusions on the disadvantages faced by migrants, and in particular, Black migrants in Ireland. The analysis of employability programme databases suggests that the Irish labour market is a “colour coded hierarchy” which was reflected in a poor transition from education to employment for Nigerians in comparison to Spanish and Polish migrants (Joseph 2018, pg. 59). However, the key finding was reflected in the interviews whereby participants were asked to rank Spanish, Polish, Nigerian and Irish people within the context of their hierarchal position in society. Joseph (2020) states that her research showed that 98% of participants ranked Irish people at the top and Nigerian people at the bottom.

In an analysis of the same 2011 census dataset in a related study, O'Connell (2019) found that while Black Africans are a well-educated group with 45% of the population having a third-level education, 22% were unemployed; the highest of any other demographic in Irish society (O'Connell 2019). This indicates that not only are Black Africans more likely to experience exclusion from the labour market, but they are systemically discriminated against by the attitudes of employers and restrictive policies implemented by the government (O'Connell 2019).

Joseph (2020) states as a Nigerian-Irish woman, these findings are reflected in the attitudes presented by colleagues and students to her in the workplace. The poor transition from education to employment for Black Africans evokes unwarranted and inaccurate judgements regarding Black Africans intelligence. Joseph (2020) believes the regularity in which her ability to speak eloquently is commented on by students and colleagues reflects current societal attitudes regarding a Black person's intelligence. This coincides with the occurrence of Black academics being advised not to 'talk Black' (Grollman 2015, para 9) in a professional setting. Additionally, the societal order reflected in Joseph's (2018) study poses complications with classroom authority/hierarchy. Joseph (2020) feels that in class situations, she is automatically at the bottom as a default position based on her skin colour. Fundamentally, Black African's 4th placed rank, relative to White Irish and other White migrant groups, means that Joseph (2020) must outwork others so that she does not endure the migrant penalty that comes with being Black in a predominately white society.

This section has highlighted the extent of racial and ethnic inequality which exists in higher education and this may limit the ability of an minority ethnic academic to engage in activism. Studies conducted within the UK, USA and Ireland highlighted the issues facing minority ethnic staff within the context of predominantly white institutions. These issues relate to limited academic freedom based on the likelihood of being on a precarious contract based on racial and ethnic identity. Generally, minority ethnic staff experience a lack of support for their research and often feel isolated or excluded within their departments which impacts their ability to openly engage in academic-activism, as well as mobilise their careers. While reports and studies in the Irish context are limited, there is an emergence of literature detailing the apparent issues of racial and ethnic inequality within higher education. Although limited in number, these studies indicate that there are

outstanding matters relating to discrimination, racism and segregation within academia that must be addressed through measures that improve policy implementation which can heighten awareness of such issues amongst students and staff.

2.2.4 Summary

This section emphasises the significance of broadening the scope of inquiry in academia to encompass activism. By advocating for an expanded perspective through increased participation from diverse and marginalised groups, this section suggests the need to explore academia not only as a space for traditional research and knowledge production, but also as a platform for promoting social change and addressing societal inequalities. This understanding of academia as a site for activism calls for increased inclusivity and consideration of equitable and inclusive principles in research and academic practices.

While studies and insights may not always consider the intersectional issues of both academic working conditions and personal experiences of academic-activism, it is evident that sociopolitical identity impacts an individual's capability of doing so. As presented in the literature, this section has considered this from the perspective of precarious academics in comparison to their tenured colleagues and how career progression may be impacted dependent on identity factors. Academic precarity is so commonplace it can potentially be overlooked as discriminating against all early-career academics when considering its regularity. However, it is clear that precarious positions may be further impacted by individual positionality within white, Eurocentric, middle/upper-class male dominated institutions. Reimagining the academy as an institute where activist values are widely accepted and valued cannot be effective if non-permanent and/or marginalised academics are excluded from the academy and are met with additional complications when engaged with research. While it is necessary that the accounts of experienced and secure academics are taken into account, it is important to consider a much broader remit of demographics, especially when those whose identities are marginalised may be experiencing isolation, discrimination and insecurity within academia.

The prominence of precarity in academia has clear implications that extend beyond individual experiences. Through an exploration of the institutional environment, it becomes evident that the demands imposed by academia, such as institutional attitudes,

heavy workloads, and an emphasis on employability-based education, further constrain the capacity for academic-activism. These institutional restrictions create barriers that hinder the pursuit of social change within academia and impede the ability of scholars to engage in meaningful activism. This is outlined in the following section.

2.3 The impact of external environments on the institutional climate and academic-activism

Activism's place within higher education is often debated within the literature (Barsky 2006; Berlatsky 2019; Rojas 2013; Rouhani 2012; Suzuki and Mayorga 2014; Wells 2018). However, recognising the importance of activism in academia is crucial because it promotes social change, challenges systemic injustices and encourages critical thinking and engagement beyond the classroom and traditional academic dissemination. Eschle and Manguashca (2006) state that activism and academia are two separate entities where activism is considered to centre around passionate, grassroots movements and academia as an institution-based space to exercise cognitive skills. This is further emphasised by Cox (2015) in his piece on scholarship and activism, in which he conveys his frustrations of non-reflexive academics who fail to distinguish between activism and academia. However, while academia and activism may be separate spaces based on their primary functions and purposes, Cox (2015) notes that more reflexive researchers seek to go beyond the divisions in order to explain the differing relationships that can exist across the two, but believes a confusion exists within the field. In contrast, Halfacree (2004) states that activism is more than just passionate actions, but rather a chance for academics to become more connected with the real world and offer intellectual insight and expertise to matters of social justice.

While the debate on activism's place in higher education persists, there is a growing recognition among reflexive researchers of the potential for bridging the divide and harnessing academic expertise to contribute to matters of social justice (Cox 2015; Halfacree 2004). However, this can be complicated in the current institutional environment. Navigating the complexities of integrating activism into academia can be challenging due to various factors such as institutional constraints, differing perspectives and potential confusion surrounding the relationship between activism and academia.

Grounds for debate and an uncertainty regarding activism's place within academia can potentially be explained by neoliberal ideology's presence in higher education which is thought to have altered the institutional environment. Mahon and Bergin (2018, para 14) refer to the shift of an autonomous, liberal higher education system to a market model as a "university-in-itself" (a commitment to education and scholarship) to a "university-for-itself" (a commitment to financial gain and performance-based objectives). Previously higher education institutes could operate with some autonomy, but the influence of political and economic fields is now a permanent feature of academia (Foster et al. 2020; Mahon and Bergin 2018; Rhodes et al. 2017). Institutional practices and business-led management, influenced by neoliberalism, in higher education act as a silencer of academia-driven activism through cultivating an atmosphere of elitism (Courtois and O'Keefe 2015; Ivancheva et al. 2019).

Through the promoting of business-led institutional practices that are geared more towards business and corporate based approaches, the ability of academics trying to highlight the need for social change is restricted (Mahon and Bergin 2018). In this sense, activism is considered an act that would sooner be met with "threats" and "censorship" as opposed to reward and accreditations in the current institutional environment (Flood et al. 2013, pg 18) from the perspective of both tenured and precarious staff who are "more vulnerable to complaints and criticism" (Delaney 2020b, para 5)'.

President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins has been vocal about his concerns regarding the current state of higher education, particularly criticising the growing influence of market-driven approaches. He argues that the increasing focus on business-oriented practices within academia is undermining the essence of scholarly pursuit. According to Higgins, the commercialisation of higher education threatens the integrity of academic work by prioritising profit over the fundamental purpose of scholarship (O'Brien 2021a). He is particularly critical of how this shift leads to a reduction in public-facing academic work, which traditionally served to advance knowledge and benefit society. Higgins emphasises the need to reaffirm the commitment to academic excellence and public good, urging a return to the core values of scholarship that foster intellectual inquiry and contribute meaningfully to societal development (O'Brien 2021a).

In a global society where repressive regimes and populist governments are restricting academics who are involved in politically and/or socially motivated research (Acar and Coskan 2019; Baird 2020; Donmez and Duman 2021). As an example of this, political interference and institutional censorship in countries such as Turkey and Hungary have meant that academic-activism (or expressions of academic freedom) have become a contested practice (Acar and Coskan 2019; Donmez and Duman 2021). Therefore, this section of the literature review will outline the impact of the current academic environment on limiting expressions of academic freedom and restricting the potential for building the necessary work relationships required to sustain academic work, activist-themed or otherwise (Flood et al. 2013).

2.3.1 Stifled creativity in an individualised and competitive environment

This section, will include a brief exploration as to whether the neoliberalisation of universities (e.g. marketisation of teaching, commercialisation of education, performance metrics, employment issues, etc.) impacts upon the ability of academics to exercise their academic freedom through academic-activism (Marginson 1997; Phipps and McDonnell 2021). This will be accomplished through an examination of the impact the current institutional culture has on the expression of academic freedom (and academic-activism) and how it impacts upon some of the necessary conditions (such as institutional support, job security and the availability of support networks) to express academic freedom in a variety of ways. In particular, studies by Clarke et al. (2015) and Merga and Mason (2020) along with the personal insights of academic-activists from journal articles and book chapters will be outlined to highlight current issues within the academic environment and the personal impact faced by academics as a result of workplace demands. Through considering the impact of current institutional demands, this section suggests that the role of academics must be not only secure but also significantly wider-reaching than it currently is.

Institutional practices and business-led management in higher education act as a silencer of academia-driven activism through cultivation of an atmosphere of elitism, individualism and competition (Ivancheva et al. 2019). This is achieved by promoting institutional practices (e.g. greater value placed in industry-based partnerships rather than community-based; performance-based metrics for research, etc.) which restrict the freedom of socially motivated academic-activists (Sliva et al. 2019). An emphasis on

increased productivity and efficiency has created tension between the contractual obligations and activist commitments of an academic (Donmez and Duman 2021).

International data from developed nations such as Ireland, UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand, etc. suggest that research impact or performance-based research is seen as a policing function of the neoliberal academy to hinder the advancement of socially-motivated academic-activist themed output beyond academic audiences (Foster et al. 2020; Rhodes et al. 2017; Rose 2017). Academics are now becoming incentivised to remain within the status-quo of an economic and industry-led university that resists democratic and political research/activism (Fleming 2021; Mahon and Bergin 2018, Morrish and the Analogue University Writing Collective 2017; Rhodes et al. 2017). The impact agenda has been adopted, particularly by Australian and UK institutions given the “fiscally constrained” situation academics find themselves in (Rhodes et al. 2017, pg. 5).

Given the current environment, academic-activists are depicted as “modern day cranks” (Rhodes et al. 2017, pg. 6) for resisting the discourses presented by the economic and industrial motivated academy. While activist work is not completely excluded or restricted from receiving external funding or having outside impact (e.g. climate change academic-activism), there is a need for academics and activism to co-exist beyond neoliberal values and expectations present in higher education institutes. This means evaluating research on its potential for external influence and impact on society as opposed to its “market-based justification” for economic gain (ISE 2020, Moore et al. 2017; Rhodes et al. 2017, pg. 7).

While above examples cite academic-activism in some manner (e.g. socially motivated research, public-facing scholarship, etc.) the literature is not comprehensive in its combining of academic-activism, neoliberal ideology and institutional policy. However, exploring institutional values and practices provides contextual ground from which to understand the institutional environment as a site for social activism in the absence of targeted work on academic-activism.

An environment which nurtures a culture of individualised careers and competition amongst peers appears to damage the possibility of building adequate support networks. Support networks (or work relationships) form a key part of academic-activists support systems. Flood et al. (2013) states that these support systems grant the individual a sense

of freedom to explore the topics they feel align with their values and interests. However, Clarke et al.'s (2015) study, which aimed to build a support system for Irish-based academics, (1,187 survey respondents and 16 follow up semi-structured interviews) found that in Irish academics, over half (54%) of academics felt that their research was not supported by their institute.

The same figure (54%) represented academics who felt that their services (i.e. public and voluntary work) outside of teaching were not supported. A lack of support and weak work relationships is common in Irish academics with 53% of respondents feeling as though their line managers do not engage in good communication practices, nor support the freedom of academics (Clarke et al. 2015). Interview participants cited that mismanaged workloads delegated by line managers are harming the potential to engage with research. "New corporate management" (Clarke et al. 2015, pg. 102) has meant that there is less consultation and interaction with line managers and institute hierarchy resulting in a workplace that is based on direction and control.

The institutional environment makes it difficult for academics to even consider undertaking activist research as they are now part of a more traditional managerial environment where academic service through teaching and adhering to demands suppresses activist thought (Cancian 1993; Martin 2009). Universities are a government product and therefore survive by serving governmental purposes through addressing job market shortages or requirements and delivering measurable returns through research (Marginson 1997; Moore et al. 2017). However, higher educational institutions should perform a wider range of functions within society that exist outside the immediate remit of governmental strategy. Marginson (1997) states that this is cause for tension within academia, particularly for academics looking to exercise their academic freedom beyond their contractually obliged duties such as research, teaching and supervision. Both Marginson (1997) and Moore et al. (2017) call for a more independent and pluralistic expression of academic freedom (i.e. the doing of academic-activism) through engagement in social critique and the establishment of solidaric relationships with like-minded colleagues where the assessment and application of academic work is more than just the peer-review process.

However, constructing a collective identity (with like-minded colleagues) and reformulating academic norms regarding the intention and motivations behind academic work is complex as there are differing experiences of academia based on a two-tiered employment model (Rahal et al. 2023). Clarke et al. (2015) states that there is a division between permanent and precarious staff which is highlighted by an experienced academic participant in this study who suggests that with no secure contract, precarious academics are more likely to work to please rather than operate with any independence. This effectively diminishes their voice and the personal quality of their work (Clarke et al. 2015). The institutional environment emphasises the demand for performance-based research through ‘publish or perish’ regimes (Bosanquet and Rytmeister 2017; Rahal et al. 2023).

This is misaligned in an environment where a lack of job security is common. In particular, ECR’s (including PhD researchers and postdocs) and precariously employed academics cite a lack of mentorship, poor remuneration and limited research spending as key barriers to their research processes (Rahal et al. 2023). Given the apparent barriers to engaging in research faced by those who are precariously employed, their ability to climb the ladder is stunted (Rahal et al. 2023). Furthermore, with progression not guaranteed and no clarity on future job safety for academic staff, this leads to instances of high turnover which further diminishes the potential for quality research as those who are building research skills which take years to acquire leave academia entirely (Lalor 2010; Grey 2013; Rahal et al. 2023; Roberts 2007).

In a study conducted with 30 early-career researchers (ECR’s) in Japanese and Australian universities, Merga and Mason (2020) found that there was a disparity between institutional values and requirements when aligned to the availability of support and resources offered to ECR’s. This issue is a result of insufficient funding in higher education. ECR’s stated that their institute’s budget had become more centralised, thus eliminating the possibility of being able to support individual researchers in a number of departments (Merga and Mason 2020). Instead, limited funding meant placing resources into higher valued grants and funding opportunities (Merga and Mason 2020). ECR’s in this study have experienced the shift to producing in line with institutional demands and strategies. While this is seen to improve upon the real world and translational impact of research, a lack of industry related funding in certain fields can lead to a devaluing of an

academic's output (e.g. humanities compared to STEM) (Merga and Mason 2020; Rahal et al. 2023). Academia is seen to be lacking in its incentivisation of research, which leads to a reliance on industry to provide a reward system for ECR's (Merga and Mason 2020). This leaves ECR's vulnerable to producing output based primarily for career progression as opposed to producing research that can contribute towards social change (Merga and Mason 2020).

While this study can be seen to highlight the impact on creativity for ECR's who are perhaps limited by a lack of job security, producing output in line with institutional norms appears to be a broader issue within academia. Recent research indicates that scholars are publishing work that is not reaching the public sphere, or even significant audiences in academia (Sliva et al. 2019). The large volume of academic work published each year remains behind a pay wall or is inaccessible to the layperson through its complicated use of language and theory (Furco 2010; Sliva et al. 2019) This development obstructs the mission of academic-activists who wish to resist the neoliberal discourse in higher education by providing research, teaching and services to marginalised or oppressed groups within society as output (Mahon and Bergin 2018). For many institutes, the primary focus is often on increasing citation counts and academic prestige rather than actively engaging in research that has a tangible influence or impact on society (Reyes Mason 2020). The importance of grant income far outweighs occupying faculty within the public sphere fighting for social change (Reyes Mason 2020).

Overall, this data indicates that the current academic environment is not conducive to activism. Pereira (2016, pg. 102) states that if the activism is not "significant", or disruptive to institutional norms and strategy, managers and colleagues are generally not concerned. However, if the activism becomes too vocal, radical or time-consuming, it is inevitable that peers and superiors will "make comments" regarding the academic-activist's involvements in social/political movements (Pereira 2016, pg. 102). Non-traditional platforms like blogs and online/social media have offered academics (both permanent and precarious) an alternative space to share their work given apparent frustrations with the conventional peer review process and professional pushback (Grollman 2015). However, this form of dissemination may strain professional relationships and jeopardise the legitimacy and impact of academic contributions compared to peer-reviewed publications (Cancian 1993; Sliva et al. 2019).

Pereira (2016) notes that attitudes towards academic-activism can shift depending on the social and political climate, which can offer some assistance to academics who are passionate about enacting social change. For instance, colleagues and line managers are less likely to be resistant to activism that can improve the reputation or image of the institute (Pereira 2016). Similarly activism that is not disruptive or done outside of institutional hours is tolerated as long as it does not disturb workplace demands (Choudry 2020; O’Flynn and Panayiotopoulos 2015). Rahal et al. (2023, pg. 165) state that “vital tasks” such as administration, committee involvement, constructing relationships with external bodies, communities and individuals (e.g. policy makers), as well as responding to the needs of society (e.g. marginalised communities) need to be incorporated within an academic’s job description. Not only this, but time invested in these duties should be valued and encouraged (e.g. in promotion and hiring procedures) rather than being considered a “hindrance to an academic career” as they are currently (Rahal et al. 2023, pg. 165). By valuing these duties at an institutional level, academics can improve upon their own outputs and offer up more holistic and wider-reaching research that have positive implications outside of traditional academic audiences.

Academic duties (e.g. research, supervision, etc.) beyond teaching are complicated to blend in to a conventional working week when demands placed on academics are high. Lashuel (2020) is critical of university management for failing to take into consideration the negative effects of stressed and anxious faculty, claiming that there is more importance given to the targets met by academics rather than the academics themselves. As a result, there has been a growing sense that academics are facing mental health issues and declines in their general well-being (Lashuel 2020). Within the literature, academics are calling for management to consider the negative impacts academic burnout will have throughout the institute (e.g. quality of output, student’s education, etc.) and on the institution’s strategies/missions regarding research targets (Delaney 2020b; Lashuel 2020; Whelan 2021).

The demand to be innovative and accountable with regards to academic output has meant that the business-led approach by the majority of institutions can rapidly become a site of burnout as opposed to activism (Cox 2011). This discussion of relevant literature suggests that exploring the experiences of permanency and precarity within the study will provide relevant insight into the role of the institutional climate on academic-activism, as well as

the importance of work relationships to help maintain the level of academic output required within an individualised and competitive environment. The next section will focus on how external environments have impacted upon the quality of education delivered within higher education, as well as how this may restrict activist-led teaching in classrooms.

2.3.2 The effect of employability-based education⁴ on activist-led teaching

This section begins by discussing the impact of the current educational environment, specifically its consumer-centric focus and limitations on critical thinking and activism. Although there is limited empirical research on this specific topic, the existing literature extensively examines the effects of the prevailing environment on educational delivery. This is discussed relevant to the impact of the institutional environment on the delivery of quality education and the experiences of academics. The section further explores the marketisation of higher education, the increase in student numbers and the resulting challenges faced by academics (such as increased workloads and less time to prepare). Such challenges are considered to be worsened by the emphasis on employability-based education. The section then introduces the concept of critical pedagogy as an alternative approach and highlights its benefits and limitations within the current institutional environment. This section concludes by suggesting that there is a need for reevaluating educational priorities, creating spaces for activism and resisting neoliberal influences which are limiting academics' ability to embrace critical thinking and explore potential avenues for activism.

Employability can be understood as the development of transferable skills, personal/professional attributes and knowledge that can be used to increase the chances of an individual's employment opportunities (Sin et al. 2019). According to the literature, higher education is guilty of being overly concerned with employability and less on the quality of education received by any one person; deflecting from the seemingly marginalised aspects of education (i.e. mentoring, support/supervision of students and teaching), and instead focusing on directly transferable skills for future employment (Bosanquet and Rytmeister 2017; Villanueva and O'Sullivan 2019). Higher education is

⁴ Employability-based education is an approach in higher education that prioritises equipping students with the skills and attributes necessary to enhance their employability and succeed in the job market (Villanueva and O'Sullivan 2019).

seen as an environment for individuals to receive job training to join the competitive labour market once graduated rather than encouraging academics to engage in pedagogical methods that require students to reflect, interact and critically engage with course content (Kellner and Kim 2010). However, President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins notes that: “universities are not there merely to produce students who are useful...they are there to produce citizens who are respectful of the rights of others to participate and also to be able to participate fully, drawing on a wide range of scholarship” (Horgan-Jones 2020, para 2).

Government’s reform of higher education has encouraged the marketisation of its universities in a bid to attract students based on prospective employability and learning experience in neoliberal states such as the UK (Maisuria and Cole 2017). However, Maisuria and Cole (2017) note that this expansion (namely through a removal of student number caps) was more likely to be a strategy to increase the volume of students and encourage competition between universities to attract the most students based on offering a specific experience or range of employment opportunities in order to avoid closure in the likelihood of a lack of government funding. It is perhaps important to note that this occurred around the same time after the reintroduction of full university fees in the UK, which required many students to rely on student loans for funding. Consequently, the introduction of fees became a form of social exclusion once student number caps were removed.

In reality, expanding the volume of students in an environment where they are likened to customers, can be potentially detrimental to the careers of academics. In the UK and Ireland, academic institutions have increasingly focused on generating revenue by increasing student enrolment and aligning the treatment of new and existing students to customers in the service industry (Mercille and Murphy 2015). This expansion of student numbers has resulted in a heavier teaching workload which limits academic progression, especially for precarious academics. It also serves to reduce the time available for research, adequate class preparation and applying for research funding (Merga and Mason 2020; O’Keefe and Courtois 2019). Under this current arrangement, academics believe that students’ needs are not being adequately met, leading to friction and breakdowns in communication between academics and institutional management (Clarke et al. 2015). While the competition among universities to attract students with promises of a valuable

learning experience and improved employability is not a new trend, it has gained prominence in recent times. This focus on employability has historically been part of the higher education agenda (Villanueva and O’Sullivan 2019). However, the current scenario presents additional challenges that hinder academics' ability to engage in activism, as detailed below.

Mahon and Bergin (2018, para 15) state that: “in terms of teaching, neoliberal students become customers buying a university experience; they invest in their degree and in their work-ready skill set”. While it is reasonable for students to want to avail of the best education so as to fulfil their career objectives, improving a student’s employability is lost within unscrupulous university practices and can lead to poor evaluations of faculty (Malik et al. 2014). Additionally, the expansion of numbers has meant that “poorly qualified students” (Maisuria and Cole 2017, pg. 608) and “less capable students” (Clarke et al. 2015, pg. 88) have been warehoused in higher education due to a lack of job opportunities and the saturation of academic qualifications on the labour market (Fleming 2021; Lee 2015; Stroebe 2019).

A decrease in funding for teaching and a lack of job security is apparent, yet higher educational institutes stand to benefit financially by generating revenue from student fees (Clarke et al. 2015; Ivancheva et al. 2019). Given that the labour market is competitive and individualistic, the neoliberal academy’s objective of employability is somewhat justified. However, there are complications that accompany it as will be listed here. Employability does not necessarily equate to employment, therefore limiting a student’s learning experience to transferrable workplace skills is restricting in the context of overall learning (Osborne and Grant Smith 2017). Likening students to customers in an education market and an institutional environment concerned with financial gain scuppers the overarching objective of improving employability (Clarke et al. 2015; Callinicos 2006). The objective of improving employability combined with staff evaluations is prone to providing misleading information regarding the quality of an institute and its staff (e.g. evaluations) (Brown 2015; O’Keefe and Courtois 2019; Osborne and Grant Smith 2017; Power et al. 2013). So, while focusing on the potential employability of students in the current economic climate is perhaps appropriate, its execution within the current context of the institutional environment is often mismanaged according to the above sources.

As discussed, the existing body of literature extensively examines the problematic nature of prioritising employability in higher education. However, there is a notable gap in addressing the experiences of academics who are required to adapt their teaching methods, research interests and values to deliver a learning experience that aligns with students' workplace skills. While the literature is critical of the influence of the neoliberal climate on academia, the few alternative pedagogical approaches that are detailed within the literature capture the insights and experiences of those who resist the prevailing educational narratives within academic institutions (Cox 2014).

Baird (2020) argues that activist-led teaching can enrich students' learning by demonstrating the real-life impact of research and other academic-activist endeavours. Adopting a balanced approach and being mindful of your positionality in delivering academic-activist teaching can transform the educator's role from a passive instructor to an informative guide in students' education (Baird 2020). In higher education, students' education has been reduced to an "employability check-list" influenced by the neoliberal-influenced political and economic strategies prevalent across European Union member states (Holborow 2012, pg. 96; Mercille and Murphy 2015). The focus has shifted from the subject matter of courses/modules to equipping students with skills deemed necessary to meet labour market demands (Holborow 2012; Mercille and Murphy 2015).

Critical pedagogical approaches challenge this employability-driven model within academia. Critical pedagogy aims to foster human agency and personal development to bring about social transformation for a fairer and more just society (Freire 1970; Kaufmann 2010; Kellner and Kim 2010). This approach often involves educators challenging the traditional hierarchy of the classroom, creating an egalitarian and democratic setting where experiences, opinions and dialogue replace the one-way dissemination of information (Cox 2014; Rouhani 2012; Villanueva and O'Sullivan 2019). With departmental and collegial support, recently established courses that enabled students to develop practical skills relevant to employment opportunities while employing critical pedagogical teaching methods have seen students engaged in research, policy work, campaign coordination, community engagement, feeling empowered to effect real social change beyond the confines of a traditional classroom (Cox and Grummel 2013; Ollis 2012; Rouhani 2012).

Nevertheless, critical pedagogical approaches also have their limitations. Some students may struggle to adapt to this relatively new style of learning and the pressure to translate classroom learning into visible social change can lead to disengagement (Cox 2014; Rouhani 2012; Villanueva and O’Sullivan 2019). The successful implementation of critical pedagogy requires clear communication and support from management, colleagues, and the academic community. Unfortunately, resistance and conflicting views from peers can hinder the establishment of such an environment, as exemplified by Rose’s (2017) experience, where attempts to create a democratic space for activist-led education were met with opposition from faculty members who favoured a conventional approach to education. In the current institutional environment, meeting economic and job market requirements takes precedence and activist-led education can be perceived as disruptive (Grey 2013). To overcome these challenges, Grey (2013) suggests that academics engage in day-to-day resistance through critical and pedagogical teaching methods, critiquing university policies and establishing networks with activist organisations and/or political elites.

However, implementation of Grey’s (2013) recommendations can be complex with in different social contexts. In the Irish context specifically, the lack of ongoing dialogue between left-leaning groups, such as trade unionists, politicians, academics, independent researchers, activists, and the general population, coupled with the absence of dedicated spaces for activism, hinders the development of alternative educational approaches (O’Flynn and Panayiotopoulos 2015). The precarious conditions within academia contribute to this challenge, creating insecurity for academics and activists alike (Courtois and O’Keefe 2015). A merging of academic expertise and a working dialogue between activist groups and trade unions could foster a more progressive and effective educational framework that resists the neoliberal tide (Cox 2012). While critical pedagogical approaches may not be universally applicable to all degree programs or modules (e.g., STEM subjects), they can greatly benefit areas of education where the subject matter lends itself to translating educational backgrounds into the public sphere (e.g. Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences) (Flood et al. 2013; Phakathi 2014).

In conclusion, the literature extensively discusses the effects of the political and economic environment on educational delivery, particularly in neoliberal states. The marketisation of universities and the increase in student numbers have resulted in heavier teaching

workloads, limited research time and reduced communication between academics and institutional management. In addition, the emphasis on employability-based education has restricted other aspects of education and has limited the quality of education received by students within the context of the aforementioned restrictions on academics' time to plan appropriately. Although alternative pedagogical approaches, such as critical pedagogy, challenge the employability-driven model and aim to foster social transformation, the success of these approaches requires a level of support from management and colleagues that is not evident within higher education currently. To overcome present challenges, relationships must be built between academics, institutions and various groups (including trade unions, politicians, academics, independent researchers, and activists), to create a more progressive educational framework. Overall, this section highlights the need to reevaluate educational priorities, create spaces for activism and resist neoliberal influences to foster a more just and transformative society within academia.

2.3.3 Summary

This section examined the institutional environment and how it poses a challenge to academic-activism. Academics are expected to meet high demands and increase their productivity and efficiency in demanding conditions. In an individualised and competitive environment, producing academic output that does not necessarily align with institutional norm and strategies can impact negatively upon support networks. Furthermore, the current institutional climate has created a disparity between permanent and precarious staff. This restricts the manner in which precarious staff can exercise their academic freedom in comparison to tenured staff given a lack of job security. While the response (either positive or negative) to academic-activism can be sensitive to the social climate, academics within the literature are highly critical of institutional management's disregard for current conditions which emphasises the importance of performance-based metrics rather than wider-reaching academic output (e.g. outreach).

The institutional environment is one that values business strategy above the scholarship of faculty and the quality of education delivered to students. The emphasis placed on monetary gain, performance measures and accountability of staff can be seen to limit academic freedom. This business-led strategy is carried out to reduce the impact of a lack of funding. However, accessing external streams of revenue has meant larger student

enrolments who require extensive mentoring and teaching, thus reducing time to engage in research, whether this is activist-based or not. While these measures may have benefits regarding staff performance in conjunction with the institute's objectives, it encourages the continuing disconnect between the academy and society. The success of offering alternatives to the delivery of education is reliant on good work relationships and communication between staff. However, alternative approaches may strain work relationships between academic-activists and colleagues or institutional management. Academics who seek to not only publish their work for the benefit of disadvantaged groups or individuals in society, but wish to inform their teaching through pedagogical approaches that delivers a more enriching experience for students find this to be a disruptive to the institutional norm.

The following section offers conclusionary remarks within the context of the previously discussed literature. This includes evaluating the level at which the literature considers academic-activism in the holistic manner that has been suggested in this chapter, as well as indicating that particular frameworks would be useful to help understand academia as a site for activism in Ireland.

2.4 Concluding remarks on academia as a site for social activism

From a personal perspective, I originally understood academic-activism as a straightforward premise: if you are a permanent academic, you are given the opportunity to exercise academic freedom. If you are a precariously employed academic, you are less likely to partake in academic-activism given a lack of job security. While existing literature has reinforced my early assumption, understanding academic-activism has proven to be a much more intricate activity within the context of the political, social and economic environment, as well as the institutional environment and the identity of the individual.

The connection between academia and activism is complex and cannot be reduced to academics merely expressing their activist principles within the realm of education and research and seeking appropriate opportunities and platforms to share the outcomes of their values and beliefs. Rather, academic-activism is reliant on a number of factors. Briefly, these factors relate to the prominence of precarity in academia, the institutional environment that encourages individualism, competition and strained work relationships

for those attempting to engage in activism and the identity or background of an individual. The individual's place within the confines of economic, political, social and institutional environments determine their ability to engage in academic-activism in a traditional sense or whether they must pose resistance and find alternative approaches to exercising their values and beliefs.

Those on insecure contracts are usually assigned to managing teaching workloads with other less accredited academic work. More hours teaching means less time for research and given the nature of casual contracts, research duties are rarely a part of a precarious academic's main responsibilities (Courtois and O'Keefe 2015; Gill 2009). Overcoming this barrier is subject to the determination of an academic to find alternative ways in which to disseminate their activist research, or whether or not they can conduct their activism outside of the institute's working hours (Flood et al. 2013). Drawing comparisons between precarious staff's activism and permanent staff's activism will provide an interesting base to this research as it may suggest that academics are afforded particular privileges based on their contract type. While it is agreeable that those on permanent contracts should be granted a degree of freedom, the current academic environment has meant that experienced or successful academics have been left to build careers on insecure contracts (Ivancheva et al. 2019), therefore complicating the manner in which those who are either permanently or precariously employed are afforded their academic freedom.

It is noted in the literature that it is within an institute's best interests to be politically neutral and objective (Ahmed 2017). This creates an environment that is primarily concerned with maintaining the reputation of an institute so as to meet performance objectives (Altman 2018; Grey 2013). Through meeting performance objectives, academics can appeal to student's (customers) and sell them a particular learning experience that caters for their future employability (Villanueva and O'Sullivan 2019). While education is a pre-cursor to the quality of employment (Joseph 2018), the employability of students is poorly utilised in the neoliberal academy. Securing student fees and enhancing student numbers due to a lack of public funding is essentially disguised as employability in this manner. Adhering to pedagogies that encourage students to engage in critical thinking (Pease 2015), whilst managing a vast student pool means that activist influences are usually absent in the classroom with academics producing more compliant, work-ready students (Kellner and Kim 2010; Rose 2017).

Engaging in activism, given the institutional environment, relies on the relationships that are constructed in the workplace and whether or not the activism is supported by line managers and colleagues. Academic-activists quickly become ostracised by their departments and formal networks having been unable to secure stronger support within impersonal structures (Pearce 2020). These factors impact the individual experience of academic-activism. In these circumstances, feelings of exploitation, burnout, lacking in self-worth and being incapable of achievement become increasingly common; thus decreasing the potential of engaging in impactful and meaningful activism (Cox 2011; Maslach and Gomes 2006).

At present, the current literature is lacking in a relevant exploration of academic-activism where individual issues (e.g. precarity) are analysed in line with sociopolitical identities relevant to a particular context (i.e. society; academia). Therefore, understanding academia as a site for social activism cannot be understood through the successes of experienced academics with tenured positions alone. Rather it must incorporate varying demographics, experience levels, contract types and the values and beliefs of an individual relative to the economic, social and political environments, as well as their work relationships (e.g. line managers, colleagues and formal networks). From this, comparisons, benefits, pitfalls and possible solutions can be drawn to help resolve issues in an environment that affords privileges and freedom(s) to some and not to others. Given the complexity of academic-activism and its relationship with external environments, incorporating a theoretical framework which considers the impact of external systems on the individual will be key to forming a holistic understanding of academia as a site for activism in Ireland. This will be outlined in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Research Paradigms

3.1 Introduction

In my own journey as a white, working-class man, academic-activist and a PhD researcher who has experienced precarious employment in academia, my identity and experiences deeply inform my choice of research paradigms. Drawing upon my own educational, working and sociopolitical background, I am perhaps sensitive to the narratives of disadvantaged and marginalised groups; particularly in the academic context. I have chosen a methodology that allows for the exploration of participant stories and the amplification of their voices which recognise the significance of subjectivity. The paradigms adopted for this study aligns with my current and previous experiences which I consider crucial for engaging in meaningful dialogues with other academic-activists as described further below.

By incorporating frameworks which encourage reflexivity and highlight the importance of our interaction with both objective and subjective realities, I can better acknowledge how my own background, experiences and positionality shape my research focus, methods, and analysis. This allows me to acknowledge the importance of hearing disadvantaged and marginalised voices and to approach my research with a critical awareness of power dynamics and the influence of my own subjectivity as a researcher. As such, the chosen frameworks within this chapter allow me to co-create knowledge with my participants, therefore allowing for a deeper understanding of the diverse perspectives involved in the context of academic-activism. Throughout the research, I situate my participants at the forefront of the research process, acknowledging their agency and the role of external environments in shaping their own experiences. By adopting this approach, I aim to create a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of academic-activist experiences.

This chapter will outline the research paradigms used in the current research. Specifically, this chapter will discuss the ontological and epistemological positioning of the research. This is followed by outlining Bronfenbrenner's and Morris's (2006) PPCT (i.e. Person, Process, Context and Time model) within the context of how it can be used to understand individual experiences of academic-activism within intersecting ecological systems. The implications of employing this theory will be explored to deepen the understanding of academic-activism in connection with existing literature and the ontological and

epistemological positioning of this research. Furthermore, this chapter will discuss how Participatory Action Research guides the conducting of both Study One (online survey) and Study Two (interviews with academic-activists) as a methodological framework within the context of the PPCT model and adopted philosophical underpinnings. Figure 1 provides a brief overview of the research paradigms as outlined in this chapter.

Ontology	Epistemology	Theoretical Framework	Methodology	Method
The researcher's view of the nature of reality or being	The theory of knowledge, or philosophy that formed the basis of my theoretical perspective and my methodology	The approach used to get knowledge	The plan/framework to carry out the research and acquire knowledge	How data is analysed and collected
Critical Realism	Weak social constructionism	Bronfenbrenner's 2006 PPCT (i.e. Person, Proximal Process, Context, Time) model	Participatory Action Research (PAR)	Mixed Method (survey and interviews analysis to inform final chapter)

Figure 1. Overview of research paradigms.

3.2 *Ontology*

In this section, the ontological positioning of the research is outlined. Given the mixed-method research approach, it was important to carefully consider the philosophical stance of the thesis. Ontology refers to the researcher's view of the nature of reality or being (Bryman 2012). More specifically, the ontological positioning of a research project refers to the researcher's philosophical stance on what exists in the world and how it can be studied (Bryman 2012). In this section, the critical realist ontological positioning of the PhD thesis is outlined with regards to the mixed-method research approach, the justification of the critical realist approach given the aims and objectives of the research, as well as the benefits this perspective poses for gaining greater understanding of academic-activists' experiences of aiming to enact positive social change.

Given the mixed methods approach of this project, the ontological position of the thesis must allow for methodological pluralism where the researcher can utilise a range of

methods in the same piece of research (May et al. 2017). As this study involves both quantitative and qualitative analysis to inform best practice guidelines and recommendations, critical realism is adopted as the ontological positioning of this research. Yucel (2018) states that critical realism offers a coherent ontological middle-ground between extreme positions (i.e. positivism and social constructionism). Critical realism asserts that there is a real, objective world that exists independently of human perception and interpretation, but this reality can only be known through social constructions and interpretations (Yucel 2018).

Therefore, critical realism acknowledges the importance of social structures and institutions in shaping people's beliefs and behaviours while recognising the existence of underlying causal mechanisms that generate social phenomena (Yeung 1997). Moreover, critical realism acknowledges that social phenomena are complex and cannot be fully understood by only examining observable data (Braun and Clarke 2022). In essence, critical realism acknowledges that there can never be a singular objective truth, therefore, it is recognised that knowledge can also be socially produced through practical and theoretical work, and social interaction (Bhaskar 1989; Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009; Yucel 2018). Furthermore, it recognises that there is a reality that exists beyond our perception and experience of it; i.e., the real world (which exists beyond human perceptions) and the observable world (constructed through our perceptions and social constructions) (Yeung 1997). As such, this position acknowledges that our understanding of reality is mediated by our perceptions, experiences, and social contexts (Bhaskar 1989; Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009; Yucel 2018).

The ontological position of critical realism was chosen for this research project due to its compatibility with the mixed-methods approach adopted to explore academia as a site for social activism in Ireland. Thus, the critical realist ontological position for this research is justified by several factors. As the research aims to explore academia as a site for social activism in Ireland, critical realism is well-suited to this purpose as it recognises the importance of social structures and institutions in shaping people's beliefs and behaviours, including their engagement in social activism. By adopting a critical realist perspective, the researcher can examine how academic institutions shape individual motivations and barriers, as well as how higher education institutions can be utilised as a way in which to promote social change within society (Yeung 1997; Yucel 2018).

Critical realism was chosen over other ontological positions, such as positivism or interpretivism due to its ability to accommodate the complexity and diversity of social phenomena (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009). Positivism, for example, would limit the exploration of social activism in academia to measurable and observable phenomena, which would not capture the full range of experiences and perceptions of academic-activists (Babones 2015). On the other hand, interpretivism would emphasise the subjective experiences and perceptions of academic-activists, without accounting for the objective reality of social activism in academia (Babones 2015; Levers 2013).

The research adopts a mixed-method approach that combines quantitative statistical analyses and qualitative content analysis to inform best practice guidelines and recommendations. As a critical realist perspective acknowledges the existence of a social reality that is beyond the individual experiences of academic-activists, while also acknowledging the influence of individual perceptions and experiences on this reality, this approach allows for the exploration of the interplay between the objective reality of social activism in academia and the subjective experiences of those involved. Therefore, the critical realist perspective of the research acknowledges the importance of both objective and subjective data in understanding social phenomena (Cresswell and Creswell 2018; Ma 2012; May et al. 2017).

The use of both quantitative statistical analyses and qualitative content analysis in the online survey allows for the exploration of the objective reality of social activism in academia, while the subsequent in-depth interviews with academic-activists provide insight into the subjective experiences and perceptions of those involved. This approach is in line with critical realism's emphasis on exploring both the objective and subjective aspects of reality, and its recognition of the limitations of any single method or perspective. This is described in more specific detail below.

The quantitative statistical analyses in this research are key for identifying patterns and trends in the data (i.e. participant demographics) and for understanding academic-activists views on factors that impact on activism based on their own identity and the type of activism they are engaged in. However, statistical analyses alone cannot provide a complete understanding of the social phenomena being studied (i.e. the impact of external environments on academic-activism relevant to the individual). Therefore, the research also uses qualitative content analysis to examine the meanings that academic activists

attach to their actions and the context in which these actions take place (Atkinson 2018; Jones et al. 2021).

In addition, the in-depth interviews conducted in this research are important for gaining a deeper understanding of the experiences and perspectives of Irish-based academic-activists. In line with the critical realist underpinnings of the research, by exploring the experiences of academic-activists in Ireland, the research can better understand the social and cultural context that shapes their beliefs and motivations for academic-activist work (Braun and Clarke 2022; Cresswell and Creswell 2018). The in-depth interviews also allow academic-activists to express their views in their own words, which can provide rich insights into the motivations, values, and beliefs that drive academic-activism in Ireland.

In conclusion, the choice of critical realism as the ontological position for this research project was based on its compatibility with the mixed-method approach adopted, its recognition of the complexity and diversity of social phenomena, and its ability to provide a framework for exploring the relationship between the objective and subjective aspects of reality. This ontological position allows for a comprehensive exploration of the relationship between academia and social activism in Ireland and provides a useful framework for the development of best practice guidelines and recommendations for academic-activists. By adopting a critical realist perspective, this research can contribute to the development of theoretical and practical insights that can promote social activism in academia.

3.3 Epistemology

In this section, the epistemological positioning of the research is outlined. This includes a concise definition and overview of weak social constructionism which focuses on its core principles which distinguish it from other forms of social constructionism. The choice of weak social constructionist is justified in line with its suitability with the both the ontological positioning of the research and the mixed-method research approach. This is followed by a discussion on how weak social constructionism allows for a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of academic-activists, encompassing both subjective interpretations and objective realities. Furthermore, this section explores the benefits of adopting a weak social constructionist perspective in alignment with the

critical realist framework, emphasising the role of social constructions, language, and structural conditions in shaping academic-activism.

Given the ontological positioning of the research, it was important to consider a suitable epistemological stance that would be both compatible and beneficial for the mixed-method research approach. Epistemology is the theory of knowledge, or philosophy that forms the basis of the theoretical perspective and methodology of this research (Tennis 2008). Tennis (2008) states that epistemology practically determines what is deemed valid in terms of research and plays an important role in determining the suitability and acceptability of the presenting of knowledge, as well as the means of discovering this knowledge.

The current research takes a weak social constructionist perspective. Weak social constructionism allows for the combination of qualitative and quantitative analytical approaches which acknowledges both a positivist and socially constructed reality (Fopp 2008; Lawson 2002). A weak social constructionist perspective is often found in forms of critical realism as, methodologically, the implication of this perspective suggests that our understanding of “natural, biological or physical facts” (or “brute”) can be informed by “institutional” (“social”) facts and vice versa (Amineh and Asl 2015, pg. 13). Therefore, our understanding of phenomena may change or be reshaped through human activity (such as conversation with others). Similarly, the way in which individuals/groups interpret symbols and facts (brute and/or social) within society alter our connection with reality (Fuller and Loogma 2009; Searle 1995).

These interpretations shape our understanding of the world around us and play a crucial role in constructing our social realities. By acknowledging the interpretative nature of individuals and groups in relation to symbols and facts, this highlights the significance of exploring the subjective nature of academic-activism and the role of social constructions in shaping these experiences. For example, an academic may view higher educational institutions as vehicles to transform and challenge societal norms through research, teaching, and activism. Whereas others may see them as spaces that perpetuate existing power structures. These interpretations can alter the approach an academic takes in their academic-activist work and their engagement with social issues based on their own positionality such as their contract type or their gender identity.

Moreover, by adopting the epistemological position of weak social constructionism, it is acknowledged that social reality is constructed through language and discourse, but also recognised that there are still objective realities that exist independently of social constructions (Searle 1995). For example, when studying the experiences of academic-activists from various career stages, contract types, and identities in their engagement with activism, this perspective allows for an exploration of how social constructions of power, privilege and inclusion shape their experiences. Simultaneously, it acknowledges the objective barriers and structural inequities that exist within academia, such as limited access to resources, discriminatory practices, and unequal opportunities for engagement. This holistic understanding guides efforts to create a more accessible and inclusive academic environment, where academic-activists from all backgrounds can actively engage in academic-activism.

This position rejects the notion of conventional or strong social constructionism, which posits that all reality is a social construct and that objective reality does not exist (Berger and Luckman 1966; Gergen 1999; Willig 2001). The choice of weak social constructionism as the epistemological position for this research is based on its compatibility with the critical realist ontology that underpins the study. Both perspectives share a common view that reality exists independent of human perception, but that our understanding of reality is socially constructed through the interaction between individuals and their environment (Fopp 2008; Fuller and Loogma 2009; Lawson 2002).

More specifically, this compatibility allows for a detailed understanding of the experiences of academic-activists in the context of their social and institutional environments, and is well-suited to the mixed-method approach of the research. This mixed-method research employs both quantitative statistical analyses and qualitative content analysis in the survey study, and in-depth interviews in the subsequent study. Weak social constructionism offers a suitable framework for integrating these two methods, as it allows for the examination of both objective and subjective realities (Amineh and Asl 2015). Therefore, the choice of weak social constructionism as the epistemological perspective for this research is based on its ability to accommodate both objective and subjective realities, while also recognising the role of language and discourse in shaping social constructions (Willig 2001).

Furthermore, the use of weak social constructionism in conjunction with critical realism is particularly well-suited to the mixed-method approach of the research which combines both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data collected through the online survey provides a broad understanding of the experiences and perspectives of academic-activists, while the qualitative data collected through the open-ended survey questions and in-depth interviews provides a more refined and detailed insight into the ways in which the participants construct their realities. By triangulating these different sources of data, the research can arrive at a more comprehensive, dependable and accurate understanding of the complex relationships between academia and social activism.

In conclusion, weak social constructionism was chosen as the epistemological perspective for this research because of its ability to accommodate both objective and subjective realities, its recognition of the role of language and discourse in shaping social constructions, and its suitability for integrating quantitative and qualitative research methods. This perspective allows for an examination of power relations and/or structures (e.g. established through institutions) within social constructions and the exploration of how social constructions can be challenged and transformed. Other forms of social constructionism were not suitable epistemological perspectives for this research because of their rejection of objective reality and their lack of suitability for integrating quantitative and qualitative research methods which limits the holistic aims of the research.

3.4 Ecological systems framework: person, proximal processes, context, time

This project utilises Bronfenbrenner's updated ecological systems model as its theoretical framework (i.e. Personal, Proximal Process, Context, Time or PPCT). The main purpose of the PPCT model is to provide a framework for understanding how individuals are influenced by their environment. The model proposes that human development is influenced by the interaction between the person and their environment, and how this interaction occurs across different levels of context and over time. Rosa and Tudge (2013) state that Bronfenbrenner's original model underwent changes and critiques since its inception in the early 70s. Changes were made to deal with critiques which have resulted in the most recent iteration of the model that is being used in this research. Common critiques of Bronfenbrenner's early PPCT model from the 1970s to the 1990s include the lack of specific guidance on measuring and assessing the components of the model, such

as person, process, context, and time. Additionally, there was an overemphasis on the four ecological systems, neglecting other influential factors and bidirectional interactions with others (Rosa and Tudge 2013). Throughout the late 80s and early 90s, Bronfenbrenner begins to address these common critiques to form a more holistic and comprehensive model that incorporates other factors that are key to understanding an individual's development. Bronfenbrenner's updated model (1993-2006) deals with critiques of his previous frameworks which did not comprehensively consider the characteristics of a person (e.g. sociopolitical identity, values and beliefs) and how they influence the individual's experience within the ecological systems framework (i.e. context) through proximal processes (i.e. regular and reciprocal interactions between individuals/groups with their external environments over time) (Rosa and Tudge 2013; Tudge et al. 2009).

In addition, the current model incorporates a chronosystem (i.e. time) which surrounds the intersecting macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem and microsystem and is important in considering the individual's development within their external environments. In this sense, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems framework displays the interdependent nature of human interactions within different contexts (Henderson and Baffour 2015). Below, each interrelated system will be outlined briefly as per Eriksson et al. (2018); Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006); Levine and Breshears (2019); Rosa and Tudge (2013) and; Tudge et al. (2009) and how these have been adapted for the purpose of this study:



Figure 2. Ecological systems framework

Figure 2 is a visual representation of Bronfenbrenner's and Morris's (2006) PPCT model which represent the following aspects of the model:

- **Macrosystem:** This refers to the social and political environment (i.e. political, social attitudes and beliefs, and economic ideology).
- **Exosystem:** This acknowledges that the individual is not situated within the exosystem, but is impacted directly by actions from it. It refers to institutions, policies, market forces, and hierarchical relationships.
- **Mesosystem:** This reflects a system of microsystems. This is where the microsystem and exosystem interact. It refers to community settings, workplaces, and localities.
- **Microsystem:** This refers to the individual, their interpersonal relationships, attitudes, values, personal characteristics, roles and duties.
- **Chronosystem:** This refers to time and surrounds the previously mentioned systems. It refers to the impact of time on changing societal contexts, and the development of the individual within the interrelated systems mentioned above.

Bronfenbrenner proposes that the system works by recognising the reciprocal and dynamic interactions between individuals and their environments. This broadens the

scope of analysis and allows for a more comprehensive examination of individual academic-activists experiences (Eriksson et al. 2018). Additionally, the revised PPCT model acknowledges the importance of the bidirectional nature of processes, recognising that individuals both influence and are influenced by their environments (Tudge et al. 2009). This captures the dynamic interplay between individuals and their contexts over time (Henderson and Baffour 2015). Utilising the ecological systems framework allows for the researcher to better understand the individual based on their interactions across various systems (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). However, there have been critiques of the model given its apparent complexity and the inability of researchers to correctly incorporate each of its elements. Tudge et al. (2009, pg. 198) states, “by not properly representing a theory, the researcher risks research integrity by not giving the theory a fair test and therefore producing results or observations about the theory that are misleading”.

Following from this, Tudge et al. (2009) state that researchers who have failed to incorporate each element or plan to retract a system (such as an element of model, e.g. chronosystem) within their eventual conclusions, should highlight this as a theoretical limitation within their study to maintain integrity. To apply the model correctly, it must be shown how different ecological systems interact with one another (Eriksson et al. 2018). By not considering the interaction between or within systems, research findings risk becoming generalised and too focused on individual systems. Eriksson et al. (2018) have shown that failing to implement the model for its intended purpose often results in the dismissal of the wider societal context and how ecological systems are interrelated. If the eventual research aim is to enact some form of social change, failing to apply the model correctly can make it difficult to assist researchers in targeting where, when and how to intervene (Eriksson et al. 2018).

With regard to the current study and given that this project is positioned within a critical realist/weak social constructionist paradigm, it was important to utilise a framework which can consider the experiences of participants within a range of interacting systems. Therefore, the philosophical underpinnings of this research, which allow for the use of a mixed method, weak social constructionist approach, is valued within the PPCT framework which enables the researcher to uncover the complexity of individual’s experience within intersecting systems (Henderson and Baffour 2015). Furthermore, the philosophical assumptions of the ontological and epistemological framework (i.e. the construction and understanding of reality through human interaction with brute social

facts) combined with the ecological systems framework provides a suitable structure to engage with academic-activists about their personal experiences within wider environments (i.e. influenced by personal characteristics, time, etc.)

Bronfenbrenner's and Morris's (2006) updated model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted interactions between academic-activists and their socioecological contexts. This allows for an exploration of how personal characteristics, social processes, contextual factors and developmental changes intersect to shape academic-activists' experiences and engagement. The system's comprehensive perspective aligns with the holistic aims of my research, allowing for a nuanced analysis that considers the complexities of academic-activism within the broader social and institutional environments.

More specifically, the PPCT model allows for an examination of how academics identification with gender, class, and race, as well as their collegiate engagement and perceptions of the political, institutional, and social environment relate to their experiences as academic-activists. The model's emphasis on the person, process, context and time dimensions helps capture the interplay between individual characteristics, social processes and the external environments in shaping academic-activists' experiences. Moreover, by considering the interactions between individuals and their environments, the model helps uncover the dynamic processes that influence academic-activists' motivations behind their engagement in activism and the potential challenges they face within their institutional contexts based on their own personal characteristics, such as their sociopolitical identity and academic role.

Hence, the bidirectional aspect of the PPCT model is crucial for understanding the dynamic interplay between individuals and their environments. This model highlights that people are not only shaped by their systems and institutions but also play a significant role in shaping them. By acknowledging this reciprocal relationship, the PPCT model provides a comprehensive framework for examining how personal agency and experiences influence, and are influenced by, external forces. This bidirectional interaction is essential for driving social change, as it highlights the potential for individuals to impact systemic transformations and specifies the need for systemic responses to individual needs. Embracing this perspective enables researchers and

policymakers to develop more nuanced strategies for encouraging meaningful and sustainable change within educational and other institutional settings.

Ultimately, the updated PPCT model offers a valuable framework for informing guidelines that promote social change in academic practice to support academic-activists. A holistic consideration of academic-activists experiences in this research allows for a comprehensive understanding that can inform the development of best practice guidelines and recommendations to enhance institutional support for academic-activism. This approach allows for a nuanced exploration of the complex interplay between individuals and their contexts, providing valuable insights to inform both practice and future research in the field of academic-activism. Applying Bronfenbrenner's interrelated systems model grants the researcher space to further consider the complexity of the individual academic-activist experience within external environments as indicated during Chapter 2, Literature Review.

While traditionally used in studies concerning human development, the ecological systems framework is flexible; is suitable within a variety of studies and; can be combined with other frameworks (i.e. methodological, philosophical, etc) (Eriksson et al. 2018; Tudge et al. 2009). More recently, there has been a small-scale emergence of studies and insights from academics who believe applying the ecological systems framework to studies concerning higher education could adequately address current issues. Gavazzi (2020) suggests the use of Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model to help us understand the current academic environment and how external environments influence the relationships between higher educational management, the institutional workplace and academics. Similarly, Hemer and Reason (2019) adopted the framework for their study on student activism. While perhaps not directly comparable to the experience of academics, it is interesting to note how the researchers analyse the interaction between the interrelated systems within the context of academia and activism.

Bronfenbrenner's and Morris's (2006) PPCT model provides a framework from which to develop a comprehensive understanding of the complex and dynamic nature of the experiences of academic-activists which aids the forming of meaningful and practical solutions to current issues facing academic-activists. Therefore, understanding academia as a site for activism is considered within the ecological systems framework in order to explore the experiences of academic-activists within their internal and external

environments. An intensive review of the literature and Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model informed the design of the online survey (Study One) which, in turn, informed the design of the interview guide (Study Two). While the theoretical framework does not directly inform the analysis of Study One (statistical analyses and qualitative content analysis where the development of themes, categories and codes took an inductive approach) and Study Two (inductively driven thematic analysis), the discussion of both studies will reflect on the 'goodness of fit' of the model in considering the studies' findings. The final chapter of the thesis will consider the overall, holistic findings of Study One and Study Two in an in-depth discussion. This discussion will map participant's experiences within the PPCT model to further inform best practice recommendations and guidelines to improve experiences of academic-activists.

Through considering the experiences of academic-activists at different career stages it will be possible to theorise such experiences through an ecological systems perspective. The following section considers intersectionality as an accompaniment to the theoretical framework.

3.5 Integrating intersectionality within the ecological systems framework

Intersectionality is a conceptual framework for understanding how aspects of a person's social and political identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege (Bowleg 2012; Bowleg 2017). As a framework, intersectionality disposes of single-axis thinking and instead moves towards a matrix perspective (Crenshaw 1989). An intersectional perspective dictates that "inequities are never the result of single, distinct factors. Rather, they are the outcome of intersections of different social locations, power relations and experiences" (Hankivisky 2014, pg. 2). An intersectional analytical framework affords the researcher the ability to "conceptualize, investigate, analyse and address disparities and social inequality" that becomes evident in the research (Bowleg 2012, pg. 1267). Through moving beyond single-axis thinking and considering the intricate nuances of the lived experience of academic-activists, it becomes less likely that important information regarding the unfair impact of policies and practices on individuals will be ignored throughout the research process (Hankivisky 2014).

Carrying out intersectional analysis requires 'doing intersectionality' under key tenets. The key tenets that relate to this study concerning the lived experience of academic-

activists within the current neoliberal climate and institutional environment are as follows (Bowleg 2012; Hankivisky 2014):

- (i) Social identities are multidimensional and intersecting. It is problematic to discuss an individual's identity based on singular classifications, such as gender, race and class.
- (ii) Relationships between power relations, social locations and processes (e.g. racism and sexism) are linked. It is possible for them to change over time and be dependent on geographical location.
- (iii) People may experience privilege and oppression simultaneously dependent on the context (e.g. a white, middle-class, transwoman scholar).
- (iv) The individual experience must be linked and analysed in relation to the wider environments to determine how power relations are structured.
- (v) Researchers must engage in reflexive practice to consider their own positionality.
- (vi) Intersectionality must be used to build towards social justice and equality.

Bowleg (2017) states that intersectionality has been central to research concerning gender and race studies, as well as being a key component with regards to research relating to those who identify as social activists and their lived experiences as agents tackling matters of social injustice. Similarly, intersectionality has become a commonly administered framework in studies concerning higher education given its traditional application in studies that aim to tackle social injustice, sexism/gender inequalities and racism/discrimination and the prominence of such issues in academics (Nichols and Stahl 2019).

With regards to integrating intersectionality with an ecological systems framework in this study, consideration of the individual's identity (i.e. sociopolitical identity, academic role, type of activism, etc.), within the intersecting systems will provide greater insight into academic-activists experiences (Levine and Breashears 2019; Roy 2018). Although they share similar functions in the sense that they both place the experiences of an individual within the core of interrelated systems, intersectionality is rarely explicitly integrated within studies utilising the ecological systems framework (Roy 2018). If combined

within the analysis, an intersectional perspective (in line with the PPCT model) can enable the researcher to understand the in-depth experience of a person within a particular environment (e.g. academia) relevant to their individual identity (Levine and Breshears 2019).

Syed and Ajayi (2018, pg.112) state that intersectionality is often applied with a “one-sided” view of the discrimination or oppression experienced by an individual. Often, this results in a lack of thorough consideration for how dominant and privileged positions are maintained and also, how these maintained positionalities disrupt the developmental process for those in disadvantaged positions (Syed and Ajayi 2018). In essence, intersectionality’s narrow utilisation as a tool to understand multiple systems of oppression dismisses the influence of social systems on both privileged and non-privileged groups and individuals. Bowleg (2008) states that an intersectional framework is often limited as a result of the subsequent analysis, which regularly omits contextual grounding as to why a particular stream of discrimination or privilege exists for certain individuals and groups (i.e. stereotypes, gender roles, prejudice, etc.). A combined intersectional and ecological framework would allow the researcher to analyse levels of privilege and discrimination within different systems (i.e. social and political, institutional, etc.) and base the analysis on how individuals experience disadvantages and advantages based on their identity relevant to wider societal contexts (Levine and Breshears 2018).

Integrating intersectionality within an ecological systems framework can be utilised to forward social justice action for groups and individuals that partake in the promotion of positive social change within hegemonic structures and cultures. With that, it is possible to understand intersectionality not only as a standalone theory whereby multiple layers of oppression and privileges are analysed in relation to sociopolitical categories, but as an integrated theory that can aid in the analysing of interrelated systems that impact upon an individual’s experience of oppression or their privileges (Syed and Ajayi 2018).

The following section outlines the methodological framework of the current research which aims to incorporate the previously discussed theoretical and philosophical underpinnings in order to produce best practice guidelines and recommendations for academic-activists.

3.6 Participatory Action Research

In order to methodologically achieve critical insight into the academic environment and how it impacts the individual academic-activist, Participatory Action Research (PAR) was carried out to ensure this research was done with and for participants as opposed to on participants (Pecorelli 2015). Mixed methods within a PAR framework allows for the researcher to broaden their perspective and interpretations of data beyond what might be possible within singular research method approaches (Sendall et al. 2018). Therefore, in the current research, mixed method surveys and qualitative semi-structured interviews (i.e. Study One and Study Two) are combined to inform a range of best practice guidelines and recommendations (i.e. final chapter). Utilising both philosophical and theoretical frameworks, in line with PAR, provides an opportunity to give voice to the experiences of academics which need to be heard and explored further in the wider context of academic-activism (e.g. working-class academics) (MacDonald 2012). By including academics with varying identities (gender, class and race) and academic roles (permanent and precarious), it is possible to explore and examine different experiences within the PPCT model.

PAR emphasises conducting research with and for participants through a process of collaboration. As an academic-activist, PAR provides a methodological framework which incorporates my own experience and identity within the project. This approach, as described by Cox (2015), goes beyond academic theory and signals to the importance of fostering a collaborative learning process among participants with shared or similar experiences. PAR enables meaningful engagement and knowledge exchange between researchers and the individuals involved in the movement (Cox 2015). In this way, PAR not only contributes to academic inquiry but also supports the advancement of social change through active participation and shared learning. PAR is conducted with a main objective of enacting social change with specific actions (MacDonald 2012). Generally, researchers use PAR to learn and work with marginalised or activist groups in order to produce research that offers solutions for their needs and ways in which society can improve on addressing these needs (MacDonald 2012).

In this regard, one of the key strengths of PAR is its inherently activist nature which makes it particularly well-suited for research that aims to examine and promote activism through academic freedom. By highlighting the voices and experiences of participants and

encouraging them to act as co-researchers, PAR aligns with the fundamental principles of activism, such as: empowerment, inclusivity, and social change. In the context of this research, PAR enables a more authentic exploration of academic-activism because it embodies the very values of collective action. This collaborative approach allows the research to not only study activism, but also engage in activism, as participants are given the agency to contribute to the research process in a way that mirrors their activist work in some instances. Thus, PAR is an ideal methodological framework for a project aimed at addressing activism, as it highlights the very change it seeks to understand.

Considering my current expertise and experiences, and identity as an academic-activist, I believe that I am uniquely positioned to spearhead this transformative change through the proposed research. The intersection of my identity as a white, working-class man academic-activist, along with my extensive engagement in precarious employment within academia, equips me with a nuanced understanding of the challenges and complexities inherent in this environment. Furthermore, my academic training (in line with my activist experience) has honed my critical thinking skills and nurtured a deep sense of empathy and responsibility towards disadvantaged and marginalised groups. Thus, I firmly believe that the combination of my own academic skills and my dedication to inclusivity, equity and social change, make me an ideal candidate to lead this research and contribute meaningfully to the advancement of academic-activism and a more inclusive academic environment.

While PAR is a valuable framework for promoting collaboration and ensuring the research is done with participants, it also presents several challenges. One key limitation is the issue of power dynamics between the researcher and participants, where researchers may still retain significant control over decision-making which can potentially limit participant engagement (Pecorelli 2015). Additionally, PAR can be time and resource-intensive as it requires extended engagement with participants, which can strain both the researcher's and participants' capacities (Pecorelli 2015). Lastly, there is the risk of participant bias, as those involved in the research may influence its direction and outcomes based on personal interests, which makes it difficult to maintain objectivity while encouraging subjectivity (Pecorelli 2015).

However, PAR involves a process of reflexive practice that allows an individual to engage in critical self-reflection as part of any substantial academic and social movement activity.

This facilitates academic-activists to learn from social movements and/or activists involved in social movements (MacDonald 2012; Kemmis et al. 2014; Pecorelli 2015). Researchers using PAR must regularly consider their own positionality within their research with the aim of challenging potential biases and determining their own personal motivations within any project (Pecorelli 2015).

In addition, PAR requires a collaborative element where participants act as co-researcher(s) to provide their insight to the analysis of data. For their part, in this research project participants were asked to make contributions to the research design (interview guide), analysis (member reflections), as well as the final chapter's guidelines and recommendations. Following an extensive literature review which informed the statements in the online survey (Study One), participant's responses to the close-ended and open-ended statements informed the interview guide of the subsequent study (Study Two). During the preliminary analysis of interview transcripts, participants were asked to review the initial themes and codes, as well as highlight any part of the transcript they felt was important to their account that may have been overlooked in the early analytical stages. These steps are discussed further in Chapter 4 and Chapter 6.

As the final aim of this exploratory study is to contribute to the work of activists in academia through producing guidelines and recommendations for best practice, incorporating the collaborative input of academic-activists ensures that this research is conducted in line with the PAR framework. Therefore, the solutions (guidelines and recommendations) to current barriers to engaging in academic-activism are generated by academic-activists; for academic-activists. While often characterised by its delivery of qualitative methods (e.g. focus groups and interviews), in this research PAR is conducted within a mixed method approach to provide a holistic understanding of academic-activism in Ireland. In line with an overarching objective of PAR, this approach aims to give strength and a voice to participants in a bid to promote positive social change in this area (MacDonald 2012).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the paradigms which guide the current research. In particular, this chapter describes the philosophical positioning of the research, as well as Bronfenbrenner's and Morris's (2006) PPCT model and how it has been adapted for the purpose of this study in line with the ontological and epistemological positioning of the

research. In addition, this chapter outlines how intersectionality is integrated within the PPCT model in order to aid the interpretation of individual academic-activist's experiences within the interrelated systems as part of the PPCT model. Finally, this chapter outlines Participatory Action Research (PAR) as the methodological framework. Specifically, this chapter notes the suitability of PAR within both the philosophical and theoretical frameworks and how utilising key tenets of PAR (e.g. collaboration with participants) aid the holistic consideration of academic-activists experiences in order to produce the final chapter's best practice guidelines and recommendations in this area. Development of these guidelines highlights the importance of PAR in informing the design of both Study One and Study Two within the context of the PPCT model.

The following chapter presents the Study One's methodology, which includes an overview of the research design, as well as the processes involved in the descriptive analysis of survey data, as well as the various inferential statistical tests and the qualitative content analysis of the open-ended questions.

Chapter 4: Study One Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The present study explores academics' identification with gender, class and race, collegiate engagement, and perceptions of the political, institutional and social environment relative to their experiences as an academic-activist. This is addressed by Study One (online survey), which involved the development and administration of a novel online survey to examine the responses of academic-activists regarding their views of a range of influences on their activism work in academia (including the political and social environment; institutional environment; and the individual academic-activist's personal values, beliefs and motivations for their academic work) across both close and open-ended survey questions. The current study utilised a mixed method analytical approach where quantitative and qualitative analytical methods were combined to inform best practice guidelines and recommendations for academic-activists in line with the PAR framework. This chapter presents the methodology of Study One which outlines the research design, the sampling approaches (and participants), the tools used to collect data under this research approach, analytical approaches and key ethical considerations.

Figure 3 provides an overview of the process involved in the mixed-method survey development, as well as the subsequent steps including sampling strategy and analysis. The aim of the survey was to assess experiences of academic-activism across the social, political and institutional environments.

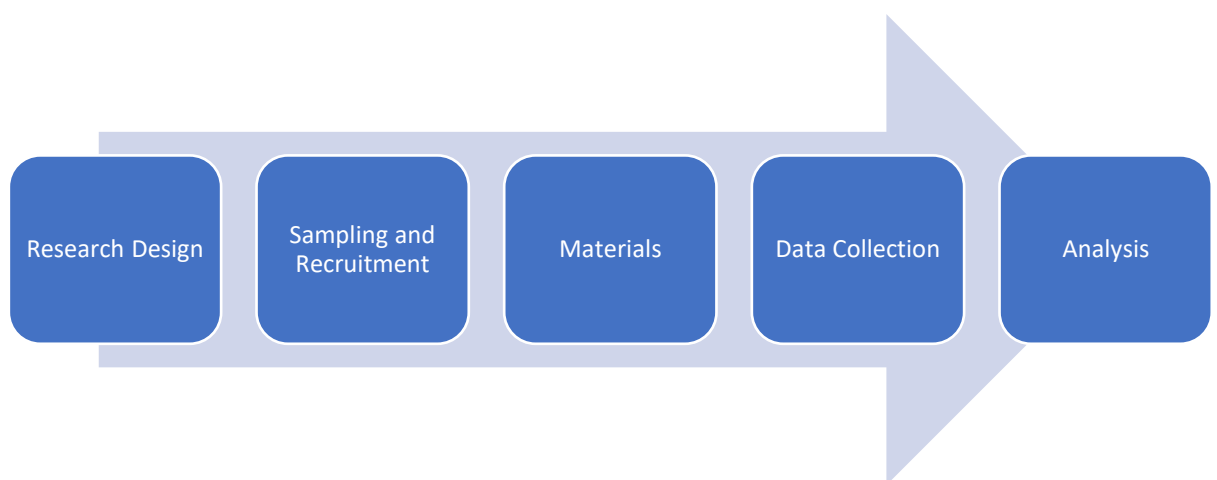


Figure 3. Overview of Study One

4.2 Research Design: A Survey of Academic-Activism and Institutional Responses

The survey developed for Study One consisted of quantitative (close-ended statements) and qualitative elements (open-ended questions). As a quantitative measure, surveys can provide a description of attitudes and opinions for a sample population (Bryman 2012; Creswell and Creswell 2018). In addition, a quantitative approach allows for the “careful measurement” and “experimental manipulation” of a data set so as to answer research questions and challenge assumptions and hypotheses about the participant group (Creswell and Creswell 2018, pg. 206). However, by only using quantitative measures (i.e. survey scoring, descriptive statistics, etc.), the researcher risks detaching the sample from their reality and creating a “static view” of individual experiences (Bryman 2012, pg. 179).

Therefore, a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures (mixed methods) were used in the data gathering and analysis of the online survey. While quantitative measures were used for close-ended statements, qualitative measures were implemented for the open-ended statements so as to offer a more holistic analysis of the experiences of academic-activists. Including a qualitative element in the online survey allowed for the researcher to generate key insights which, in line with the quantitative analysis, informed Study Two’s interview guide. As a primarily quantitative research tool, a survey focuses on “observation and the measurement of responses to statements and questions” (Atkinson 2017, pg.11). However, Chiang et al. (2015) state that survey research is a flexible, quantitative and qualitative measuring tool that can be applied to a varying degree of broad and specific research questions. Within any survey, open-ended and close-ended statements and/or questions can be posed to respondents. Open-ended questions are a method of questioning that allows the participant to answer in any way they choose, therefore making open-ended questions more subjective (Chiang et al. 2015).

Within this survey, participants were provided with a combination of close-ended (quantitative) and open-ended questions (qualitative). While the open-ended questions sought to capture a response that is expressed by participants personally, close-ended statements posed to participants were measured through a Likert scale. Bryman (2012, pg. 166) states that Likert scales are used to measure the “intensity” of feelings and attitudes within a particular area. In order to produce an effective Likert scale, the survey

contained close-ended questions in the form of statements as opposed to questions; thematically grouped questions so that they relate to the same area (i.e. institutional environment, support networks, etc.), thus contributing to the development of subscales and; was mindful of phrasing so as not to suggest negative responses (e.g. “I am not supported by my line manager” or “my experience in academia has been challenging”).

By utilising surveys in the data collection process, the researcher affords participants the opportunity to answer potentially anxiety inducing or personally uncomfortable statements/questions in more relaxed circumstances (e.g. at home, work office, etc.) (Bryman 2012). In this sense, Braun et al. (2020) state that qualitative surveys are more appropriate for potentially sensitive survey topics. Particularly, if the population of interest is dispersed. In this case, some of the research topics, such as precarity, can be considered to be sensitive topics for participants and with the sample population dispersed around Ireland, a qualitative element was a suitable fit in the development of the survey (Braun et al. 2020).

Arguments against mixed method approaches typically note the complications with paradigm mixing and challenges to the researcher(s) who must learn multiple methods which make it a time consuming process (Cresswell and Cresswell 2018). Moreover, this can lead to issues regarding the reconciliation of philosophical assumptions within the research (Ma 2012). Within this study, ontological and epistemological viewpoints were carefully considered given quantitative studies association with positivist/objectivist paradigms and qualitative studies association with subjectivist/constructionist paradigms (Ma 2012). Some researchers suggest that remaining within a single paradigm can serve as a foundation for conducting mixed methods research (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009). However, other researchers have argued that in mixed method research designs which incorporate multiple paradigms can be beneficial. This approach allows for diverse perspectives which can better contribute to answering research questions across various studies (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009).

The mixed method research approach meant that the data from both studies offered a more nuanced and comprehensive insight into the experiences of academic-activists. This robust approach to research allowed for the drawing of more meaningful and holistic conclusions regarding the impact of external environments in the doing of academic-

activism. Using a mixed methods approach afforded the researcher to go beyond the descriptive and gather rich data which provided insight into both the individual's experience as an academic-activist, as well as the reality of the social context in which academic-activists work/engage in activism. To achieve this, the qualitative and quantitative findings were treated as a cohesive data set.

In this sense, it is important to consider the philosophical underpinnings of the research. The ontological (critical realism) and epistemological (weak social constructionism) positioning of the research allows for methodological pluralism which supports for inductively interpreted themes and statistical analyses to merge together to answer research questions and hypotheses following the quantitative analysis (Braun et al. 2020). Given the philosophical underpinnings of the research and the subjective interpretation of data, seeking a singular or commonly shared or objective truth is not suitable within this analytical approach. Within a critical realist/weak social constructionist perspective, participants experiences are not "pure" truths, but rather they are "socially located" (Braun and Clarke 2022, pg. 170). Braun and Clarke (2002, pg. 171) maintain that data should not provide a "clear and direct reflection of reality". Instead, as the researcher, you interpret a mediated reflection of reality based on your own subjectivity and how the analysis was approached. The critical realist/weak social constructionist perspective allowed me to interpret participant responses subjectivity, while linking their accounts to shared social contexts, for example: how structural conditions restrict academic-activism (i.e. use of survey analysis to construct scales representative of shared contexts).

Furthermore, from a critical realist ontological perspective, the statistical analysis of Likert scale items provided interesting insight about the patterns and relationships between variables. However, it was important to also consider the underlying structures that shape those patterns and relationships. For example, considering why certain groups of respondents (e.g. women academics) may have responded differently on particular items, and how these were potentially influenced by external influences (e.g. working experience in academia). Similarly, from a weak social constructionist epistemological perspective, the qualitative analysis of open-ended statements provided valuable insights into the meanings and interpretations that respondents attach to particular concepts or ideas. However, it is important to also recognise that these interpretations are shaped by the social context in which they are produced. Therefore, a weak social constructionist

perspective allowed for the consideration of how various social contexts (e.g. academic role) may be influencing my own interpretation of responses, as well as shaping how participants responded to the open-ended statements.

Following the above discussion on research design, the subsequent sections will detail the steps involved in the sampling and recruitment strategies, the development of materials, as well as the data collection and analytical procedures.

4.3 Sampling Strategy, Recruitment and Participants

Purposive snowball sampling was used for this study, as this method emphasises voluntary participation and self-selection (Bryman 2012). This also ensured that participants had relevant experience and were suitable to the main purpose of the research (Dusek et al.2014). The online survey was advertised through my social media accounts, as well as my supervisors to reach their network of academic colleagues (See Appendix B). To increase participation across broader academic audiences, postgraduate unions and research groups/centres were contacted via email and asked to circulate the survey amongst their membership (See Appendix B). Participation was restricted to academics employed in Ireland and engaging in an activity that they consider to be activism.

A total of 147 Irish-based academic-activists responded to the survey. The survey was open to participants of all career stages and experience levels who may be in full time, part time or casual/hourly paid posts. Based on the European University Institute (2018) ‘career curriculum’ in Irish academics, participant categories included:

- (i) Early-career researchers (Including: PhD researchers and Postdoc)
- (ii) Lecturers (Assistant Lecturers, Lecturers and Senior Lecturers)
- (iii) Professors (Associate, Full Professors and Heads of Department)

See Chapter 5 for further details on Study One’s participant demographics which are included in the descriptive analysis section.

4.4 Materials

Online data collection was conducted through Microsoft Forms. The online survey included 57 items in total: 12 items relating to participant demographics, 42 Likert scale statements and 3 open-ended questions relating to three sub-scales:

- Political, Economic and Social Environment (15 Likert scale items and 1 open-ended question)
- Institutional Environment (15 Likert scale items and 1 open-ended question)
- Individual Academic-Activist (12 Likert scale items and 1 open-ended question)

Each section included an open-ended question that was optional for participants to answer, such as: what ‘type’ of activism are you engaged in? If so, how do you normally disseminate/perform this activism?

The development of the sub-scale sections and open-ended questions in the survey were informed by the literature review and the theoretical framework (i.e. PPCT model) as there was no suitable scale or survey instrument found after an extensive search (see: Appendix A). Existing scales focused on particular forms of activism or activist orientation. Upon examining the statements in these scales, it was found that they did not adequately encompass the intricate and complex experience of academic-activism, which takes into account factors like job security and personal identity in relation to engagement with activism. For instance, survey instruments presented by Corning and Myers (2002), as well as Hope et al. (2019), contained either specific or general activist-themed statements, which were deemed inappropriate for this study due to their failure to acknowledge the individual’s positionality within external environments. For example, “I am likely to display a poster or bumper sticker with a political message” (Hope et al. 2019, pg. 199).

Statements and questions in this study were adapted based on the key findings, ideas, concepts and personal experiences that were presented in the literature review relevant to academic-activism. By adapting this type of information from the literature to form questions and statements, it was possible to form a survey that was clear, comprehensive and relatable to the experiences of academic-activists from different sources and researchers. As such, the statements and questions cover a range of topics, including:

institutional practices, socioeconomic classification, workplace culture and value systems. With the PPCT model in mind, questions and statements were initially arranged and categorised based on their appropriateness within certain sections of the survey which related to the relevant environments that impact academic-activism.

Given this, the following paragraph outlines example survey statements. The single quotation marks represent a statement from the survey. The accompanying reference indicates an example of a literary source from which the statement was adapted and formed.

The Political, Economic and Social Environment section included statements that relate to the current neoliberal climate and its impact on academia, such as: ‘a system of meritocracy provides fair and equal opportunity to all’ (Courtois and O’Keefe 2015) and ‘higher educational institutes are adequately supported through public funding’ (Fleming 2021). The Institutional Environment section included statements relating to the current institutional environment, institutional practices and management, such as: ‘there is a need to develop a space in academia to challenge wider institutional strategy/policy’ (Grey 2013) and ‘performance-based research is more valuable to my institute than public facing research’ (Sliva et al. 2019). The Individual Academic-Activist section included statements related to the individual academic-activists’ personal values, beliefs and motivations for academic work, as well as their experiences of academic-activism in the current environment, such as: ‘my area of interest is a reflection of my background (gender, class, race, etc.)’ (Pease 2015) and ‘academics should be encouraged to pursue research projects that involve matters of social justice’ (Flood et al. 2013).

The following section will describe data collection procedures for the current study.

4.5 Data Collection

The online survey went live for an initial period of 3 months to allow for sufficient responses to be gathered. A minimum of 100 responses were required. Having collected an acceptable number of responses within this timeframe, survey responses were exported to both Excel (Likert scale) and Microsoft Word (open-ended questions). The following section will outline the procedural steps involved in the data collection process prior to the analysis of survey data.

Both the advertisement poster and email contained a link to the survey (Appendix B). When the invitation link was clicked, the participants came to the 'landing page' of the survey, which included: (i) the project information document detailing the purpose of the study and; (ii) if the participant agreed to participate they clicked a button to progress to the next page which contained the informed consent form. This includes a statement which emphasises that their participation is voluntary, how long the survey will take to complete, how to complete the survey and the researchers contact details if required. Once the participant had provided their informed consent they progressed to the next page of the survey. On average, the survey took 10-15 minutes to complete, though some participants took over 1.5 hours, likely due to interruptions in their schedule or pausing to return later while engaged in other work. The survey responses were then collected and imported to the researcher's SETU OneDrive for further, in-depth analysis (statistical analysis and qualitative content analysis).

The survey responses were initially exported to an Excel file. For the purpose of the qualitative content analysis, responses to the open-ended questions were then exported from the Excel file to separate Word documents. This allowed for the open-ended responses to be prepared for analysis. An example of this process is provided in Chapter 5, Study One Analysis and Discussion. In relation to the participant demographic and Likert scale items, responses to these items underwent a process of numeric coding in preparation for analysis via SPSS. As SPSS cannot analyse qualitative responses, numerical codes were assigned to represent each category. For example, gender was coded: 1 = women, 2 = men and 3 = nonbinary. Regarding Likert scale items, numeric coding was applied to convert the ordinal responses into a meaningful numerical scale. This survey involved using a 5-point Likert scale where: 0 = Prefer not to say, 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

To ensure the accuracy of the Excel coding for survey items before importing into SPSS, a thorough validation process was undertaken. This process involved cross-referencing each survey item in Excel with the original questionnaire to verify correct labelling and response options. Additionally, a random sample of survey responses were manually checked for consistency with the coded data. See Appendix D for the survey codebook.

The next section outlines the analytical steps taken within Study One following the data collection.

4.6 Analysis

This section outlines the data analytical approaches utilised in Study One. Beginning with the statistical analysis of the survey data, this section then moves onto the qualitative content analysis of open-ended statements. Figure 4 provides a brief overview of the chronological order of the analytical steps which correspond to the sub-headings within this section. This section describes the descriptive analyses employed on participant demographics to provide an overview of the sample characteristics. Subsequently, this section outlines the procedural steps in the reliability and validity testing performed on raw survey data to ensure the robustness of the measurement tool. Hypotheses testing outlines the procedure utilised to explore the relationships between variables. This is then followed by the correlation and regression analysis that used to further assess the relationship between scale variables in this study. This section also outlines the procedure involved in the qualitative content analysis which provide further insights into the quantitative data.

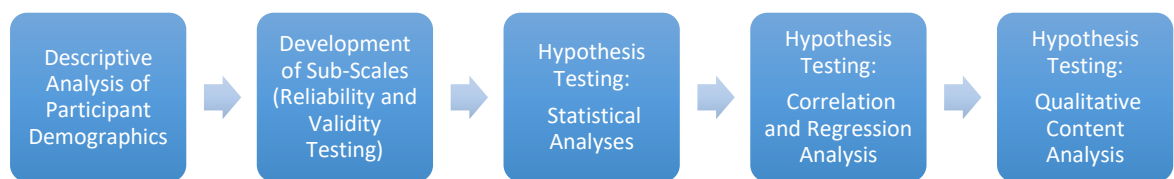


Figure 4. Analytical steps utilised in Study One

4.6.1 Descriptive Analysis of Participant Demographics

The first step in the statistical analysis involved a descriptive statistical analysis of the survey data was conducted to help summarise participants demographic information (Pallant 2011). As participant demographics were categorical variables (e.g. gender, marital status, etc.), percentages and frequencies were calculated for each demographic item. The results of this descriptive analysis of demographics are presented in Chapter 5, Study One Analysis and Discussion (see also: Appendix D for demographic information collected).

4.6.2 Development, Validity and Reliability of Sub-Scales

The following section outlines the scale development process utilised to create a redeveloped questionnaire and examines its reliability and validity for future use in academic-activism research studies. Out of the 57 items initially developed for the survey, 42 Likert scale items were included in the development of the sub-scales. The initial items related to the three domains within the survey which explored the social and political environmental aspects, the institutional environment and the individual academic-activist.

In order to identify the items that best measured participant agreement within the academic-activism constructs, mean scores were calculated for each item from the initial survey instrument, which was specifically designed to measure agreement with statements. A 5-point Likert scale was utilised where: Strongly Agree = 5 and Strongly Disagree = 1. Scores greater than 3 (i.e. the neutral cut-off point) were considered to indicate high participant agreement with scores below this threshold indicating disagreement. Having determined which items represented high agreement, a reliability test was carried out to determine if the items were a good fit within the sub-scale.

To assess the internal reliability of each sub-scale, Cronbach's alpha was employed. Scores between 0.6 and 0.8 were considered acceptable, indicating scale reliability which is particularly relevant for exploratory research (Daud et al. 2018). If correlations were negative or close to zero, these were eventually removed during the sub-scale development process. Items were retained based on their indication of high agreement and positive correlation scores (between at least 0.2 and 0.5) in line with an acceptable Cronbach's score. This shows that items measure the same construct and appropriately aligned with what the scale is measuring (Roschel et al. 2021). Minor revisions were made to sub-scale items to ensure coherence and representativeness of the overall construct.

A principal components analysis (PCA) was run on retained items following reliability tests. The suitability of the PCA was determined prior to analysis (i.e. acceptable correlation scores between items). Data was then evaluated using Bartlett's test of sphericity and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) to determine its suitability for an EFA. In this instance, Bartlett's test of sphericity should be significant ($p < 0.5$) and the KMO index should yield a result of at least 0.6, which is considered to be the minimum for an appropriate EFA (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). To explore and implement a simple factor

structure (i.e. items to load onto 1 factor), for the purpose of the redeveloped questionnaire, principal axis factoring with varimax rotation was used to aid interpretability.

Within EFA, factor loadings (within the rotated component matrix) greater than 0.3 are considered to be stable (Field 2017). Further following Field's (2017) and Hope et al.'s (2019) advice, items with factor loadings greater than 0.4 were retained. Typically, it is advised to delete cross-loading items (i.e. items that load onto 2 or more factors with loadings greater than .32) (Field 2017; Hope et al. 2019). However, some cross-loading items were retained in some instances. Ultimately, this is for the researcher to decide dependent on how important the variable is within a research question, particularly in exploratory studies (Costello and Osborne 2005). To ensure the reliability of the retained items from the EFA, an additional reliability test was conducted.

Following the development of the sub-scales and subsequent reliability and validity tests, 3 sub-scales were finalised. Each of the sub-scales were developed from the original sections within the survey. The tested items were designed to represent 3 sub-scales: the social and political environment, institutional culture and restrictions and activist motivations. The 3 sub-scales were then combined into an overall academic-activist measure. Although reliability tests were performed with The Academic-Activism Orientation Scale, validity tests were not conducted. As this is a newly developed scale, it will be recommended that future research determine the validity of the overall construct and its sub-scales (i.e. 3 components relating to academic-activism) through a confirmatory factor analysis on new data. This will be discussed further in the final chapter.

The validated and reliable sub-scales and the reliable overall academic-activist measure were utilised within the quantitative hypotheses testing as summated scale variables (composite scores of each scale items) along with 4 key categorical variables: gender, class, race and contract type to simplify the quantitative hypotheses testing. This is outlined in the next section.

4.6.3 Hypotheses Testing

This section outlines the comprehensive approach to both quantitative and qualitative hypotheses testing which includes three sub-sections: statistical analyses, correlation and regression analysis and qualitative content analysis. The statistical analyses outlines the

rigorous quantitative techniques to examine the relationships between variables and subscales. The correlation and regression analysis describes the procedure involved in further exploring the relationships between categorical and scale variables. The qualitative content analysis then outlines the systematic approach to analysing and interpreting open-ended questions in the online survey which aims to provide deeper understanding and context to the statistical tests.

4.6.3.1 Statistical Analyses

Following the descriptive statistics on participant demographics, the next step in the statistical analyses involved running various inferential statistical tests required to test the hypotheses formulated in line with the project research questions. In relation to the quantitative statistical analysis, the hypotheses include the following:

1. Men and women differ in terms of their levels of academic-activism:

- a. There is a significant difference in the levels of academic-activist orientation across gender.
- b. There is a significant difference in the influence of the social and political environments on academia felt across gender.
- c. There is a significant difference in the impact of the institutional environment on academic-activism across gender.
- d. There is a significant difference in the likelihood of identifying as an academic-activist and engaging in academic-activism across gender.

2. Class impacts an academics' ability to engage in academic-activism:

- a. There is a significant difference in the levels of academic-activist orientation across class groups.
- b. There is a significant difference in the influence of the social and political environments on academia felt across class groups.
- c. There is a significant difference in the impact of the institutional environment on academic-activism across class groups.
- d. There is a significant difference in the likelihood of identifying as an academic-activist dependent on class background.

3. An individual's race impacts their experience of academic-activism:

- a. There is a significant difference in the levels of academic-activist orientation across different racial backgrounds.
- b. There is a significant difference in the influence of social and political environments on academia felt across different racial backgrounds.
- c. There is a significant difference in the impact of the institutional environment on academic-activism dependent on racial background.
- d. There is a significant difference in the likelihood of identifying as an academic-activist dependent on racial background.

4. There is a difference in levels of activism dependent on contract type:

- a. There is a significant difference in the levels of academic-activist orientation dependent on contract type.
- b. There is a significant difference in the influence of social and political environments on academia felt relative to the individual's contract type
- c. There is a significant difference in the impact of the institutional environment on academic-activism dependent on contract type.
- d. There is a significant difference in the likelihood of identifying as an academic-activist dependent on contract type.

To test the hypotheses, a combination of parametric and non-parametric tests were employed with consideration for the challenge of determining normality in small-to-moderate sample sizes ($n = 147$). The choice of tests was dependent on the data distribution and this approach allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the data and relationships between variables. This is elaborated in further detail in the next chapter.

Gender was the only dichotomous categorical variable included in the current study. Independent samples t-tests were used to assess the differences in mean values across gender. Similarly, the non-parametric equivalent (Mann-Whitney U test) was used to assess the difference in median values across gender. The categorical variables: class, race and contract type involved assessing differences across more than two groups. In this

case, in situations where multiple groups were being compared, a combination of one-way ANOVA (assessing means) and the non-parametric equivalent Kruskal-Wallis test (assessing medians) were used to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the data (Abu-Bader 2021).

Following the quantitative hypotheses testing, correlation and regression analysis was performed on the data. This is discussed in more detail below.

4.6.3.2 Correlation and Regression Analysis

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the relationship between independent and dependent variables an exploratory correlation and multiple regression analysis were used. This means that the analysis was performed without guiding hypotheses. Rather, the correlation and regression analysis were conducted to further explore the relationships between the academic-activist measures and variables of interest following the exploratory development of the overall scale and three sub-scales. Conducting an exploratory correlation and regression analysis in this manner meant that the patterns and relationships that emerged in the data provided the basis for research questions and hypotheses to be utilised in future studies where the developed scales are re-tested with new data. This section will begin by outlining the procedure involved in the correlation analysis before discussing the analytical procedure involved with the multiple regression models.

As this study was interested in the relationship between the categorical variables: gender, class, race and contract type and a continuous variable (i.e. the academic-activist constructs), Pearson's correlation coefficients (r) were used to assess the relationship (i.e. strength and direction of the relationship) between these variables (Pallant 2011). Similarly, Pearson's (r) was used to assess the relationship between the academic-activist measures with each other (e.g. social and political environment sub-scale and academic-activist orientation scale). For the correlation analysis, the type, as well as the direction of the relationship was reported between the variables. The correlation analysis results served as a basis for conducting the subsequent multiple regression analysis. This approach enabled a deeper exploration of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, extending upon the initial insights gained from the correlation analysis.

Multiple regression allows you to evaluate the importance of each of the independent variables in the model and to test the overall fit of the model to your data (Pallant 2011). Multiple regression is performed when a researcher wants to explore the predictive ability of a set of independent variables (gender, class, race and contract type) on one continuous dependent measure (academic-activist scales). Therefore, multiple regression allows you to evaluate the importance of each of the independent variables in the model and to test the overall fit of the model to your data (Pallant 2011).

A number of assumptions had to be met before conducting multiple regression analysis. An adequate sample size is required in order to perform a multiple regression analysis. Guidelines suggest that the sample size should be at least 10 times the number of predictor variables to avoid overfitting the model. Moreover, Van Voorhis and Morgan (2007) provide the following formula to calculate adequate sample size: N (number of participants) $> 50 + 8m$ (m = number of independent variables). Therefore, in this case, 147 participants with 4 predictor variables was considered sufficient for multiple regression.

Before conducting multiple regression, it is important to ensure assumptions of homoscedasticity and normality of the residuals are met. These refer to various aspects of the distribution of scores and relationships between variables (Pallant 2011). In addition, it is important to check for multicollinearity amongst the independent variables. Pallant (2011) suggest that the VIF (variance inflation factor) value(s) should not be greater than 10. A VIF value greater than 10 suggests that the independent variables are highly correlated; indicating multicollinearity. This was also checked through examining the correlations between independent variables as described above.

Overall, 4 multiple linear regression models were conducted with the academic-activist scales (academic-activist orientation scale; social and political environment sub-scale; institutional environment sub-scale and; activist motivations sub-scale) as dependent variables and gender, class, race and contract type as independent variables. This approach involved including all independent variables (or predictors) simultaneously in the regression equation. By doing so, an estimate of the collective predictive ability of the set of variables in explaining the variance in the dependent variable was obtained. Additionally, this method provided insights into the individual contributions of each independent variable within the model.

The following section will outline the procedure of qualitative content analysis which was performed on the open-ended survey responses.

4.6.3.3 Qualitative Content Analysis

The qualitative content analysis in Study One further explored the relationships between academics' identification with gender, class, and race, their collegiate engagement and their perceptions of the social and political environment in relation to their experiences as academic-activists. Through analysing the responses of academic-activists to the open-ended questions, further insight was gained into understanding the impact of external environments and the individual's identity (including their own personal values, beliefs and motivations) on academic-activism. Therefore, the qualitative content analysis complemented and enriched the prior quantitative work in the study. This section starts by giving an overview of qualitative content analysis. It also explains and justifies as to why this method was chosen instead of other forms of content analysis and qualitative analytical methods. This is followed by outlining the procedural steps involved in conducting the qualitative content analysis.

Content analysis can uncover the latent meaning behind the participant responses, as well as being able to frame the answer and its meaning within a particular context (Bryman 2012; Hsieh and Shannon 2005). Moreover, qualitative content analysis offers an alternative to quantitative content analysis which focuses on examining and reporting frequencies in a text through themes and categories. Researchers who utilise qualitative content analysis as a data analytical tool argue that counting themes and relying on frequencies does not allow you to build an understanding of the latent content that develops during the research process (Atkinson 2017). In comparison to other qualitative research methods, such as thematic analysis, qualitative content analysis emphasises the importance of the coding process involving the condensing of data into meaningful units and categorising them accordingly (Atkinson 2017; Erlingsson and Brysiewicz 2017).

In light of this emphasis on data structuring and organisation, qualitative content analysis provided a method to effectively interpret both brief and articulated open-ended survey responses. This approach allowed for a systematic exploration of the data which ensured a comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives. Additionally, qualitative content analysis provided a balance between a nuanced interpretation of the open-ended

responses and the substantial statistical analysis in this study; making it an appropriate complement to the overall research approach. Hence, by opting to choose a method of content analysis that does not rely on counting frequencies, as advised by methodological guidelines, the analysis of open-ended questions provides meaningful and subjective insights which further contextualise the quantitative data (Atkinson 2017; Mayring 2000; Erlingsson and Brysiewicz 2017).

The qualitative content analysis employed an inductive approach, allowing themes, categories, and codes to emerge directly from the data without pre-established frameworks (Mayring 2000; Erlingsson and Brysiewicz 2017). Although deductive elements were considered, the primary focus was on inductive category development. The themes, categories and codes identified reflect my interpretation of the data which is based on my understanding of literature in the area, my own personal experiences as a precariously employed academic-activist, as well as the PPCT model which examines how external environments can shape individual experiences over time. While the theoretical framework does not concretely guide the analysis, it will be fully utilised at a later stage in the research. This is covered in the final chapter which discusses the relevancy of the PPCT model with regards to the guidelines and recommendations that have been informed by both studies' findings.

Participants were asked to answer 3 open-ended questions at the end of each section of close ended statements as follows:

Q1. Political, Economic and Social Environments: What do you see as the role of an academic within the context of the political, economic and social environments? (Alternatively, you can write 'I do not wish to answer')

Q2. Institutional Environment: In the current institutional environment, does activism have a role in the academy? (Alternatively, you can write 'I do not wish to answer')

Q3. Individual Academic-Activist: What 'type' of activism are you engaged in? If so, how do you normally disseminate/perform this activism?(Alternatively, you can write 'I do not wish to answer').

Erlingsson's and Brysiewicz's (2017) guide to qualitative content analysis was followed. Figure 6 provides an example of the procedure for the analysis of open-ended statements.

Therefore, the qualitative content analysis, which followed an inductive approach in line with Erlingsson's and Brysiewicz's (2017) guidelines, involved the following steps:

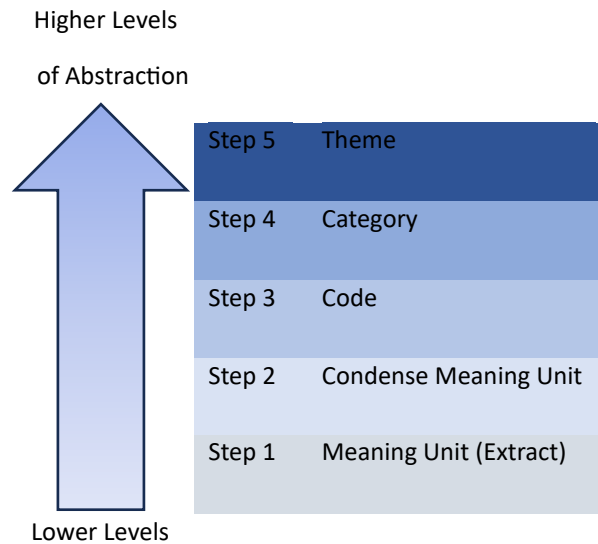


Figure 5. An overview of the process involved in qualitative content analysis guidelines adapted from Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017).

The analysis began by exporting answers to a Word document for familiarisation with the data. Where necessary, extracts (meaning unit) were condensed before coding. Given that some responses were concise, this step was not needed for each extract. See Chapter 5 for an example of this process where more articulated responses were condensed before coding. See also Appendix F for coding framework template and example of coding for concise responses. Condensed meaning units were coded using a combination of semantic and latent coding. Dependent on the depth provided within the participant response, certain condensed meaning units were subject to multiple coding instances. A brief worked example of this is also provided in Appendix F. Throughout this process, notes were kept to track different iterations and explanations of codes.

Categories were then developed by grouping related codes together. Following this step, an overarching theme was formed to express the latent meaning behind grouped categories (see Chapter 5). Within qualitative content analysis, category development can represent the highest level of abstraction which reflects the interpreted, latent meaning of text within content analysis following the forming of categories (Erlingsson and Brysiewicz 2017). However, it is possible to take a further procedural step and create

themes. While categories express content through what is visible and obvious in the data through factual labels, themes operate on an interpretative (or latent) level which express the underlying significance of categories (Erlingsson and Brysiewicz 2017). The use of intercoder reliability was not employed in this inductive approach, as it is considered problematic and may not align with the philosophical position of the research (O'Connor and Joffe 2020). Indicating precise numbers for inductively driven themes and categories can cause ontological and epistemological challenges, as qualitative analysis is inherently subjective (Braun and Clarke 2013; Krippendorff 2004).

In the absence of intercoder reliability as a procedural step, O'Connor and Joffe (2020) state that reliability can be replaced with phrases such as: trustworthiness or dependability. This can be achieved through transparent reporting of the research and the combination of analysis across studies (e.g. statistical analysis of surveys and interview data for the final chapters recommendations and guidelines). The qualitative content analysis also contributed to the basis for interview questions (Study Two). This ensured that the analysis was done in line with key principles of PAR (i.e. collaboration; doing research with and for participants). This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

The following section will outline the ethical considerations of the current study.

4.7 Ethics

Institutional ethical approval for Study One was obtained from the Waterford Institute of Technology (now South East Technological University or SETU) Ethics Committee on March 31, 2021 (See Appendix E). The main ethical considerations throughout the project are briefly outlined below.

Data Protection and Security:

Throughout the research, utmost importance was given to the security and protection of personal information. To ensure this, access to the raw survey data was limited to the researcher, principal supervisor, and co-supervisor. The researcher was committed to processing information in a fair, lawful, and honest manner. Information (survey responses) was used only for the specified research purposes. All data from survey responses were securely stored on a password-protected device for data analysis, with access limited to myself and the supervisory team, ensuring GDPR compliance and safeguarding participant information throughout the research process. Additionally, data

stored on cloud-based platforms such as SETU OneDrive were protected with strong passwords to prevent unauthorised access.

To facilitate open communication and address any queries or concerns, contact details for both myself and the supervisory team were made readily available to participants. This approach emphasised transparency and served as a supportive resource, ensuring participants felt comfortable seeking clarifications during or after their survey submission.

Participants provided a unique identifier in the survey to ensure their anonymity and provide them with the option to have their submissions removed if desired. While submissions were analysed collectively, the unique identifier allowed participants to exercise their right to be forgotten and the right to withdraw.

Research Integrity and Practices

The research adhered to good research practices and principles to maintain research integrity. These practices included ensuring the reliability of the research through rigorous design, methodology and analysis. The research was conducted honestly, transparently, and without bias in developing, undertaking, reviewing, reporting and communicating the findings. The researcher and supervisory team was accountable for all stages of the research, from idea to publication, and for its management, organisation, and wider impacts.

Participants Protection and Participation:

Survey statements were carefully designed to not cause any undue stress to the participants. Instead, the focus was on understanding their values, meanings, and attitudes towards activism and how these aligned with academic duties. Personal information such as names, employers, email addresses, or contact numbers were not collected during the survey.

The recruitment of participants was conducted through purposeful snowball sampling, ensuring self-selection and voluntary participation. Participants were well-informed through informed consent forms and the project information document (Appendix C) about the study and had the choice to decline participation if they were uncomfortable.

Additionally, participants had the right to request erasure of their data within six months of their initial submission.

Participants Protection and Data Analysis:

The study aimed to explore academia as a site for activism rather than targeting specific institutions. Participants were presented with statements that related to their past and current experiences without requiring them to identify specific employers or institutions. The target population consisted of highly educated individuals familiar with research processes and ethical considerations, and their data was statistically grouped to ensure individual privacy. Therefore, the participants were not considered a vulnerable group.

Risk to the Researcher:

As a researcher, measures were taken to mitigate social, emotional, and economic risks associated with the research. Participatory Action Research (PAR) methods were employed, enabling the researcher to work with or for participants rather than on them. Reflective practice, including the use of a reflective journal, was implemented to monitor emotions and stress levels. Open communication with the research team was encouraged to address any issues or concerns.

The study aimed to contribute to the work of activists in academia by developing guidelines and recommendations for social change. The dissemination of results would follow an academically justified approach, prioritising publication in peer-reviewed journals and sharing recommendations with relevant bodies.

Risk to the Participants:

Efforts were made to minimise potential risks to participants. Participants were fully informed about the study, its aims, and their rights to withdraw before accessing the survey (Appendix C). A list of supports and contact numbers was provided to participants who might require additional assistance (Appendix A).

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring their understanding and agreement to participate. De-identification techniques, such as disabling tracking settings and omitting identifying information were employed to protect participant privacy.

Overall, this study prioritised the protection of participants' privacy and confidentiality while ensuring research integrity and adhering to ethical practices. Measures were

implemented to minimise risks to both the researcher and participants, and participant rights and informed consent were respected throughout the research process. The findings of this study aimed to contribute to academic-activism by providing valuable insights and developing guidelines for social change, thereby benefiting the academic-activist community and beyond.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter outlined how the research for Study One was carried out. This chapter described the research design, data collection procedures and the subsequent analysis relevant to Study One. In particular, this chapter outlined the analytical procedures and processes in line with the philosophical underpinnings of the research, as well as its methodological framework. In addition, the main ethical considerations involved in both studies was discussed relevant to measures taken to protect both myself (as the researcher) and participants throughout this PhD study.

The following chapter will present the analysis and discussion from Study One (online survey). This will include the descriptive analysis of survey data, as well as the various inferential statistical tests and the qualitative content analysis of the open-ended questions.

Chapter 5: Study One Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of Study One, which employed a survey to explore how an academics' identification with gender, class and race, collegiate engagement⁵, and perceptions of the political, institutional and social environment relate to their experiences as an academic-activist. To address this aim, a comprehensive analysis of the data collected from 147 participants was conducted by examining the responses of academic-activists in Irish Higher Education Institutions about their views of a range of influences on their activism work in academia, including the political, economic and social environment; institutional environment; and the individual academic-activist's personal values, beliefs and motivations for their academic work.

Part One of the chapter begins by outlining the descriptive statistics of the twelve survey (questions 3-14) related to participant demographics (see Appendix A and Appendix D) (e.g. age, gender, race, etc.), providing important context for understanding the characteristics of participants.

Part Two of the chapter presents the development of the three sub-scales in the survey, as well as the development of the overall scale. This involves assessing the reliability of each sub-scale through Cronbach's alpha analysis, as well as further validity testing through an exploratory factor analysis on retained sub-scale items. The final developed scale informed the subsequent hypotheses testing. The discussion of these findings will be presented following the presentation of results.

Part Three of the chapter presents the findings of the hypotheses testing, which involved both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Quantitative statistical analyses were performed on 44 close-ended, Likert scale items (questions 15-29; 31-45; 47-58), while a qualitative content analysis was performed on the 3 open-ended statements which corresponded to the 3 domains: the political, economic and social environmental aspects, as well as the institutional environment and individual academic-activist in the online survey (see Appendix A). Following quantitative hypotheses testing, correlation and

⁵ Collegiate engagement refers to the active participation, involvement and interaction of academics in various aspects of academic pursuits, such as: giving lectures, volunteering, conducting research and taking on leadership roles. It is not intended as a specific measurable variable, but rather as a collective reference encompassing participation in activities listed above that were prominent the survey responses.

regression analyses were conducted to explore the relationship between the variables of interest (gender, class, race and contract type and the academic-activist constructs). A comprehensive discussion was conducted, integrating the results from the quantitative hypothesis testing and correlation and regression analysis. This is then followed by the qualitative content analysis which includes a separate discussion section.

Finally, Part Four considers the implications of the findings (statistical analyses and qualitative content analysis) and outlines the overall conclusions of the study which are contextualised within the relevant literature and aided by the interrelated ecological systems of the PPCT model. Furthermore, this section discusses how the qualitative content analysis informed the interview guide in the subsequent study (in-depth interviews with academic-activists).

5.2 Part One: Descriptive Analysis of Participant Demographics

Based on a total sample of 147 academic-activists based in Ireland, this section presents the descriptive statistics of participants demographics in the order of: (i) personal characteristics (Tables 1-4); (ii) employment details (Tables 5-8) and; (iii) childcare and marital status (Tables 9-12). Personal characteristics include the distribution of gender, class, race and age; details of participant's employment include participants' highest level of award, current role, time worked in academia and current contract type; and the final tables outline whether participants have children and if childcare (as well as parental/maternity/paternity/adoption leave) are relevant to the respondents) (see Appendix D).

Tables 1-4 provide a summary of the distribution of participants based on gender, age, race, and class, along with their corresponding frequencies. In terms of gender, there were 52 participants who were men (35.4%), 94 women participants (63.9%), and 1 participant who identified as nonbinary (0.7%). Regarding age, there were 2 participants in the 18-24 age range (1.4%), 46 participants in the 25-34 range (31.3%), 51 participants in the 35-44 range (34.7%), 37 participants in the 45-54 range (25.2%), 9 participants in the 55-64 range (6.1%), and 2 participants who were 65 or older (1.4%). When examining race, 107 participants identified as White Irish (72.8%), 27 participants identified with other white backgrounds (18.4%), 10 participants identified with any other ethnic background (6.8%), and 3 participants preferred not to disclose their identity with race (2%). Regarding class, there were 15 participants in the upper middle-class (10.2%), 90

participants in the middle-class (61.2%), 32 participants in the working-class (21.8%), 5 participants in the lower working-class (3.4%), and 5 participants who preferred not to disclose their class identity (3.4%).

Table 1: Distribution of Gender

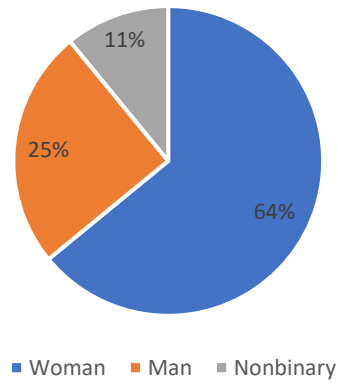


Table 3: Distribution of Participant Race

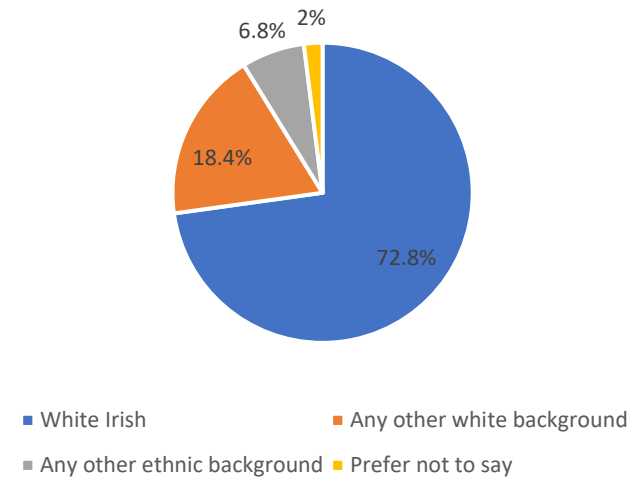


Table 2: Distribution of Age

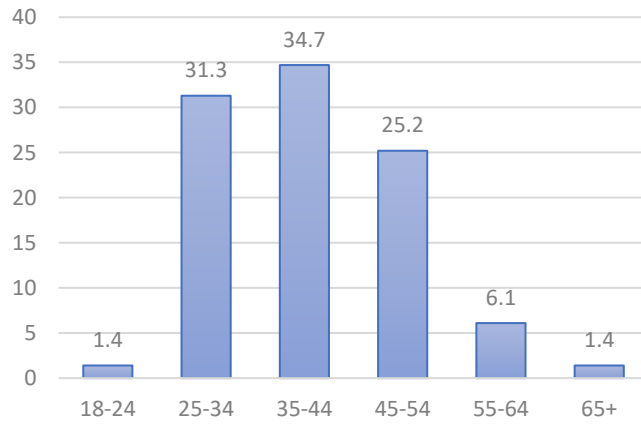
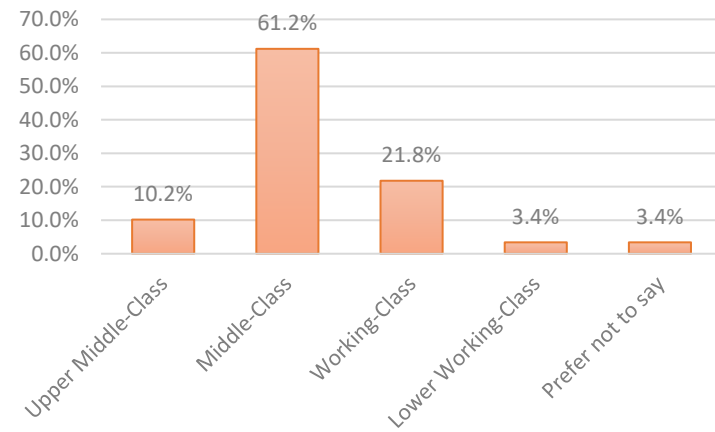


Table 4: Distribution of Class



Tables 5-8 present information on the distribution of participants across variables related to employment details, along with their corresponding frequencies and percentage frequencies. In terms of the level of award, 90 participants (61.2%) held a PhD, 50 participants (34.0%) held a Masters degree, and 7 participants (4.8%) had an Honours Degree. Regarding current academic role, the majority of participants were Lecturers (46.3%, n = 68), followed by PhD Researchers (23.1%, n = 34) and Professors (11.6%, n = 17). Other roles included Researchers (10.9%, n = 16), Teachers (2.0%, n = 3), Tutors (2.7%, n = 4), individuals in administrative positions (0.7%, n = 1) and Head of Departments (1.4%, n = 2) among others. Considering time worked (in years), the largest group consisted of participants who had worked for 6-10 years (26.5%, n = 39), followed by 3-5 years (23.1%, n = 34) and 11-20 years (24.5%, n = 36). The types of contract varied, with the majority having a permanent contract (51.0%, n = 75), followed by fixed term (19.7%, n = 29), PhD Scholarship (19.0%, n = 28), and other types such as no formal, casual, hourly paid (8.2%, n = 12). Other types of working conditions included rolling (0.7%, n = 1), post-retirement (0.7%, n = 1) and an adjunct position (0.7%, n = 1).

Table 5: Distribution of Level of Award

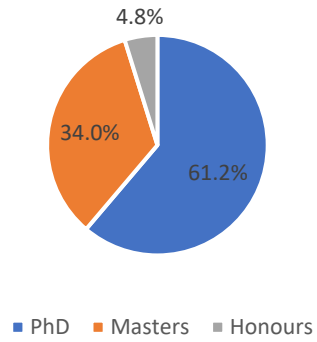


Table 7: Distribution of Years Worked

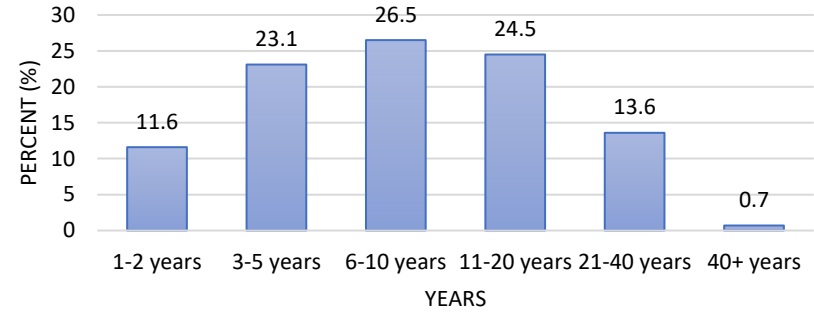


Table 6: Distribution of Current Roles

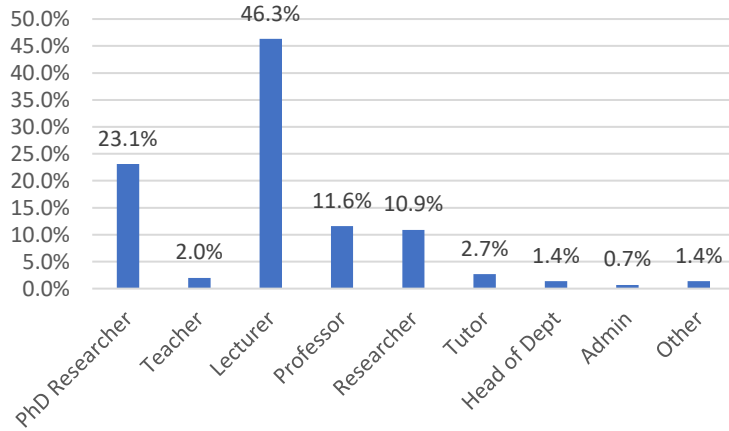
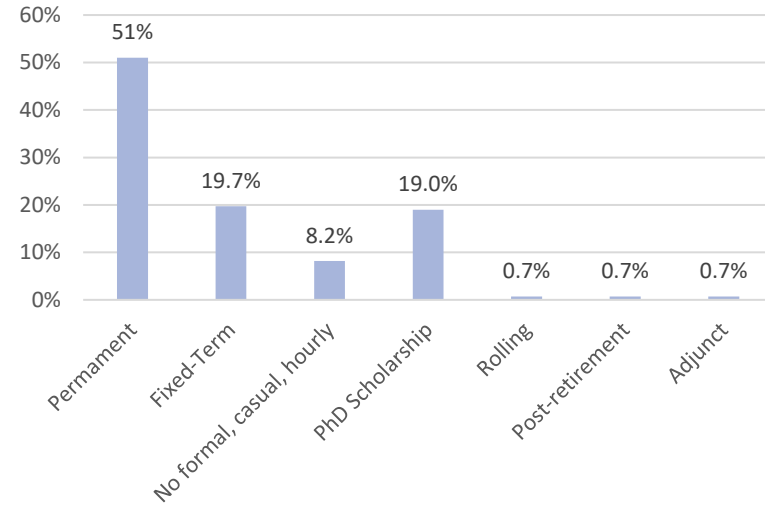


Table 8: Distribution of Contract Types



Tables 9-12 provide information which concern aspects related to childcare and marital status. In terms of marital status, the majority of participants were married (50.3%, n = 74), followed by those who were single (27.2%, n = 40), co-habiting (7.5%, n = 11), and long-term/engaged (5.4%, n = 8). A smaller percentage reported being divorced (4.1%, n = 6), separated (1.4%, n = 2), unmarried (0.7%, n = 1), or preferred not to disclose their marital status (3.4%, n = 5). Regarding children, approximately half of the participants had children (49.7%, n = 73), while the remaining participants did not have children (48.3%, n = 71). Some participants preferred not to disclose their status (2.0%, n = 3). Additionally, participants were asked about their agreement with statements related to childcare responsibilities. The responses varied, with 30.6% (n = 45) strongly agreeing, 9.5% (n = 14) agreeing, 7.5% (n = 11) being neutral, 11.6% (n = 17) disagreeing, 38.1% (n = 56) strongly disagreeing and some participants preferring not to disclose their opinions (2.7%, n = 4).

In terms of parental/maternity/paternity/adoption leave, participants were asked about their agreement with statements related to leave entitlements. Again, the responses varied, with 6.8% (n = 10) strongly agreeing, 8.2% (n = 12) agreeing, 8.8% (n = 13) being neutral, 26.5% (n = 39) disagreeing, 46.9% (n = 69) strongly disagreeing. Some participants chose not to disclose their opinions (2.7%, n = 4)

Table 9: Distribution of Marital Status

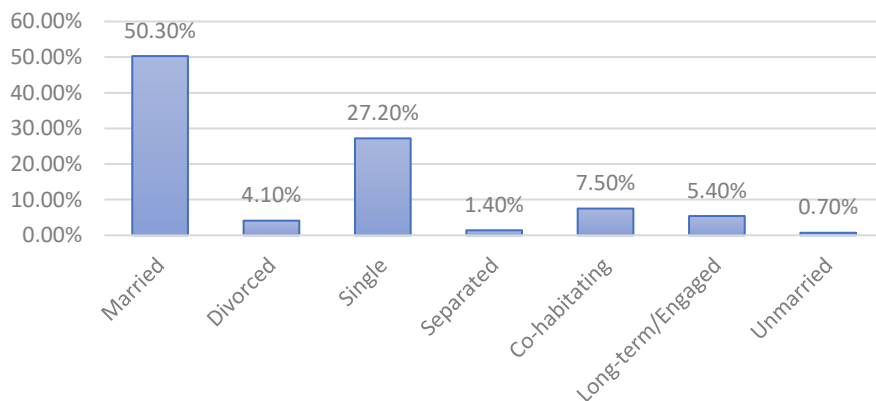


Table 11: Distribution of Participants with Childcare Responsibilities

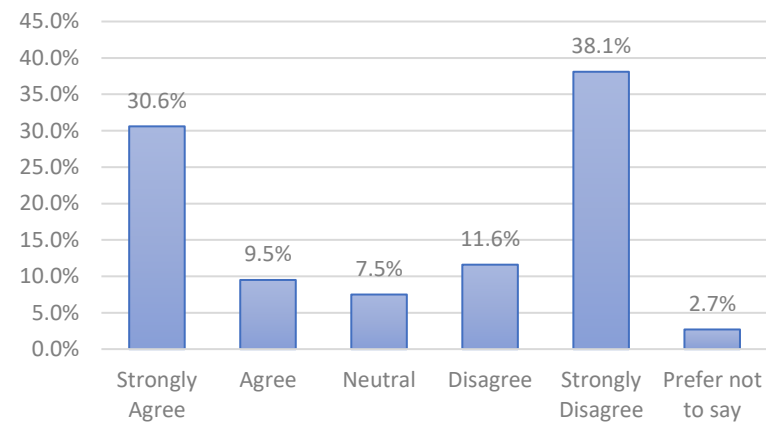


Table 10: Distribution of Participants With/Without Children

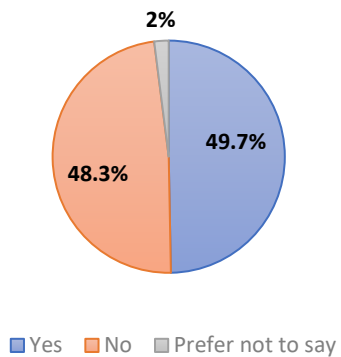
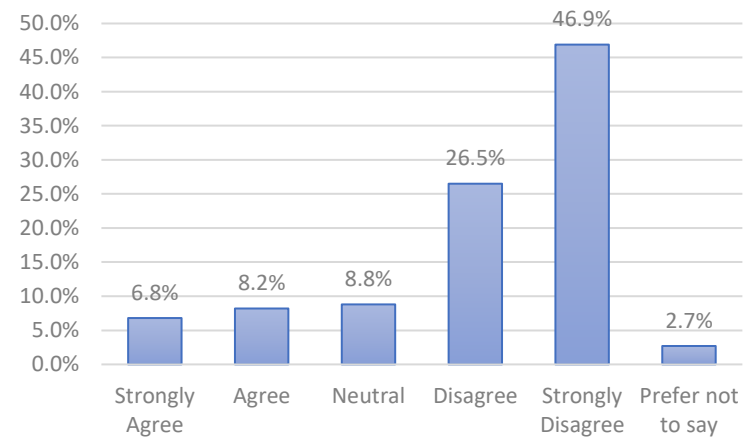


Table 12: Distribution of Participants with Leave Entitlements (Parental/Maternity/Paternal/Adoption)



5.3 Part Two: Development, Reliability and Validity of Sub-Scales

Following the development of the sub-scales and subsequent reliability and validity tests, 3 sub-scales and an overall scale were finalised. Each of the sub-scales was developed from the original ‘themed’ areas within the survey. What the sub-scale and overall scale constructs relate to and measure is outlined in more detail here. The discussion of the findings related to the sub-scale development is presented following the presentation of results in the final part of this section.

From the initial 15 items in the political, economic and social environment theme, the social and political environment sub-scale was developed which consists of 6 statements relating to the presence of neoliberalism within academia and society (e.g. structural conditions). A high score in this scale indicates that the individual feels strongly about the influence of neoliberal ideology within society and academia. Therefore the individual is more likely to encourage or; engage in activism as a response (e.g. through left-leaning activism that challenges mainstream narratives).

From the initial 15 items in the institutional environment theme, the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale was developed which contains 5 statements that refer to the academic environment and the impact this has on academic-activism (e.g. increased workloads). A high score indicates that an academic-activist feels unsupported within their working environment and finds the institutional culture restrictive of academic-activism.

From the initial 12 items in the individual academic-activist theme, the activist motivations sub-scale includes 4 statements which refer to the individual’s characteristics (personal), motivations, attitudes, values and beliefs regarding academic-activist work. A high score indicates a greater willingness to engage in academic-activism and a greater likelihood that you identify as an academic-activist.

The Academic-Activism Orientation Scale represents the overall scale as it captures the focus on academic-activism and the individual's orientation or inclination towards this type of academic practice. This scale measures an individual's overall readiness towards academic-activism based on the three sub-scales (as above) that measure different aspects of this orientation.

The statistical results from the validity and reliability testing relating to the academic-activist constructs (as above) are outlined in more detail in following sections.

5.3.1 Reliability and Validity of the Social and Political Environment Sub-Scale

The sub-scale, ‘the social and political environment’ consisted of 6 items (see Figure 6). Initially, the sub-scale consisted of 15 items. Through the procedure outlined in Chapter 4: Study One Methodology, items were removed due to a lack of internal consistency which was generally the result of low participant agreement and low correlation scores on certain items within the overall construct (see Appendix G for more detail on this process). The 6 item social and political environment sub-scale has an acceptable level of internal consistency, as determined by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.713.

The following table presents each of the 6 items on the social and political environment sub-scale:

Item	Mean
BEPSWE2⁶ Neoliberal ideology impacts the academic environment	4.4762
BEPSWE3 Academia is predicated on middle class values	3.9388
BEPSWE7 Precarious employment is common in academia	4.7211
BEPSWE12 There is a need in Ireland to develop a continuing dialogue with left-leaning groups (organised activists, academics, trade unions, etc.)	4.1905
BEPSWE13 There is a need in Ireland to develop a space in academia to challenge wider economic policy	4.5170
BEPSWE15 Broadly speaking, the current working academic environment encourages individualism	3.8299

Figure 6. The social and political environment sub-scale items.

In Figure 6 each of the mean scores of the social and political environment sub-scale items is above 3. This highlights broad levels of agreement with these statements for participants regarding the presence of neoliberalism within academia and society. The mean scores for each of the 6 items indicated that participants were in high participant agreement regarding the prominence of precarity in academia and the need for space in academia to challenge wider economic policy.

⁶ BEPSWE was used in SPSS to code items in the broader environment for the social and political environment sub-scale.

An exploratory factor analysis was run on the 6 retained items to determine the validity of the sub-scale. Prior to running an exploratory factor analysis, a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of 0.7 (which is considered middling to meritorious) and a significant Bartlett's test of sphericity (p less than 0.5) indicated that the items were likely factorisable. The 6 component solution successfully loaded onto 1 factor with 1 eigenvalue greater than 1, signifying that the items are highly correlated and are measuring the same underlying construct. Factor loadings ranged from 0.471 to 0.806 which indicates that the items are contributing moderately to strongly to the underlying factor they are measuring. This suggests that the retained items in the social and political environment sub-scale includes statements that are well-suited to measuring the construct that the sub-scale is intended to measure. The single factor (social and political environment) is reasonably well-defined by the items included in the scale.

5.3.2 Reliability and Validity of the Institutional Culture and Restrictions Sub-Scale

The sub-scale, 'institutional culture and restrictions', consists of 5 items. The initial sub-scale of the institutional environment consisted of 15 items. Similar to the above, and as outlined in Chapter 4: Study One Methodology, items which were determined to have low correlation or indicate low participant agreement were removed in the process of the sub-scale development due to unacceptable reliability scores (see Appendix G). The 5 item institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale had an acceptable level of internal consistency which is reflected by the Cronbach's alpha score of 0.648.

Figure 7 presents each of the 5 items on the institutional environment sub-scale:

Item		Mean
<i>IE1</i> ⁷	There is a need to develop a space in academia to challenge wider institutional strategy/policy	4.5034
<i>IE2</i>	Generally speaking, my institute is concerned with financial gain	4.3469
<i>IE6</i>	Institutional demands limit my academic freedom	3.4762
<i>IE8</i>	At my institute, securing external funding is a higher priority than teaching/supporting students	3.6735
<i>IE9</i>	My academic freedom is restricted by my teaching workload	3.5714

Figure 7. The institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale items.

While the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale has an acceptable internal consistency score, in comparison to the social and political environment sub-scale, both the reliability score and the mean scores are lower for some items in the institutional culture and restrictions subscale. Participants felt strongest about the need to develop space within academia to challenge current institutional practices given their respective institutions prioritising of financial gain within the context of a lack of inadequate public funding. However, participants were not as consistent in their replies about institutional demands limiting their academic freedom, the institutional attitudes towards securing external funding and whether academic freedom was restricted by their teaching workload.

An exploratory factor analysis was run on the 5 items to determine the validity of the sub-scale. Prior to running an exploratory factor analysis, a KMO measure of 0.7 and a significant Bartlett's test of sphericity (p less than 0.5) indicated that the items were likely factorisable. The 5 items successfully loaded onto 1 factor with 1 eigenvalue greater than 1, signifying that the items are measuring a single factor (i.e. institutional culture and restrictions), rather than multiple factors. Factor loadings ranged from 0.550 to 0.766. The range of factor loadings in this sub-scale indicates that the items are contributing moderately to strongly to the institutional culture and restrictions construct. This suggests that the retained items in the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale includes statements that are well-suited to measuring the construct that the sub-scale is intended

⁷ IE was used to code institutional environment items in SPSS for the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale.

to measure. In addition, the single factor (institutional culture and restrictions) is reasonably well-defined by the items included in the scale.

5.3.3 Reliability and Validity of the Activist Motivations Sub-Scale

The ‘activist motivations’ sub-scale includes 4 items. The initial sub-scale of ‘individual academic-activist’ consisted of 12 items. As noted previously, in line with the procedure outlined in Study One Methodology, determining which items were a good fit within the sub-scale focused on the correlation between items and the mean scores of each item to determine participant agreement (see Appendix G). The activist motivations sub-scale had an acceptable level of internal consistency which is reflected by the Cronbach’s alpha score of 0.783.

Figure 8 presents each of the 4 items on the individual academic-activist scale:

Item		Mean
IND4⁸	Academics should be encouraged to pursue research projects that involved matters of social justice	4.4014
IND5	My area of interest is a reflection of my background (gender, class, race, etc.)	3.8163
IND6	I identify as an activist	3.7279
IND7	I am currently engaged in projects that can be considered activism	3.8435

Figure 8. The activist motivations sub-scale items.

Participants were in high agreement regarding the need for academics to be more broadly supported in their pursuit of public facing scholarship. This is reflected by the items within the activist motivations sub-scale which highlight that the participant group were likely to identify as an academic-activist, as well as engaging in teaching and research which is primarily driven by their relationship with their own identity to gender, class and race.

Having determined the reliability of the activist motivations sub-scale, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on the 4 retained items to test for validity. The KMO measure of 0.7 and a significant Bartlett’s test of sphericity (p less than 0.5) indicated that the items suitable for a factor analysis. The 4 component solution successfully loaded onto 1 factor with 1 eigenvalue greater than 1. Factor loadings ranged from 0.656 to 0.890

⁸ IND was used to code individual academic-activist items in SPSS for the activist motivations sub-scale.

which indicates that the items are strongly related to the activist motivations construct. This suggests that the items in the activist motivations sub-scale are well-suited and that the sub-scale is well-defined by the retained items.

Having completed the reliability tests of each sub-scale, an overall activism construct (i.e. 'academic-activist orientation scale') was developed. This utilised the 15-items (as discussed above) and was verified as a reliable measure with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.824. The overall construct is used in the subsequent quantitative hypotheses testing with the 3 sub-scale measures in Part Three of this chapter. The next section outlines the discussion of results from the development of the sub-scales in line with reliability and validity testing on survey data.

5.3.4 Discussion of the Development, Reliability and Validity of Sub-Scales

The discussion of the results for the reliability and validity testing in the previous section is organised according to each of the four academic-activist constructs (overall scale and three sub-scales). Therefore, this section provides an overview of the key findings related to academic-activist measures, highlighting participants' agreement with issues such as the prominence of precarity in academia and the need for activism to challenge prevailing economic policies. Additionally, it discusses the participants' perception of academia as a middle-class institution and their varying views on academic freedom restrictions. Moreover, it emphasises the importance of personal values and beliefs in driving academic-activist commitments, particularly in research related to social justice and identity. These findings align with existing literature and provide a base for further detailed statistical analysis of the relationship between these factors and variables of interest such as gender, class, race, and contract type in Part Three of this chapter.

Within the social and political environment sub-scale, the mean scores for each of the 6 items indicated that participants were in high participant agreement regarding the prominence of precarity in academia and the need for space in academia to challenge wider economic policy. Furthermore, it is shown from the high level of agreement for each statement that participants perceive academia as a middle-class institution where an individualised working environment is encouraged (Crew 2021; Crew 2020; Fleming 2021). Given the apparent neoliberal influence which is prevalent within academia and society, academics believe there is a need to accelerate left-leaning forms of activism to challenge the status-quo at present (Cox 2014; Grey 2013; O'Flynn and Panayiotopoulos

2015; Rose 2017). However, as is evident within the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale, participants' strong belief in the need for activism within academia is hampered by institutional practices which restrict academic-activism.

For the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale, it was noted that participants felt strongly about the need to develop space within academia for activism in light of issues regarding institutional practices which favour financial gain over public facing scholarship (Altman 2018; Bosanquet and Rytmeister 2017; Fleming 2021; Mahon and Bergin 2018; Marginson 2014; Marginson 1997; Mercille and Murphy 2015; Phipps and McDonnell 2021; Rhodes et al. 2017). However, participants were not as consistent in their agreement with items relating to their academic freedom being restricted by institutional demands (e.g. increased workloads). Potential reasons for this are participants being employed in institutions that encourage and support academic-activism through public facing research and pedagogical approaches in the classroom (Cox 2014; Grollman 2015; Pease 2015; Rouhani 2012; Villanueva and O'Sullivan 2019). As well as this, differences in academic roles (in particular contractual obligations and responsibilities as part of an academic role) may determine whether an individual feels restricted by their teaching workloads or other institutional demands (e.g. Senior Lecturer in comparison to a PhD Researcher) (Alakauvklar 2020; Delaney 2020b; Clarke et al. 2015; Flood et al. 2013; Nkomo 2009; Merga and Mason 2020; Rahal et al. 2023; Woolston 2019). Given apparent restrictions to academic freedom in an institutional context, participants' high agreement with statements related to the need for wider support of academic-activists. This reflects the alignment of personal values and beliefs with activist commitments, particularly in research pertaining to social justice and personal identity which was demonstrated within the activist motivations sub-scale.

The activist motivation sub-scales indicates that participant's personal values and beliefs with regards to academic work are conducted through activist commitments and motivations (Reyes Mason 2020; Rhodes et al. 2017; Sliva et al. 2019). This was indicated by mean scores which depicted participant's high agreement with statements related to the need for academic-activists to be more widely supported given that there are academics engaged in research related to their own identity which is geared towards matters of social justice (Gorski and Erkat 2019; Grollman 2015; Lund and Nabavi 2008; Pease 2015; Sobande 2018). These findings highlight the significance of supporting

academic-activists who conduct research related to their personal identity and are driven by a commitment to social justice, as indicated by participants.

The combination of the sub-scales within the overall academic-activist measure, which has acceptable internal reliability, is indicative of the later correlation and regression analysis which further supported claims from the wider literature (as briefly detailed above) that these external factors (i.e. social and political environment; institutional culture and restrictions and; the individual's activist motivations) are key to understanding an individual academic-activist's experience of engaging in academic-activism. This will be further discussed in the following section in more specific detail as to how they relate to each of the variables of interest within this study (gender, class, race and contract type).

5.4 Part Three: Hypotheses Testing

This section includes three sub-sections. Firstly, the statistical analyses of each of the categorical variables of interest (gender, class, race and contract type) in line with the academic-activist measures is reported before presenting a summary table of each of the hypotheses testing. Following this, the results from the correlation and regression analysis are presented. Although the correlation and regression analysis is not guided by hypothesis, the purpose of the results here are to provide a basis for future re-testing of the current analysis of survey data. Next, the discussion of the findings which includes both the quantitative hypothesis testing and correlation and regression analysis is outlined. Lastly, the qualitative content analysis, which provides further context and depth to the statistical analyses is outlined before a subsequent discussion section.

In order to test the hypotheses listed above, a combination of parametric and non-parametric tests were performed. The choice between a parametric test and its non-parametric test relies on whether the data is normally distributed or not (Pallant 2011). However, in small-to-moderate sample sizes (i.e. less than 150) it is challenging to determine whether the data is normally distributed (Abu-Bader 2021; Cessie et al. 2020). This is due to the distribution of the sample statistics (e.g., mean, variance) being highly variable for small sample sizes. This can make it difficult to accurately estimate the population parameters (Field 2017). In addition, standard normality tests, such as the Shapiro-Wilk test or the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, have low power to detect non-normality when the sample size is small (Cessie et al. 2020). In this case, the decision

was made not to automatically default to either parametric or non-parametric tests, but to utilise a combination of both types of tests.

It is possible to use both parametric and non-parametric tests on non-normal data dependent on relevant contexts and the goals of the analysis (Cessie et al. 2020). By conducting both parametric and non-parametric tests and comparing the results, it was possible to gain a better understanding of the differences between the groups and the academic-activist constructs which aided the robustness of the findings (Abu-Bader 2021). Moreover, as will be outlined below, the assumption of normality in this instance does not have any noticeable effect on the significance of results. Before reporting the results of the hypotheses testing, the guiding hypotheses of the current study are restated in Figure 9.

<p>Men and women differ in terms of their levels of academic-activism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. There is a significant difference in the levels of academic-activist orientation across gender. b. There is a significant difference in the influence of the social and political environments on academia felt across gender. c. There is a significant difference in the impact of the institutional environment on academic-activism across gender. d. There is a significant difference in the likelihood of identifying as an academic-activist and engaging in academic-activism across gender.
<p>Class impacts an academics' ability to engage in academic-activism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. There is a significant difference in the levels of academic-activist orientation across class groups. b. There is a significant difference in the influence of the social and political environments on academia felt across class groups. c. There is a significant difference in the impact of the institutional environment on academic-activism across class groups. d. There is a significant difference in the likelihood of identifying as an academic-activist dependent on class background.
<p>An individual's race impacts their experience of academic-activism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. There is a significant difference in the levels of academic-activist orientation across different racial backgrounds. b. There is a significant difference in the influence of social and political environments on academia felt across different racial backgrounds. c. There is a significant difference in the impact of the institutional environment on academic-activism dependent on racial background. d. There is a significant difference in the likelihood of identifying as an academic-activist dependent on racial background.
<p>There is a difference in levels of activism dependent on contract type</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. There is a significant difference in the levels of academic-activist orientation dependent on contract type. b. There is a significant difference in the influence of social and political environments on academia felt relative to the individual's contract type c. There is a significant difference in the impact of the institutional environment on academic-activism dependent on contract type. d. There is a significant difference in the likelihood of identifying as an academic-activist dependent on contract type.

Figure 9. List of hypotheses related to key categorical variables and academic-activist measures.

5.4.1 Hypothesis 1: men and women differ in terms of their levels of academic-activism

A combination of independent samples t-test and non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test were conducted to assess differences in levels of activism for men and women within 4 constructs relating to academic-activism: (a) academic-activist orientation scale (b) the social and political environment sub-scale, (c) institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale and (d) activist motivations sub-scale which are outlined below. As those who identified as gender nonbinary were a small sample size ($n = 1$), this respondent's data was not included within the statistical tests. As the sample size of nonbinary respondents is disproportionately small compared to the other gender groups, this can lead to statistical challenges or limitations in drawing reliable conclusions due to imbalanced representation.

Parametric Tests			Non-parametric Tests			
Sub-Scales	Mean Men	Mean Women	Significant Difference	Median Men	Median Women	Significant Difference
AAOS ⁹	3.82	4.21	Yes, p value = 0.000	3.90	4.27	Yes, p value = 0.000
Social and Political	4.12	4.37	Yes, p value = 0.038	4.33	4.50	No, p value = 0.088
Institutional ¹⁰	3.66	4.07	Yes, p value = 0.000	3.80	4.20	Yes, p value = 0.001
Activist Motivations	3.58	4.14	Yes, p value = 0.000	3.75	4.25	Yes, p value = 0.000

Figure 10. Mean and median results of statistical analyses for gender.

- (a) There was a significant difference ($p = 0.000$) between the mean scores between men (mean = 3.82, $n = 52$) and women (mean = 4.21, $n = 94$) within the academic-activist orientation scale. A non-parametric Mann-Whitney U also showed that there was a significant difference ($p = 0.000$) in the median scores between men (median = 3.90, $n = 52$) and women (median = 4.27, $n = 94$).

⁹ AAOS is an abbreviation of Academic-Activist Orientation Scale and is used throughout the analysis in results and summary tables.

¹⁰ Institutional is shorthand for the Institutional Culture and Restrictions sub-scale and is used throughout the analysis in results and summary tables.

- (b) There was a significant difference ($p = 0.038$) between the mean scores between men (mean = 4.12, $n = 52$) and women (mean = 4.37, $n = 94$) within the social and political environment sub-scale. However, a non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test showed that there was no significant difference ($p = 0.088$) in the median scores between men (median = 4.33, $n = 52$) and women (median = 4.50, $n = 94$). While the p value within the non-parametric test is not less than 0.05, it is less than 0.1 which would indicate there is weakly significant relationship between gender and the social and political environment sub-scale. Overall, the results of the statistical tests are somewhat inconclusive which suggests that there is not a strong relationship between the variables.
- (c) There was a significant difference ($p = 0.000$) between mean scores for men (mean = 3.66, $n = 52$) and women (mean = 4.07, $n = 94$) within the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale. Additionally, a non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test indicated a significant difference ($p = 0.001$) between median scores for men (median = 3.80, $n = 52$) and women (median = 4.20, $n = 94$) in the same sub-scale.
- (d) Lastly, there was a significant difference ($p = 0.000$) between mean scores for men (mean = 3.58, $n = 52$) and women (mean = 4.14, $n = 94$) within the activist motivations sub-scale. The non-parametric equivalent also found a significant difference ($p = 0.000$) between the median scores for men (median = 3.75, $n = 52$) and women (median = 4.25, $n = 3.75$) within this sub-scale.

Within the context of academic-activist orientation, institutional culture and restrictions, as well as activist motivations, it is evident that men and women differ in their levels of academic-activism. However, within the social and political environment sub-scale, the results were inconclusive, therefore there was not sufficient evidence to support this particular hypotheses. The following section will outline the statistical tests conducted for class groups within the academic-activist orientation scale and 3 sub-scales.

5.4.2 Hypothesis 2: class impacts an academics' ability to engage in academic-activism

A combination of one-way ANOVA and non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test were conducted to assess whether class impacts an academics' ability to engage in academic-activism within 4 constructs relating to academic-activism: (a) academic-activist

orientation scale (b) the social and political environment sub-scale, (c) institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale and (d) activist motivations sub-scale which are outlined below. Participants were categorised within three class categories: upper middle-class, middle-class and working-class and lower socioeconomic status (SES)¹¹. As those from the lower working-class group had a small sample size (n = 5), those identifying with the lower working-class social group were combined with working-class participants (n = 32) for statistical analysis. No participant identified with the upper class group originally presented in the survey. Those who did not state which class they identified with (n = 5) were not used within the analysis. The results from the hypotheses testing relating to class are outlined below.

Sub-Scales	Parametric Tests				Non-parametric Tests			
	Mean Upper MC	Mean Middle Class	Mean Working Class and Lower SES	Significant Difference	Median Upper MC	Median Middle Class	Median Working Class and Lower SES	Significant Difference
AAOS	4.06	4.07	4.20	No, p value = 0.400	4.13	4.20	4.33	No, p value = 0.244
Social and Political	4.17	4.33	4.36	No, p value = 0.548	4.33	4.50	4.50	No, p value = 0.395
Institutional	3.89	3.82	4.25	Yes, p value = 0.002	3.80	4.00	4.20	Yes, p value = 0.002
Activist Motivations	4.10	3.99	3.89	No, p value = 0.669	4.25	4.00	4.25	No, p value = 0.972

Figure 11. Mean and median results of statistical analyses for class.

- (a) A one-way ANOVA test found that there was no significant difference ($p = 0.400$) between mean scores for upper middle-class (mean = 4.06, $n = 15$), middle-class (mean = 4.07, $n = 90$) and working-class and lower SES groups (mean = 4.20, $n = 37$) within the academic-activist orientation scale. Further, a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test indicated there was no significant difference ($p = 0.244$) between median scores for upper middle-class (median = 4.13, $n = 15$), middle-

¹¹ From this point on, the term 'lower socioeconomic status' will be used to refer to individuals or groups who experience reduced access to economic resources, education, and social opportunities due to income disparities, occupation, or other related factors. It will be abbreviated as "lower SES" for brevity.

class (median = 4.20 , n = 90) and working-class and lower SES groups (median = 4.33, n = 37) within this scale.

- (b) A one-way ANOVA test found that there was no significant difference ($p = 0.548$) between mean scores for upper middle-class (mean = 4.17, n = 15), middle-class (mean = 4.33, n = 90) and working-class and lower SES groups (mean = 4.36, n = 37) within the social and political environment sub-scale. Further, a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test indicated there was no significant difference ($p = 0.395$) between median scores for upper middle-class (median = 4.33, n = 15), middle-class (median = 4.50 , n = 90) and working-class and lower SES groups (median = 4.50, n = 37) within this sub-scale.
- (c) A one-way ANOVA test found that there was a significant difference ($p = 0.002$) between mean scores for upper middle-class (mean = 3.89, n = 15), middle-class (mean = 3.82, n = 90) and working-class and lower SES groups (mean = 4.25, n = 37) within the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale. An additional Tukey's post-hoc analysis revealed there was a significant differences in the means between middle-class and working-class and lower SES groups ($p = 0.001$) within the institutional environment sub-scale. Equally, a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test indicated there was also a significant difference ($p = 0.002$) between median scores for upper middle-class (median = 3.80, n = 15), middle-class (median = 4.00 , n = 90) and working-class and lower SES groups (median = 4.20, n = 37) within this sub-scale.
- (d) A one-way ANOVA test found that there was no significant difference ($p = 0.669$) between mean scores for upper middle-class (mean = 4.10, n = 15), middle-class (mean = 3.99, n = 90) and working-class and lower SES groups (mean = 3.89, n = 37) within the activist motivations sub-scale. A non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test indicated there was also found that there was no significant difference ($p = 0.972$) between median scores for upper-class (median = 4.25, n = 15), middle-class (median = 4.00 , n = 90) and working-class and lower SES groups (median = 4.25, n = 37) within this sub-scale.

There was no significant differences found within the academic-activism orientation scale, the social and political environment sub-scale and the activist motivations sub-scale meaning that there was insufficient evidence to support the guiding hypotheses in this instance. However, there a significant difference was found across class groups within the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale. The following section will outline the statistical tests conducted on the race variable within the academic-activist orientation scale, as well as the 3 sub-scales relating to academic-activism.

5.4.3 Hypothesis 3: an individual's race impacts their experience of academic-activism

Participants were categorised into three categories: White Irish, any other White background and any other ethnic background. Those who selected prefer not to say (n = 3) were not used within the statistical analysis. Both one-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis tests were used to assess whether an individual's race impacts their experience of academic-activism. This is further analysed through significance testing within 4 constructs relating to academic-activism: (a) academic-activist orientation scale (b) the social and political environment sub-scale, (c) institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale and (d) activist motivations sub-scale which are outlined below.

Sub-Scales	Parametric Tests				Non-parametric Tests			
	Mean White Irish	Mean Other White	Mean Any Other Ethnic	Significant Difference	Median White Irish	Median Any Other White	Median Any Other Ethnic	Significant Difference
AAOS	4.09	4.11	3.74	No, p value = 0.222	4.20	4.27	4.00	No, p value = 0.202
Social and Political	4.34	4.25	3.85	No, p value = 0.087	4.50	4.50	4.08	No, p value = 0.229
Institutional	3.92	4.01	3.62	No, p value = 0.459	4.00	4.40	3.40	No, p value = 0.125
Activist Motivations	3.95	4.04	3.73	No, p value = 0.728	4.00	4.25	4.13	No, p value = 0.843

Figure 12. Mean and median results of statistical analyses for race.

(a) A one-way ANOVA test found that there was no significant difference ($p = 0.222$) between the mean values between White Irish (mean = 4.09, $n = 107$), other White backgrounds

(mean = 4.11, n = 27) and other ethnic backgrounds (mean = 3.74, n=10) in the academic-activist orientation scale. A non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test showed that there was also no significant difference in the median values ($p = 0.202$) between White Irish (median = 4.20, n = 107), other White backgrounds (median = 4.27, n = 27) and any other ethnic backgrounds (median = 4.00, n = 10) in the same scale.

(b) A one-way ANOVA test found that there was no significant difference ($p = 0.087$) between the mean values between White Irish (mean = 4.34, n = 107), other White backgrounds (mean = 4.25, n = 27) and other ethnic backgrounds (mean = 3.85, n=10). Further analysis through a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test showed that there was also no significant difference in the median values ($p = 0.229$) between White Irish (median = 4.50, n = 107), other White backgrounds (median = 4.50, n = 27) and any other ethnic backgrounds (median = 4.08, n = 10). Although there was no significant difference found between groups within the social and political environment sub-scale, those from other ethnic backgrounds reported visibly lower mean and median values in comparison to other groups within this sub-scale.

(c) A one-way ANOVA test found that there was no significant difference ($p = 0.459$) between the mean values of White Irish (mean = 3.92, n = 107), other White backgrounds (mean = 4.01, n = 27) and other ethnic background participants (mean = 3.62, n = 10) within the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale. A Kruskal-Wallis test also showed that there was no significant difference between the median values of White Irish (median = 4.00, n = 107), other White backgrounds (median = 4.40, n = 27) and any other ethnic backgrounds (median = 3.40, n = 10) within the same scale. Again, while there was no significant difference found, the mean and median values for those from other ethnic backgrounds is noticeably lower in comparison to White Irish and other White background participants.

(d) A one-way ANOVA test found that there was no significant difference (p value = 0.728) between the mean values of White Irish (mean = 3.95, n = 107), other White backgrounds (mean = 4.04, n = 27) and other ethnic backgrounds (mean =

3.73, n = 10) within the activist motivations sub-scale. Similarly, a Kruskal-Wallis test showed that there was no significant difference (p value = 0.843) between the median scores for White Irish (median = 4.00, n = 107), other White backgrounds (median = 4.25, n = 107) and other ethnic background (median = 4.13, n = 10) participants within this scale.

No significant differences were found across any of the academic-activism measures for race meaning that there was not enough evidence to support the guiding hypotheses. The following section will outline the statistical tests conducted on the contract type variable within the academic-activist orientation scale, as well as the 3 sub-scales relating to academic-activism.

5.4.4 Hypothesis 4: there is a difference in levels of activism dependent on contract type

For the analysis, participants were categorised into four main categories relating to contract type: permanent (n = 75), fixed-term (n = 29), no formal, casual or hourly paid (n = 12) and PhD Scholarship (n = 28). Those who noted that they were in post-retirement (n = 1) or on a rolling (n = 1) or adjunct (n = 1) contract were left out of the statistical analysis due to their small sample size. One-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis tests were conducted to assess whether there is a difference in the levels of activism dependent on contract type. This will be further analysed below within the 4 constructs relating to academic-activism: (a) academic-activist orientation scale (b) the social and political environment sub-scale, (c) institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale and (d) activist motivations sub-scale which are outlined below.

Sub-Scales	Parametric Tests					Non-parametric Tests				
	Mean Perm	Mean FT	Mean None	Mean PhD	Significant Difference	Median Perm	Median FT	Median None	Median PhD	Significant Difference
AAOS	4.06	4.14	4.20	3.98	No, p value = 0.604	4.20	4.27	4.23	4.20	No, p value = 0.646
Social and Political	4.31	4.30	4.29	4.16	No, p value = 0.743	4.50	4.33	4.33	4.33	No, p value = 0.576
Institutional	3.89	4.00	4.15	3.86	No, p value = 0.526	4.00	4.20	4.40	4.00	No, p value = 0.355
Activist Motivations	3.89	4.09	4.13	3.88	No, p value = 0.606	4.00	4.25	4.25	4.25	No, p value = 0.645

Figure 13. Mean and median results of the statistical analyses for contract type.

- (a) A one-way ANOVA found that there was no significant difference ($p = 0.604$) between the mean values of permanent (mean = 4.06, $n = 75$), fixed-term (mean = 4.14, $n = 29$), no formal, casual or hourly paid (mean = 4.20, $n = 12$) and PhD Scholarship (mean = 3.98, $n = 28$) respondents. Similarly, a Kruskal-Wallis test found that there was no significant difference ($p = 0.646$) in the median values between permanent (median = 4.20, $n = 75$), fixed-term (median = 4.27, $n = 29$), no formal, casual or hourly paid contract (median = 4.23, $n = 12$) and PhD Scholarship (median = 4.20, $n = 28$) participants.
- (b) A one-way ANOVA found that there was no significant difference ($p = 0.743$) between the mean values of permanent (mean = 4.31, $n = 75$), fixed-term (mean = 4.30, $n = 29$), no formal, casual or hourly paid (mean = 4.29, $n = 12$) and PhD Scholarship (mean = 4.16, $n = 28$) respondents. Similarly, a Kruskal-Wallis test found that there was no significant difference ($p = 0.576$) in the median values between permanent (median = 4.50, $n = 75$), fixed-term (median = 4.33, $n = 29$), no formal, casual or hourly paid contract (median = 4.33, $n = 12$) and PhD Scholarship (median = 4.33, $n = 28$) participants.
- (c) A one-way ANOVA found that there was no significant difference ($p = 0.526$) between the mean values of permanent (mean = 3.89, $n = 75$), fixed-term (mean = 4.00, $n = 29$), no formal, casual or hourly paid (mean = 4.15, $n = 12$) and PhD Scholarships (mean = 3.86, $n = 28$) within the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale. In addition, a Kruskal-Wallis test found no significant difference (0.355) in the median values between permanent (mean = 4.00, $n = 75$), fixed-

term (mean = 4.20, n = 29), no formal, casual or hourly paid (mean = 4.40, n = 12) and PhD Scholarships (mean = 4.00, n = 28) within the same sub-scale.

- (d) Within the activist motivations sub-scale, a one-way ANOVA found that there was no significant difference ($p = 0.606$) between the mean values of permanent (mean = 3.89, n = 75), fixed-term (mean = 4.09, n = 29), no formal, casual or hourly paid (mean = 4.13, n = 12) and PhD Scholarships (mean = 3.88, n = 28). Within the same sub-scale, a Kruskal-Wallis test found no significant difference ($p = 0.645$) in the median values between permanent (mean = 4.00, n = 75), fixed-term (mean = 4.25, n = 29), no formal, casual or hourly paid (mean = 4.25, n = 12) and PhD Scholarships (mean = 4.25, n = 28).

Similar to the race variable, no significant differences were found across any of the academic-activist constructs for contract type. As such, there is not enough evidence within this variable to support that there is a relationship between contract type and academic-activism as no significant differences were found within the analyses. The following section provides a summary of the results of the quantitative hypotheses testing.

5.4.5 Hypotheses Test Summary

In this section, the hypotheses test summary presents the key findings of the statistical analyses, which involved conducting parametric and non-parametric tests on the four guiding hypotheses along with their corresponding sub-hypotheses. Figures 14, 15, 16, and 17 provide a detailed overview of the statistical tests performed, the resulting p-values (statistical result), and the conclusions drawn from the analysis. These findings demonstrate the extent to which the hypotheses and sub-hypotheses were supported or refuted by the data.

Hypotheses and Variable(s)	Statistical Test	Significant Difference	Statistical Result and Conclusions
Gender:			
1. (a) AAOS	Independent samples t-test / Mann-Whitney U Test	Yes	p value = 0.000 for both statistical tests. This leads to the conclusion that there is a relationship between gender and overall levels of academic-activist orientation.
1. (b) Social and Political	Independent samples t-test / Mann-Whitney U Test	Yes/No	p value = 0.038 / p value = 0.088. While the parametric test lead to a significant result, the non-parametric equivalent yielded did not meaning the results are inconclusive.
1. (c) Institutional	Independent samples t-test / Mann-Whitney U Test	Yes	p value = 0.000 / p value = 0.001. This leads to the conclusion that the institutional environment impacts on academic-activists differently dependent on your identity with gender.
1. (d) Activist Motivations	Independent samples t-test / Mann-Whitney U Test	Yes	p value = 0.000 for both statistical tests. This leads to the conclusion that the likelihood of identifying as an academic-activist and engaging in academic-activism is related to your identity with gender.

Figure 14. Hypotheses test summary for gender variable.

Hypotheses and Variable(s)	Statistical Test	Significant Difference	Statistical Result and Conclusions
Class:			
2. (a) AAOS	One-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis test	No	p value = 0.400 / p value = 0.244. There is no relationship between class and levels of academic-activist orientation.
2. (b) Social and Political	One-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis test	No	p value = 0.548 / p value = 0.395. There is no relationship between class identity and the impact of the social and political environment on academic-activism.
2. (c) Institutional	One-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis test	Yes	p value = 0.002 / p value = 0.002. This leads to the conclusion that the institutional environment impacts upon academic-activism based on your class identity.
2. (d) Activist Motivations	One-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis test	No	p value = 0.669 / p value = 0.972. This leads to the conclusion that the likelihood of identifying or engaging in academic-activism is not related to your identity with class.

Figure 15. Hypotheses test summary for class variable.

Hypotheses and Variable(s)	Statistical Test	Significant Difference	Statistical Result and Conclusions
Race:			
3. (a) AAOS	One-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis test	No	p value = 0.222 / p value = 0.202. There is no relationship between race and levels of academic-activist orientation.
3. (b) Social and Political	One-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis test	No	p value = 0.087 / p value = 0.229. There is no relationship between race and the impact of the social and political environment on academic-activism.
3. (c) Institutional	One-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis test	No	p value = 0.459 / p value = 0.125. There is no relationship between the impact of the institutional environment on academic-activism dependent on your race.
3. (d) Activist Motivations	One-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis test	No	p value = 0.728 / p value = 0.843. The likelihood of identifying as an activist or engaging in activism is not related to your race.

Figure 16. Hypotheses test summary for race variable.

Hypotheses and Variable(s)	Statistical Test	Significant Difference	Statistical Result and Conclusions
Contract Type:			
4. (a) AAOS	One-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis test	No	p value = 0.604 / p value = 0.646. There is no relationship between contract type and levels of academic-activist orientation.
4. (b) Social and Political	One-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis test	No	p value = 0.743 / p value = 0.576. There is no relationship between contract type and the impact of the social and political environment on academic-activism.
4. (c) Institutional	One-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis test	No	p value = 0.526 / p value = 0.355. There is no relationship between the impact of the institutional environment on academic-activism dependent on your contract type.
4. (d) Activist Motivations	One-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis test	No	p value = 0.606 / p value = 0.645. The likelihood of identifying as an activist or engaging in activism is not related to your contract type.

Figure 17. Hypotheses test summary for contract type variable.

The findings from the quantitative hypotheses testing provide important insights into the relationship between the variables under investigation (gender, class, race and contract type) and offer interesting findings regarding how individual's interaction within different environments (e.g. institutional) impact their experience of academic-activism.

The following section will outline the findings from the correlation and regression analysis as part of this study. Incorporating correlation and regression analysis provides valuable insights by identifying potential relationships or patterns between variables. This approach not only adds a layer of depth to the analysis, but also allows for a more

comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between different factors within the research context, aiding in the development of future hypotheses for subsequent research.

5.4.6 Correlation and Regression Analysis

The correlation and regression analysis has been included as an addendum to the previous significance testing to ensure that the analysis is rigorous, clear, and comprehensive. This also allows for a further in-depth, additional exploration of the relationships between variables following initial significance testing. In addition, a summary table of the key findings is presented after both the correlation and multiple regression analysis respectively.

The correlation and regression analyses are conducted without guiding hypotheses which means that the analysis is conducted in order to identify patterns or relationships in the data following the exploratory development of the overall scale and academic-activist sub-scales which underwent significance testing. As the scales were developed in an exploratory manner, the correlation and regression analysis were conducted to determine whether any significant relationships emerge between the academic-activist constructs. In this case, exploratory correlation and regression analyses are utilised for identifying potential research questions and generating new hypotheses for future research that can be tested in similar studies with new datasets.

A correlation analysis was utilised to analyse the relationship between a categorical variable (i.e. gender, class, race and contract type) and a scale variable (i.e. academic-activist orientation scale, social and political environment sub-scale, institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale and activist motivations sub-scale) to examine the strength and direction of any correlation that may exist. This is demonstrated in more detail in Table 13.

Table 13: Pearson Correlations between Categorical Variables and Academic-Activist Orientation Scale and Sub-Scale.

	Gender	Class	Race	Contract	SocPol	Institutional	Motivations
Class	-.071						
Race	.047	.002					
Contract	-.101	-.126	.226**				
SocPol ¹²	-.187*	.079	-.196*	-.084			
Institutional	-.316**	.235**	-.044	.017	.383**		
Motivations ¹³	-.278**	-.076	-.052	.018	.582**	.316**	
AAOS	-.325**	.101	-.129	-.025	.852**	.703**	.802**

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As reported in Table 13, the correlations between the categorical variables are all relatively weak. For example, the correlation between gender and class was weak and not statistically significant ($r = -.071$, $p > .05$). Similarly, there was a weak, non-significant correlation between class and contract type ($r = -.126$). However, there was a statistically significant correlation between race and contract type ($r = .226$, $p < .01$). This correlation indicated a weak positive relationship which suggests that individuals from specific backgrounds were more likely to have specific types of contracts. Thus, within this sample the data indicates that individuals from any other White backgrounds and individuals from any other ethnic backgrounds were more likely to be on PhD Scholarships in comparison to White Irish participants who were more likely to be on permanent contracts.

The correlations between the 3 sub-scales, social and political environment, institutional culture and restrictions and activist motivations indicated statistically significant correlations with each other. There was a statistically significant correlation between the social and political environment sub-scale and institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale ($r = .383$, $p < .01$) which suggests that is a weak positive relationship between the two sub-scales. Similarly, there was a statistically significant correlation between the

¹² SocPol is shorthand for the Social and Political Environment sub-scale.

¹³ Motivations is shorthand for the Activist Motivations sub-scale.

institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale and the activist motivations sub-scale ($r = .316, p < .01$), which again, indicates that there is a weak positive relationship between the two sub-scales. The social and political environment and activist motivations sub-scales also showed a statistically significant correlation ($r = .582, p < .01$) which signifies that there is a moderately positive relationship between the sub-scales.

Expectedly, the 3 sub-scales were highly correlated with the overall academic-activist measure (i.e. academic-activist orientation scale) given that the sub-scales were related to academic-activism. There was a statistically significant relationship between the social and political environment sub-scale ($r = 0.852, p < .01$); the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale ($r = 0.703, p < .01$) and; the activist motivations sub-scale ($r = 0.802, p < .01$) with the academic-activist orientation scale respectively. Each correlation coefficient indicates that there is a strong positive relationship between each of the sub-scales and the overall academic-activist orientation measure.

Following from this, the relationship between the categorical variables and scales was explored. For the categorical variable gender, statistically significant relationships were found within each of the academic-activist scale variables. There was a statistically significant correlation between gender and the social and political environment sub-scale ($r = -.187, p < .05$); gender and the institutional culture and restrictions sub scale ($r = -.316, p < .01$); gender and activist motivations sub-scale ($r = -.278, p < .01$), as well as gender and the overall academic-activist orientation scale ($r = -.325, p < .01$). The negative correlation coefficient (r) shows that there is a tendency for women to score slightly higher on each of the academic-activist scales, but as noted here, the relationship is not strong. This is consistent with results from earlier hypotheses testing (see Figure 10).

There was no statistically significant correlation between class and the social and political environment, activist motivation or the academic-activist orientation measures. For example, the correlation between class and the social and political environment was weak positive and not statistically significant ($r = .079, p > .05$). This indicates that a person's identity with regard to social class does not have an impact on their score within the scales. However, there was a significant correlation between class and the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale ($r = 0.235, p < .01$). While this represents a weak positive correlation, the findings indicate that social class identity may have some

influence on scores within the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale. This is consistent with the results from hypotheses testing where class had a significant relationship with this scale (see Figure 11). In this case, those identifying with working-class and lower SES backgrounds tended to score higher on the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale. This finding indicates that those identifying with working-class and lower SES backgrounds within this sample, find the institutional environment more restrictive of academic-activism in comparison to other class groups in the sample.

There was no statistically significant correlation between race and the institutional culture and restrictions, activist motivations or the academic-activist orientation measures. For example, the correlation between race and the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale was not statistically significant and showed a weak negative relationship between the two variables ($r = -.044$, $p > .05$). Similar to the class variable, this indicates that a person's identity with race does not have an impact on their score within these scales. However, a significant correlation between race and the social and political environment sub-scale was found ($r = -.196$, $p < .01$). This reflects a weak negative correlation between the two variables which suggests that race may have a measurable impact on scores within the social and political environment scale. This is largely consistent with the previous hypotheses testing (see Figure 12) which found no significant association between race and the social and political environment sub-scale.

There was no statistically significant correlation between contract type and the social and political environment, institutional culture and restrictions, the activist motivations or the academic-activist orientation measures. Analysis of the correlation between the contract type and the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale yielded a correlation coefficient of $r = .017$ indicating a weak positive correlation. This suggests that there is no evidence of a meaningful relationship between these variables. Therefore, within this study, an individual's contract type does not appear to impact their score within the respective academic-activist measures.

The correlation analysis above is a form of bivariate analysis which looks at two variables simultaneously to determine if there is a relationship between the variables utilised in the analysis. These findings provide important insights into the relationships between the variables under investigation (gender, class, race and contract type) and inform the regression analysis that follows. Figure 18 provides a summary table which presents the

key findings of the correlation analysis, examining the relationship between the scales and categorical variables.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	R Value	Significant (Yes/No)	Strength and Direction
Gender	AAOS	-.325**	Yes, p < .01	Weak negative
	SocPol	-.187*	Yes, p < .05	Weak negative
	Institutional	-.316**	Yes, p < .01	Weak negative
	Motivations	-.278**	Yes, p < .01	Weak negative
Class	AAOS	.101	No, p > .05	Weak positive
	SocPol	.079	No, p > .05	Weak positive
	Institutional	0.235**	Yes, p < .01	Weak positive
	Motivations	-.076	No, p > .05	Weak positive
Race	AAOS	-.129	No, p > .05	Weak negative
	SocPol	-.196*	Yes, p < .05	Weak positive
	Institutional	-.044	No, p > .05	Weak negative
	Motivations	-.052	No, p > .05	Weak negative
Contract Type	AAOS	-.025	No, p > .05	Weak negative
	SocPol	-.084	No, p > .05	Weak negative
	Institutional	.017	No, p > .05	Weak positive
	Motivations	.018	No, p > .05	Weak positive

Figure 18. Summary table of the correlation analysis between categorical and scale variables.

The next step of the analysis combines the demographic variables simultaneously in a multivariate regression model. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of multicollinearity (i.e. all VIF values less than 10), homoscedasticity and normality of the residuals. A total of 4 multiple linear regression models were conducted with the overall scale and 3 sub-scales as the dependent variables. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression was used as the dependent variables can be treated as a continuous variable. Table 14 shows the results of the regression analysis.

Table 14: Multiple Linear Regression Models on Various Measures of Academic-Activism.

<i>Dependent Variable:</i>	AAOS	Social and Political	Institutional	Activist Motivations
<i>Sample Size:</i>	139	139	139	139
<i>Constant:</i>	4.495**	4.646**	3.824**	5.105**
<i>Independent Variable:</i>				
Gender	-.310**	-.181	-.322**	-.488**
Class	-.066	.061	.250**	-.156
Race	-.063	-.107	.013	-.091
Contract	-.014	-.036	.008	-.008
<i>R Square</i>	.107	.051	.130	.095

*. Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** . Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above multiple linear regression analysis was performed to investigate the relationship between gender, class, race, and contract type on the overall academic-activism orientation scale ($R^2 = .107$, $p = 0.004$), the social and political environment sub-scale ($R^2 = .051$, $p = 0.134$), the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale ($R^2 = .130$, $p = 0.001$) and activist motivations sub-scale ($R^2 = .095$, $p = 0.009$). These values are relatively low reflecting that the combination of X variables (independent variable) for each of the 4 regression models has a weak-to-moderate impact on Y variables (dependent variable). This will be discussed further below.

With the academic-activist orientation scale as the dependent variable, the unstandardised regression coefficients (B) showed that gender had a significant relationship ($B = -.310$, $p = 0.000$), but none of the other categorical variables (class, race, contract type) had a significant relationship. This is consistent with the earlier hypotheses testing and correlation analysis. It is evident that the relationship between gender and overall activism remains significant (i.e. women scoring higher on overall activism than men) after controlling for the other categorical variables.

With the social and political environment sub-scale as the dependent variable, no categorical variables were found to have a significant relationship. However, the model

showed that gender was a marginally significant predictor of academic-activism within the social and political environment ($B = -.181, p = .076$). This is largely consistent with the earlier hypotheses testing and correlation findings where women had a tendency to score higher on this sub-scale in comparison to men.

With institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale as the dependent variable, the model showed that both gender ($B = -.322, p = 0.002$) and class ($B = .250, p = 0.005$) were found to have a significant relationship. The independent variables: race and contract type were not significantly associated with this sub-scale. These results are consistent with the hypotheses testing and correlation analysis outlined previously. In the case of gender, women had a tendency to score higher on the institutional sub-scale. With regards to class, those identifying with working-class and lower SES groups had a tendency to score higher on this sub-scale in comparison to those identifying with middle-class backgrounds. In relation to both independent variables (i.e. gender and class), these findings show that they still have a significant relationship with the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale when controlling for other independent variables respectively.

With the activist motivations sub-scale as the dependent variable, it was shown that gender ($B = -.488, p = 0.001$) had a significant relationship. However, the other independent variables (class, race and contract type) had no significant relationship with this scale. Again, this is consistent with the previous hypotheses testing and correlation analysis which indicated that women score higher on the activist motivations sub-scale. This highlights the significance of the relationship between gender and the activist motivations sub-scale having controlled for other independent variables involved in the analysis.

The correlation analysis demonstrated that gender and class have significant associations with different measures of academic-activism which include: the overall academic-activist orientation, the social and political environment, institutional culture and restrictions and activist motivations measures. These findings suggest that gender and class in particular play a role in shaping the experiences of individuals in relation to academic-activism. The results largely indicate that there is a statistically significant correlation between gender and academic-activism, with women showing a greater inclination towards academic-activism than men. Moreover, individuals identifying with working-class and lower SES groups showed that they found the institutional

environment more restrictive of their academic-activism compared to those identifying with middle-class backgrounds.

The regression analysis further corroborated these findings by highlighting the significance of gender and class in relation to academic-activism. The results demonstrate that gender is a significant indicator of an individual's scores within the overall academic-activism scale, as well as the institutional culture and restrictions and activist motivations sub-scales. Although the correlation analysis indicated a statistically significant weak negative correlation between gender and the social and political environment sub-scale, the regression analysis found that gender was only a marginally significant predictor when controlling for other variables (i.e. class, race and contract type). Similar to the correlation analysis findings, class was found to be a significant indicator of the individual's experience of academic-activism within the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale when controlling for other variables (i.e. gender, race and contract type).

Overall, these findings indicate that the gender and class variables play a role in shaping an individual's experience of academic-activism relevant to external environments (e.g. political and social, institutional). These findings will be further discussed in relation to current research and implications for best practice guidelines and future research directions in the later discussion chapter. The subsequent summary table (Figure 19) provides an overview of the key findings and conclusions from the multiple regression analysis, illustrating the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variables.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Unstandardised Regression Coefficient (B)	Significant (Yes/No)	Overall Conclusion
Gender	AAOS	-.310**	Yes, p < .01	Gender is a marginally significant indicator of an individual's scores within the academic-activist measures. In particular, women have a tendency to score higher than men in these scales.
	SocPol	-.181	No, p > .05	
	Institutional	-.322**	Yes, p < .01	
	Motivations	-.488**	Yes, p < .01	
Class	AAOS	-.066	No, p > .05	Class was found to be a significant indicator of the individual's experience of academic-activism within the institutional culture and restrictions subscale, particularly those identifying with working-class and lower SES backgrounds.
	SocPol	.061	No, p > .05	
	Institutional	.250**	Yes, p < .01	
	Motivations	-.156	No, p > .05	
Race	AAOS	-.063	No, p > .05	Race does not have a significant effect on individuals' scores within the academic-activist scales.
	SocPol	-.107	No, p > .05	
	Institutional	.013	No, p > .05	
	Motivations	-.091	No, p > .05	
Contract Type	AAOS	-.014	No, p > .05	Contract type does not have a significant effect on individuals' scores within the academic-activist scales.
	SocPol	-.036	No, p > .05	
	Institutional	.008	No, p > .05	
	Motivations	-.008	No, p > .05	

Figure 19. Summary table of the multiple regression analysis between categorical and scale variables.

The following sections will outline the discussion the statistical analyses (quantitative hypotheses testing and correlation and regression analysis).

5.4.7 Discussion of Statistical Analyses and Correlation and Regression Analysis

This section provides an in-depth examination of the quantitative hypotheses testing and correlation and regression analyses conducted in this study. This discussion is divided into sub-sections based on the specific variables explored (gender, class, race, and contract type). The primary focus is on the findings obtained through hypotheses testing, which aimed to determine if there were significant differences in academic-activism levels across these variables. Additionally, the correlation and regression analysis, while not guided by specific hypotheses, serves as a complementary analysis to further explore the relationships between these variables and the measures of academic-activism. This discussion will shed light on the implications and insights derived from these statistical analyses, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research findings.

5.4.7.1 Discussion of Results: men and women differ in terms of their levels of academic-activism

The existing literature suggests that women academics face challenges in expressing academic freedom through academic-activism, as academia is often perceived as a neoliberal environment that reinforces ideals of childlessness and masculinity (O'Connor 2001; Lynch and Grummell 2018; Lynch et al. 2012). These challenges are rooted in structural conditions and institutional practices, resulting in longer periods of precarity, inadequate support for childcare, penalties for career progression due to having children, and a trade-off between family commitments and career advancement for women (Courtois and O'Keefe 2015; HEA 2016; Ivancheva et al. 2019; O'Keefe and Courtois 2019). These gender inequalities significantly hinder women's ability to obtain permanent positions, which are crucial for ensuring a sense of academic freedom (Delaney 2020c; De Paula and Scoppa 2013; Fitzsimons et al. 2021; MacGreil 2011; Monroe et al. 2008). Moreover, increased teaching workloads and limited time further restrict women academics' engagement in public-facing scholarship and research productivity necessary for securing tenure (Atkinson and Standing 2019; Burford 2017; Flynn 2020; Harré et al. 2017; Newcomb 2021; O'Connor 2001; Strunk 2020).

The statistical analyses conducted in this study were consistent with the existing literature on gender and academic-activism. Quantitative hypotheses testing revealed significant differences in levels of academic-activism across gender, particularly in the overall academic-activist orientation scale, institutional culture and restrictions scale sub-scale,

and activist motivations sub-scale. While a parametric t-test showed a significant difference between men and women in the social and political environment sub-scale, a non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test did not indicate statistical significance. However, women had slightly higher median scores in this sub-scale. In this instance, women reported higher median scores than men which shows that women felt slightly stronger about the presence of neoliberalism within academia and society. However, there is not enough evidence here to reach a significant conclusion.

The correlation and regression analysis further supported these findings, suggesting that women were more likely to score higher on academic-activism measures compared to men, except for the social and political environment sub-scale. Similar to the above discussion, while the result within the social and political environment construct was not significant, a p value of .076 suggests that gender is a marginally significant predictor of an individual's score within this sub-scale. This is consistent with the previously noted tendency for women to score higher within this sub-scale highlighted within the hypotheses testing and correlation and regression analysis.

The results of the statistical analyses reinforce the view from the literature that men have more opportunities to exercise academic freedom through academic-activism as women who participated in this study feel more strongly about the impact of neoliberal ideals in academia and face greater institutional restrictions (Courtois and O'Keefe 2015; Delaney 2020c; Flynn 2020; Ivancheva et al. 2019). These findings further align with existing literature, highlighting the tendency of women academics to respond to restrictive environments with activist-based academic work as a form of resistance which was evident in the activist motivations sub-scale (Atkinson and Standing 2019; Burford 2017; Eschle and Maiguaschca 2006).

These findings underscore the importance of gender in shaping the experiences of academic-activists within external environments. Women are more likely to exhibit higher levels of academic-activism compared to men, shedding light on the role of gender identity in the exercise of academic freedom through academic-activism. However, further research is needed to replicate and extend these findings in different contexts and studies. The following section will discuss the findings related to class.

5.4.7.2 Discussion of Results: class impacts an academics' ability to engage in academic-activism

Similar to the discussion on gender, individuals identifying with working-class groups face disadvantages in the academic context compared to those identifying with middle-class and upper-class groups. A lack of institutional and departmental support, combined with academia being perceived as a middle-class institution, presents challenges for working-class academics to navigate this environment (Appel 2014; Binns 2019; Fleming 2021; Forsey 2015; O'Brien 2018; O'Neill 2020; Papdelous 2015; Power et al. 2013; Reynolds 2018). The prioritisation of performance-based research and a growing disconnect between academia and society further exacerbate these issues (MacCionnaith 2015; O'Sullivan 2018; Rhodes et al. 2017). Working-class academic-activists also face limitations in reaching the communities they identify with due to the current purpose and intention of academic work, which primarily focuses on largely inaccessible forms of dissemination (Brook and Mitchell 2012; Byrne 2015; Choudry 2020; Granfield 1991; McKenzie 2017; Pease 2015).

The statistical analyses did not widely support the experiences outlined in the literature regarding working-class academics or working-class academic-activists. Both parametric (one-way ANOVA) and non-parametric (Kruskal-Wallis) tests showed no significant differences between class groups (upper-middle class, middle-class, and working-class and lower SES) in the overall academic-activist orientation scale, social and political environment sub-scale, and activist motivations sub-scale. Correlation and regression analyses further confirmed that class was not correlated with these activist measures, indicating that class identity did not impact an individual's tendency to score high or low within these measures.

However, despite the lack of statistical significance, the prevalence of neoliberal ideology in academia and society may still impact academic-activists regardless of class background. While class identity is considered to mitigate some costs of structural conditions and societal inequalities within the literature (Lund and Nabavi 2008; Lynch et al. 2012; Sobande 2018), broad agreement within the social and political environment sub-scale suggests that these issues can affect academic-activists despite their class identity. The need to challenge mainstream narratives and the widespread impact of external neoliberal environments on academic freedom were evident amongst a range of participants which is representative of academic-activist themed literature (Alakauvklar

2020; Baird 2020; Flood et al. 2013; Foster et al. 2020; Moore et al. 2017; O'Flynn and Panayiotopoulos 2015; Rhodes et al. 2017).

Similarly, the motivations for academic-activist work may not be specific to an individual's class identity. Instead, motivations may stem from a desire to use their privileged academic role to effect positive social change, regardless of class (Cox 2015; Flood et al. 2013; Grey 2013). However, it is possible that different results may emerge in a larger sample size or with new data, which can be explored in future research. The lack of statistical significance across class groups within these sub-scales does not necessarily indicate no relationship between class and the scales; rather, it suggests insufficient evidence in this study to support the initial hypotheses.

However, class identity did have a statistically significant relationship with the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale, indicating that working-class academic-activists felt more restricted in their activism compared to other class groups ($p = 0.002$). This finding aligns with previous literature highlighting the negative experiences of working-class academic-activists within the current institutional environment (Crew 2021; Crew 2020; Grollman 2015; Papadelos 2015; Pease 2015; O'Sullivan 2018; Warnock 2016; Reynolds 2018; Sliva et al. 2019). The apparent undervaluing of working-class academic-activist output due to the emphasis on metrics and business-led practices appears to hinder the academic work of working-class academic-activists within this sample, thus limiting the reach of their output in communities beyond academia.

These findings suggest that class identity can contribute to understanding an individual's experience within the institutional environment. Working-class and lower SES academic-activists were more likely to score higher on the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale, indicating their agreement that current institutional practices and workplace conditions are restrictive of their academic-activism compared to upper middle-class and middle-class groups. These results support the existing literature highlighting the generally negative experiences of working-class academic-activists in academia. However, further research with larger sample sizes is needed to determine whether class identity influences overall academic-activist orientation, the social and political environment, and motivations for academic-activist work. The following section will discuss the findings related to race.

5.4.7.3 Discussion of Results: an individual's race impacts their experience of academic-activism

The literature on minority ethnic academics in predominantly white institutions highlights their negative experiences, including underrepresentation, undervaluing of academic-activist work, precarious employment, and limited support and career progression (Bhopal and Henderson 2019; Lynch et al. 2012; UCU 2020; Grollman 2015; Gorski and Erkat 2019; Huerta 2018; Papadelos 2015; Sobande 2018; Delaney 2020b; Joseph 2020; Joseph 2018; O'Connell 2019). While the literature on minority ethnic academics in Irish higher education is limited, societal attitudes and perceptions suggest the presence of racial inequality in these institutions as well (Delaney 2020c; Joseph 2020; Joseph 2018; O'Connell 2019). Overall, the literature suggests that minority ethnic academic-activists in predominantly white institutions do not have the necessary level of security to freely express their academic freedom through academic-activism.

Hypotheses testing using one-way ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis tests did not yield statistically significant results in the overall academic-activist orientation scale, social and political environment sub-scale, institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale or the activist motivations sub-scale. Although not statistically significant, participants from other ethnic backgrounds reported lower mean and median scores compared to White Irish and other White backgrounds in the academic-activist orientation scale, social and political environment sub-scale and the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale. However, due to the lack of statistical significance, there is insufficient evidence to support the hypotheses in this study.

A weak negative correlation between race and the social and political environment sub-scale was found in the correlation analysis ($r = -.196$, $p < .01$), indicating a slight impact of race on the score within this sub-scale, but given the weak relationship, this result is largely consistent with the hypotheses testing. Furthermore, when controlling for other categorical variables in the multiple regression models, no significant correlation was found between race and the academic-activist measures. Therefore, within the context of this study, racial identity did not impact an individual's score within these scale variables.

The lower scores reported by participants from other ethnic backgrounds may be influenced by the small sample size. Within this small sample size, a significant correlation was found between race and contract type, with participants from other White

and other ethnic backgrounds more likely to be on PhD scholarships than other types of contracts. Consequently, the experiences of these ethnic backgrounds mainly reflect the perspectives of PhD researchers rather than a broader range of academic contracts within this data set.

Issues with sample size may also reflect wider racial and ethnic inequality within Irish academia. Inadequate reporting of staff demographics in Ireland has hindered efforts to address inequality, including the underrepresentation of minority ethnic staff in permanent roles (McGuire 2020; Royal Irish Academy and British Council in Ireland 2020). Recent reports support the literature's claims that minority ethnic academics in Ireland face challenges in terms of job security and institutional support for academic-activism (Kempny and Michael 2021; O'Brien 2021b), for example being labelled as troublemakers when speaking out on social justice issues (McGuire 2020). These recent reports, coupled with ongoing concerns about job security, pay and career progression, potentially suggest continued limited participation from non-White Irish academic-activists within future studies given a lack of necessary security to express academic freedom in this manner. Consequently, the inclusion of non-White Irish participants in the statistical analyses has been limited, impeding a deeper understanding of their experiences.

In conclusion, the results do not provide substantial evidence of the role of racial background in the experience of academic-activism. However, future studies with larger sample sizes and a wider range of contract types among different racial and ethnic backgrounds may yield different results. In light of this, the final chapter will discuss the limitations of this study and provide recommendations for future research. The following section will discuss the findings related to contract type.

5.4.7.4 Discussion of Results: there is a difference in levels of activism dependent on contract type

Job security is considered crucial for academics to engage in activism, as it provides a foundation and stability to express academic freedom (Alakauvklar 2020; Nkomo 2009). However, the literature often overlooks the experiences of non-permanent academics who engage in activism, focusing primarily on guidelines and recommendations for permanent academic-activists (Cancian 1993; Flood et al. 2013; Harré et al. 2017; Maxey 1999; Routledge and Driscoll-Derickson 2015). Non-permanent or precariously employed

academics are discouraged from activism due to a lack of personal security (Delaney 2020b; Courtois and O'Keefe 2015; Gill 2009; Merga and Mason 2020; Phipps and McDonnell 2021; Rojas 2013; Woolston 2019).

Given this, the study hypothesised that contract type would impact the levels of academic-activism. However, no statistically significant differences were found among different contract types (permanent, fixed-term, no formal, casual or hourly paid, or PhD scholarships) in relation to academic-activism measures, as determined by both parametric and non-parametric tests. This finding was consistent with the correlation and regression analyses, which showed no significant relationships between contract type and the academic-activism measures, controlling for other variables (gender, class, and race).

While the literature highlights the disadvantages faced by non-permanent academics (Courtois and O'Keefe 2015), such as limited academic freedom (Rhodes et al. 2017) and burnout (Cox 2011), the survey results indicated a general agreement among participants in their attitudes towards academic-activism, regardless of contract type. It is worth noting that the small sample sizes for non-permanent contract types (e.g., fixed-term, no formal, casual or hourly paid, and PhD scholarships) may have limited the ability to detect significant differences, as job security is typically considered a prerequisite for engaging in activism. This deviates away from trends within the literature which suggests that academic-activists without tenure are in a disadvantageous position to engage in academic-activism.

The existing literature extensively addresses various challenges faced by permanently employed academic-activists, including limited freedom due to institutional demands, time constraints, lack of support for alternative approaches to academic work, and the potential decision to leave academia due to the personal impact of these obstacles (Bosanquet and Rytmeister 2017; Cox 2011; Grey 2013; Lalor 2010; Lashuel 2020; Lee 2015; Marginson 2014; Marginson 1997; Maslach and Gomes 2006; McKenzie 2021b; Pereira 2016; Rahal et al. 2023; Roberts 2007; Rose 2017). Hence, the statements in the survey, which aimed to capture the experiences of academic-activists in external environments, may resonate with academic-activists across different contract types.

Overall, the analysis suggests that contract type may not have a significant influence on attitudes towards academic-activism among the study participants. However, further research with a larger sample size is needed to provide more conclusive evidence and

explore the experiences of non-permanent academics in greater depth. The study's findings contribute to the understanding of the complex relationship between job security and academic-activism, highlighting the need for continued investigation in this area.

The next section outlines the qualitative content analysis which was performed on the open-ended survey responses.

5.4.8 Qualitative Content Analysis

This section presents the qualitative content analysis of the open-ended questions in the survey, aiming to provide more depth to the quantitative element of the study:

Q1. What do you see as the role of an academic within the context of the political, economic and social environments? (Alternatively, you can write 'I do not wish to answer')

Q2. In the current institutional environment, does activism have a role in the academy? (Alternatively, you can write 'I do not wish to answer')

Q3. What 'type' of activism are you engaged in? If so, how do you normally disseminate/perform this activism?(Alternatively, you can write 'I do not wish to answer').

The discussion of the results, in line with the relevant literature, is presented following the analysis. The qualitative content analysis explores the research question of how academics' identification with gender, class, and race, collegiate engagement, and perceptions of the political, institutional, and social environment relate to their experiences as academic-activists. This aim is achieved through the examination of academic-activists' responses in the online survey, exploring their perspectives on multiple influences on their activism work.

The analysis, along with an extensive literature review, informed the content of the interview guide for Study Two. The inductive content analysis followed guidelines by Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017) and involved several steps, including identifying meaning units, condensing meaning units, coding, categorisation and forming themes. The process is outlined in Figure 20.

Steps	Analytical Process	Example
1	Meaning Unit	Take relative extracts from the text (i.e. survey response).
2	Condense Meaning Units	Shortening extracts for the purpose of coding.
3	Coding	Labelling of shortened extracts for the purpose of forming categories.
4	Categorisation	Categories (sub-themes) were created by combining related codes together.
5	Theme	Themes were formed by grouping two or more categories to express the latent content within related categories

Figure 20. Process involved in the qualitative content analysis of open-ended responses.

Participant responses to the open-ended questions are summarised in Figure 21, indicating the number of participants who answered each question. No evident trends were observed regarding the type of participant who responded or did not respond to specific questions.

Question Number	Number of Participants Answered	Number of Participants Not Answered
Question 1	87.76%	12.24%
Question 2	89.12%	10.88%
Question 3	85.71%	14.29%

Figure 21. Overview of responses to the open-ended questions in the online survey showing participant engagement.

The qualitative analysis identified an overarching theme of the ‘practical application of academic-activism’ across the three open-ended survey questions. Two categories are included within this theme: (i) academic “influencers”: connecting academia and the outside world through activism and (ii) “the tricky line”: barriers between academia and activism. The qualitative content analysis resulted in 9 pages of data for Theme 1, 7 pages for Theme 2, and 8 pages for Theme 3. No distinct trends were observed in the responses related to class, gender, or race, beyond what is presented in the demographic data. As previously mentioned the majority of participants showed a good response rate to the open-ended questions.

The analysis is complemented by examples and data presented in Figure 22 which demonstrates a worked example of the analytical procedure (see also Appendix F).

Participant identifiers are provided as ‘Participant X (gender, race, class, current role)’. If any of the identifiers are not presented, it is because participants chose not to disclose this information.

Theme: Practical application of academic-activism

Categories	Example Codes	Example Condensed Meaning Unit	Example Meaning Unit
Academic “influencers”: connecting academia and the outside world through activism	Use of expertise to improve society	External/community involvement to aid/influence social and political issues through a range of activities	‘Academics should be able to work freely with societal and governmental groups with a focus on betterment of the community and society as a whole, but specifically on issues of stratification both social and most importantly educational.’
	Alternative dissemination	Responding to marginalised/disadvantaged communities and group’s needs	‘I work and research with the NGO sector/aid (currently in Afghanistan). I cowrite with solidarity groups on issues for platforms that are helpful/relevant for them. I host webinars/seminars in partnership with NGO sector.’
	Challenge status quo (current structures)	Use of privileged position to offer alternatives	‘The academic should challenge received wisdom and 'common sense' with regards to economic, political and social orthodoxy. In addition, the academic should help propose and develop alternatives where appropriate. We are part of our social, political and economic environments and we have a duty to contribute to these environments, not simply 'observe' them.’
“The tricky line”: barriers between academia and activism	Personal circumstances	Personal circumstances restrict engagement in academic-activism	‘I think activism should have a place, certainly. But it can be difficult for those struggling with full-time academic jobs (and caring responsibilities etc) to have the time to pursue activism.’
	Institutional norms, values and structural conditions	Career aspirations limiting academic-activism	‘The broader institutional rewards processes (job interviews; promotions etc.) don't tend to value this type of work and so time-pressurized academics are less likely to undertake it.’
	Hidden pockets of activism	Academic-activism only encouraged at a discipline/departmental level (varies with type of activism)	‘In my immediate (departmental) research institute (not the university), discussions on activism and policy making is regularly incorporated into workshops. I do not, however, see this on a larger scale in the university I'm with.’

Figure 22. Worked example of qualitative content analysis procedure.

5.4.8.1 The practical application of academic-activism

In this section, the main purpose is to provide insight into the overarching theme that incorporates two categories within the analysis. Hence, in doing so, this section signals towards the content and direction of the subsequent categories, which provides a background for further exploration of the open-ended survey responses.

This single theme of ‘the practical application of academic-activism’ reflects the potential role of academics to impact positive social change in wider society. Respondents highlighted that this involves academics utilising their privileges (such as access to knowledge, teaching, research skills, networks etc.) afforded to them in order to amplify the voices of others (e.g. marginalised groups; disadvantaged communities) through a variety of ways relating to academic-activism, for example, policy reform and community outreach projects. However, this can also be restricted by barriers that determine the extent to which academic-activism can be conducted which potentially minimises the role of academic-activism within wider society such as your contract type and increased workloads.

During this discussion, the categorical area titled academic “influencers”: connecting academia and the outside world through activism provides a comprehensive exploration of the crucial role played by academic-activism. This role encompasses both the institutional environment and broader contexts (such as the social and political environment), thus underscoring the significance of academic-activism in influencing and connecting academia with the external world. Within this category, the practical application of academic-activism and the manner in which academics are able to exercise academic freedom is discussed. From an academic-activist’s perspective (i.e. the participants) the discussion within this category advocates for the flexibility of academic roles so that academic-activists can actively engage in external environments that can be both separate and/or linked to their contractual obligations as an academic.

The second category, “the tricky line”: barriers between academia and activism details the challenges faced by academic-activists when trying to engage in activism. The discussion within this category outlines the variety of barriers faced by academics which restrict their ability to engage in academic-activism. From the perspective of participants, this was understood through barriers relating to the institutional environment (e.g. institutional values and norms), as well as barriers that are experienced on an individual

level which can be restrictive of an academic-activists personal motivations, beliefs and values regarding their academic work (e.g. friction between colleagues, time commitments, etc.).

The following sections provide a more detailed breakdown and discussion of each of the identified categories in this analysis, including examples from the responding participants to highlight the interpretation provided.

5.4.8.2 Academic “influencers”¹⁴: connecting academia and the outside world through activism

Within this category, based on the evidence of the open-ended responses, there is a range of activism engaged in by Irish-based academic-activists whether this is informed, linked or separate to their contracted role, and is in line with a strong belief that an academic’s role should be flexible, fluid and more importantly visible to wider audiences that may not necessarily be associated with academia (e.g. community groups). This section highlights the potential positive impact academic-activism can have within wider society through traditional academic outputs, such as teaching, as well the variety of ways in which academic-activists can disseminate their work and bring their expertise into the community through workshops and informal education initiatives. Therefore, the manner in which academics engage with external environments is outlined. This is achieved within the context of participants’ perceptions as to what an academic’s role should entail given their own experiences of academic-activism.

The experiences and insights offered by participants here is particularly relevant given the emergence of community engagement literature from the Irish Universities Association. For example, in exploring the diverse forms of academic-activism highlighted in the participants’ responses, it is important to consider the context of how academic researchers engage with public policy and other external engagements. This is reflected through recent reports and guides by the Irish Universities Association (2022) which provides valuable insights into this dynamic. There is now a need to reflect upon, and encourage, the multifaceted ways in which academic researchers interact with public policymakers in areas such as: addressing policy agenda setting, as well as policy formation, implementation, and evaluation. Moreover, the Irish Universities

¹⁴ Quote from Participant 34 (Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Lecturer).

Association's 'Student Guide to Community Engagement'¹⁵ and 'Campus-Community Partnerships'¹⁶ guides collectively emphasise the transformative potential of academic-community collaborations. The Student Guide outlines strategies for students to actively participate in community-based activities to enhance both their academic experience and community well-being. Meanwhile, the Campus-Community Partnerships guide provides a framework for universities to build effective, mutually beneficial partnerships with local communities. Integrating insights from these guides into the discussion of academic-activism underscores the value of extending academic roles beyond traditional institutional settings. By supporting meaningful partnerships and student engagement, academia can significantly contribute to addressing societal challenges; therefore, reinforcing the role of academics as influential agents of social change.

Participants indicated that their roles should transcend institutions so as to reach wider society. Participants highlighted the importance of academics in 'raising voices that aren't ordinarily heard' while maintaining their 'caring' and 'support' for students (Participant 40, Woman, White Irish, Working-Class, Assistant Lecturer). There is an implication that academics must bridge the gap between wider society and the institutions who employ them through informed endeavours that may be internal or external to academia (e.g. advocacy and empowerment work within communities, workshops, etc.). In this manner, academics can be considered 'influencers' (Participant 34, Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Lecturer). Participant's responses reflected this potential influential role, most notably in the diverse range of ways that the participant's conducted their own academic-activism.

According to Participant 42 (Woman, Middle-Class, Tutor) 'academics should make an effort to disseminate knowledge in different forms to the traditional in order to create consciousness and change' within wider society. Given the suggestion that an academic's role should be flexible and wide-reaching, there is a need to be 'innovative' (Participant 58, Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Lecturer) 'when questioning dissents and assumptions' (Participant 95, Woman, White Irish, Researcher) within society, as well as 'challenging inequalities when representing people outside of academia' (Participant 138,

¹⁵ Campus Engage document can be found here: <https://www.iaa.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Guide-Student-Guide-to-Community-Engagement.pdf>

¹⁶ Campus Engage document can be found here: <https://www.iaa.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Guide-Campus-Community-Partnerships-WEB.pdf>

Woman, Any other white background, Working-Class, Lecturer). Given their academic tools and expertise, it is clearly indicated that academics should be more visible in the public sphere through policy development/reform and involvement with social justice and human rights groups where they have the potential or opportunity to play an active role in ‘shaping public discourse’ (Participant 1, Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Lecturer and; Participant 90, Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Researcher) and to ‘challenge and question the status quo’ (Participant 13, Woman, White Irish Middle-Class, PhD researcher).

According to Participant 77, academic-activism can be conducted in ‘variety of ways’ and is not strictly limited to the importance of the delivery of education (via teaching in a traditional classroom setting) or through writing and research. Furthermore, as Participant 77 notes, ‘if academics are charged with furthering knowledge, then it would make sense that their work is looking at external life and developing ways of understanding and/or informing change within that context’.

In this sense, academic-activism’s role within wider society should be focused on providing holistic insight and subsequent measures that go beyond ‘educating and making students aware of these [broader] perspectives’ (Participant 43, Man, White Irish, Working-Class, Assistant Lecturer) in order to ‘support students in the development of critical thinking skills’ (Participant 147, Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Lecturer). As Participant 38 (Man, Any other white background, Middle-Class, PhD Researcher) states: ‘the role of academia ought to be that of critical consciousness of society, and as a part of that academics ought to speak out against and challenge injustices in the context of broader economic, policy, social and wider environments’. Academic-activism is considered to be a practice by some participants, therefore it is defined as something which should go beyond the traditional educational environment, that its role within wider contexts is seen as a way to accelerate social change for both the improvement and betterment of society.

Academic-activist participants stated that the use of their expertise could be utilised as a means of promoting social change by challenging, critiquing and providing new knowledge to wider audiences to aid and advance societal development, particularly around ‘existing power structures’ that are ‘unfair and inequitable’ (Participant 6, Man, White Irish, Upper Middle-Class, PhD Researcher). Challenging ‘the norm and

dominant' in a bid to 'contribute to culture and society' through the 'use of knowledge gained in [academic] practice' was framed within academic-activist's responses to the impact of the 'neoliberal environment' on Irish society (Participant 13, Man, White Irish, Middle-Class, Senior Lecturer and; Participant 21, Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Researcher). In addition, the aforementioned neoliberal environment is argued to have nurtured a 'neoliberal vision' within higher education which promotes the quantifying of academic output through performance indexes (Participant 13, Man, White Irish, Middle-Class, Senior Lecturer). Neoliberalism's impact within society was considered to be present in current 'hegemonic structures that fuel inequalities and social injustices' (e.g. socioeconomic conditions) (Participant 120, White Irish, Middle Class, Lecturer). In an institutional setting, 'research targets have been 'individualised' (Participant 4, Man, White Irish, Middle-Class, Researcher) and are considered to be solely focused on generating 'impact' through the research project's results (Participant 120).

This can be judged to be too narrow a manner in which to view academic outputs, particularly if they are motivated by activist values that cannot be measured or positioned within a quantifiable output (e.g. homework clubs, informal education within community groups, craftivism, etc.). It is not the intention here to suggest that quantifiable or performance-based academic-activism is lesser given that it can have substantial benefits if disseminated appropriately (such as the use of research findings to legitimise or further academic causes, open-access journals, or for alternative dissemination via social media, podcasts, etc.). To highlight an earlier point; academic-activism can be exercised in a variety of ways. Therefore, its importance should not be dependent on its quantifiable value within performance metrics and key performance indicators.

As suggested in this section, academic-activists situate themselves within a public-facing role. This was evident in the numerous forms of activism highlighted in the responses, which are performed and disseminated in different ways, that have valuable input within society. In a conventional sense, academic-activists use their writing and research expertise to conduct research with marginalised groups which has been key in advocating for policy reform and development in areas such as: inequities in the education system (e.g. representation, working practices, etc.), climate change, animal cruelty and highlighting instances of institutionalised racism within Ireland. Traditional academic dissemination (via journal articles, conferences, etc.) with implicit elements of activist values have also been vital in 'amplifying the voices of the marginalised' through pushing

for inclusive practices and exploring alternatives within wider society (Participant 4, Man, White Irish, Middle-Class, Researcher).

Additionally, the classroom was considered a site for activism in other instances where critical pedagogical teaching approaches were applied where promoting social justice, equity and equality from the perspective of diverse representation and challenges facing marginalised groups was the key focus of modules. Others used the classroom as an opportunity to bring in activist guest speakers to promote ‘a social justice message to class groups’ (Participant 66, Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Lecturer). Expectedly, participants often viewed their activism as being ‘embedded’ in their academic work (teaching and research) (Participant 118, Woman, Any other white background, Middle-Class, Senior Lecturer). This appeared to be more common within the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences where course content pertains to such issues such as discrimination in workplaces and access to education for minority groups.

Beyond the classroom and traditional academic outputs, participants spoke of aspirations for the role of academics to be flexible, fluid and impactful outside of their expected duties in ‘direct, immediate forms of activism (Participant 113, Man, White Irish, Working-Class, Senior Lecturer). This was generally done through political actions such as political party membership and external engagement with civil servants) which aims to inform policy development in areas linked to drug policy reform, fighting homelessness and constitutional change.

As well as this, participants were involved in advocacy and empowerment work which was aimed at community-based, grassroots level activism which was often done on a voluntary/out-of-hours basis or separate to their academic role (e.g. other employment). Alternative forms of dissemination were common in this regard. This involved setting up informal education workshops and training days in community-based localised settings (e.g. activist groups, secondary schools, LGBTQIA+ support groups, addiction centres, refugees and asylum seekers, etc.). Additionally, dissemination went beyond traditional academic outlets in some instances and was done through, for example: ‘collaborative research with/for NGOs’ (Participant 6, Man, White Irish, Upper Middle-Class, PhD Researcher), ‘newspaper/magazine articles’ (Participant 11, Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Research Assistant), ‘TV and radio appearances’ (Participant 17, Woman, White Irish, Working-Class, Lecturer), ‘use of social media’ (Participant 53, Woman,

White Irish, Upper Middle-Class, PhD Researcher), ‘blog posts’ (Participant 64, Man, White Irish, Upper Middle-Class, Lecturer), ‘drop-in clinics’ (Participant 53, Woman, White Irish, Upper Middle-Class, PhD Researcher) and ‘guest talks’ (Participant 11, Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Researcher).

Participants emphasised the crucial role of academic-activists’ expertise in impacting positive social change and challenging existing structures, both within institutions and in wider society through alternative approaches. However, navigating academia as an academic-activist proves complex. Although it is evident in how environments external to academia would benefit from various forms of academic-activism, such as political engagement and community outreach, engaging in or pursuing such activism within the current institutional landscape can be challenging due to a prevailing emphasis on industry-focused research and inherent structural conditions that hinder meaningful engagement. In conclusion, while the potential for academic-activism to impact positive change in external environments is recognised, the existing institutional environment poses obstacles that must be addressed to foster and support effective academic-activism initiatives. Therefore, if academic-activism is to serve a practical use within wider society, connecting academia and the outside world becomes a complicated task which impacts the degree to which academia can extend its reach into communities. The following section further explores these challenges in more detail.

5.4.8.3 *“The tricky line”¹⁷: barriers between academia and activism*

In exploring the landscape of academic-activism among Irish-based academics, it becomes apparent that this area of academic practice endeavour is met with complexity within the current workplace environment. Drawing from the experiences shared by participants, it becomes evident that engaging in academic-activism requires thoughtful consideration, taking into account personal values, beliefs, and current academic role or contract. Furthermore, the existing structures suggest that involvement in activism could potentially have adverse effects on personal well-being and future career prospects. Therefore, this section highlights the challenges faced by academics who seek to make a positive impact beyond traditional academic boundaries. Furthermore, this section also provides insight into the key dynamics and considerations surrounding academic-

¹⁷ Quote from Participant 79 (Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Lecturer).

activism, providing valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of those involved.

Academic-activists find themselves in a challenging situation where they must carefully weigh the benefits and costs of their activism in light of institutional perceptions on activism as well as potential tensions that may arise among colleagues and broader networks. The prevailing business-oriented mindset of institutions further adds layers of complexity, leaving academic-activists to question the value of their activism and its potential impact on their career progression. Although there is evidence that participants are engaging in various forms of activism, there is a sense that academic-activism is essentially 'hidden' away in 'small, quiet pockets' (Participant 41, Man, Any other white background, Middle-Class, Teacher).

According to participants, this is the result of a broader narrative that academic-activism is not supported within institutions unless it is 'framed/presented' as 'impactful' through 'acceptable public engagement' (Participant 5, Man, White Irish, Middle-Class, Assistant Professor). As Participant 11 (Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Researcher) states: 'I see that the people who tend to engage most in overt activism tend to do so at a cost both to themselves personally and often in terms of their career as well. It can be perceived within the academy as stubborn opposition, a refusal to play by the rules of the game or a broken record'.

Participant 79 (Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Lecturer) refers to the 'tricky line' when considering activism's role within the institutional environment. While Participant 79 does not elaborate on this, other participant's responses suggest that the tricky line is the result of needing to balance the probable personal costs (e.g. economic security) in accordance with the type of activism and the individual's academic role. From an academic-activists perspective, this would appear to align with the ideal of academia's organisational culture which emphasises individual production (Participant 129, Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Lecturer). Academia is likened to an environment that is governed by a 'survival of the fittest/toughest ideology' where those who are successful boast 'large individual outputs' and are 'hardworking, ambitious/hyperfocused, competitive, accept the status quo and are 'emotionally detached' (Participant 28, Woman, Any other white background, Upper Middle-Class, PhD Researcher).

In the current environment, this is seen to take precedence over ‘well-rounded individuals with multiple interests who value the quality of human relationships, good communication, diversity, collaboration and is committed to personal contribution towards collective achievement, might question the status quo, and is emotionally integrated’ (Participant 28). Based on a ‘very narrow kind of thinking’ (Participant 44, Woman, Any other white background, Upper Middle-Class, Teacher), the abilities and aspirations of academic-activists can be limited which leads participants to believe that academia in Ireland is still largely unprepared to contribute meaningfully to the ‘transformative policies, feed the sustainable circular economies, and help re-imagine the empowered social structures that are needed in these emergent times’ (Participant 85, Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Lecturer).

Although Participant 114 (Woman, Any other white background, Working-Class, Lecturer argues that institutions ‘have the resources to put into activism, as well as the ability to reach the wider public through activism (e.g. the media or alternative media)’, higher education institutions in Ireland are ‘not resourcing this aspect of scholarship beyond tokenistic research impact roles’ (Participant 48, Woman , White Irish, Middle-Class, Researcher) and only do so as ‘an exercise in projecting appearances’ dependent on the area of activism (e.g. equality charters) (Participant 81, Man, White Irish, Middle-Class, Lecturer). Participant 119 (Woman, Any other white background, Middle-Class, Senior Lecturer) finds that in the current social climate, institutions will not risk damaging their objectivity by being perceived as biased on certain issues (e.g. social problems, war, conflicts, etc.).

However, the institutional response to particular forms of academic-activism may shift dependent on the values, norms and strategies as dictated by the institutional hierarchy. Therefore, activism is not valued; instead, it is limited and restrained unless it can be ‘co-opted’ or ‘reappropriated’ by the institution for their own gain and ‘neoliberalised through academic structures’ (e.g. ‘staff asked to engage with research which has financial reward for the institution’) (Participant 50, Woman, Any other white background, Working-Class, Lecturer).

Given this, the tricky line between academia and activism presents itself as a challenge to the individual academic-activist whereby they must ‘conform’ to institutional norms and ideal types as described above while still trying to ‘inform and inspire’ their academic

work with their activism (Participant 80, Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Lecturer). However, as Participant 28 (Woman, Any other white background, Upper Middle-Class, PhD Researcher) suggests, this can be quite complex to navigate. Participant 28 notes that they have ‘always had to do [their] activism on the side and even that was discouraged as producing academic output should be [their] main and only focus (if [they] expect to get anywhere)’. In their experience, participant’s note that they have had to do activism ‘undercover’ as they feel activism and social contributions are not appreciated or rewarded sufficiently and, is often treated as a ‘box ticking activity’ (e.g. through measuring impact and acceptable forms of community engagement through research assessments such as REF in Northern Ireland based institutions) (Participant 28). As such, the meaning assigned to engagement is vague. From the participant’s perspective, there is the possibility that activism which challenges institutions (through fighting against precarity, sexism and racial inequality) would not receive as much approval, or be weighted the same as approved-forms of activism (such as government funded projects). At an institutional level, activist-themed projects are considered risky; potentially posing a threat to participants for their involvement. This often results in ‘returned applications’ at the ethical approval stage (Participant 79, Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Lecturer).

While ‘institutions seem set on ignoring the input of academic-activism’ this is not necessarily the case at a departmental level (Participant 38, Man, Any other white background, Middle-Class, PhD Researcher). Participants found support from within their department, but this also brought about some challenges to engaging in academic-activism as described here. Similar to Participant 41’s insight above, Participant 23 (Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Researcher) found that activism can take place in ‘corners and pockets’, but ‘this does not support wider solidarity and frustratingly causes friction between colleagues’ (Participant 96, Woman, Any other ethnic background, Middle-Class, Lecturer). Likewise, Participant 113 (Man, White Irish, Working-Class, Senior Lecturer) states that within their departments, ‘many of us have academic and activist interests that chime, but this is often restricted by political and financial pressures at an institutional level’, for example being perceived as ‘troublemakers’ or being an ECR with no job security. As a result, academic-activism can be ‘isolating’ and makes it difficult to find adequate support given the perception of academic-activism on a broader

institutional level (Participant 41, Man, Any other white background, Middle-Class, Teacher).

Participant 69 (Woman, White Irish, Upper Middle-Class, PhD Researcher) is hopeful that there are signs of change with the ‘increased focus on inclusion and diversity, universities of sanctuary, awards and other such initiatives, but so much more needs to be done to better encourage activism particularly through targeted funding and recognition for work done outside of hours (e.g. perhaps ECT credits that could encourage such activities) as well as more courses on methodologies that support activism in different domains’. Beyond altering values, strategies implemented by institutions, personal circumstances and academic roles can further complicate engaging in academic-activism. This was apparent in the experiences communicated by both permanent staff and precarious staff. Despite security affording permanent staff some advantages, such as financial security, it remains evident that barriers persist for all academics within the current institutional environment – these are further discussed below.

Participant 19 (Man, Working Class, Associate Professor) believes ‘activism has a reduced role’ because ‘who would have time for it?’ Furthermore, ‘there is no incentive or encouragement for activist or politically engaged research’ (Participant 85, Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Lecturer), particularly in an environment where ‘we’re focused on our CV’s, departmental politics, individual workloads and family commitments etc. that often we are too exhausted and busy to invest the energy and time in any kind of social engagement not to mention activism’ (Participant 116, Man, White Irish, Working-Class Professor). Participant 26 (Man, White Irish, Upper Middle-Class, Researcher) and Participant 88 (Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Lecturer) comments that the broader institutional rewards processes (job interviews; promotions etc.) do not tend to value this type of work, and so, time-pressurised academics are less likely to undertake it to avoid impeding their own career progression. This has a clear impact on the ability of those in full-time academic roles to engage in academic-activism given that increased workloads and research output expectations have diminished the ability to pursue activism fully.

‘Academic-activism is also currently stifled by precarity’ (Participant 25, Woman, White Irish, Middle-Class, Researcher). In an environment that has been likened to an industry by participants, ‘career advancement is done through the meeting of commercial

imperatives rather than social or civic engagement’ (Participant 109, Man, White Irish, Working-Class, Lecturer). While there are challenges faced by those in tenured roles, the privileges afforded to full-time academics (for example, better pay and conditions) provides further opportunity to ‘act as advocates within communities’ in comparison to academics who are ‘exploited, underpaid and unpaid in a very broken system’ (Participant 134, Woman, White Irish, Working-Class, Lecturer). The precarity faced by ECR’s (notably PhD researchers), means ‘not having any employment benefits (healthcare, maternity, vacation, UNPAID¹⁸ teaching) and being on a stipend that is below minimum wage’ which does not provide adequate security to engage in academic-activism (Participant 25).

Participant 114 (Woman, Any other white background, Working-Class, Senior Lecturer) argues that institutions ‘have the resources to put into activism, as well as the ability to reach the wider public through activism (e.g. the media or alternative media)’. This means that institutions can play an ‘important role within their respective regions which can be much more positive for local communities (i.e. community wealth building initiatives)’ (Participant 114). Nevertheless, without sufficient incentivisation and inconsistent levels of support, the apparent regularity of ‘exploitative work practices’ in academia has created a ‘toxic’ environment which means it is becoming increasingly more common for those who feel ‘unsupported’ to leave academia rather than remain in their roles, to focus on being ‘careful and strategic’ in a bid to avoid personal repercussions (e.g. financial, career mobility, etc.) (Participant 111, Man, White Irish, Middle-Class, Lecturer).

The insights provided by participants shed light on the potential for institutions to make a significant impact through activism. While academia can provide the necessary resources and platforms, such as media or alternative media, to engage with and reach a wider public, the presence of exploitative work practices within academia and the lack of consistent support have created a toxic environment. Consequently, individuals who feel unsupported are increasingly opting to leave academia rather than remain in their roles. As such, academics may prioritise being careful and strategic with their academic work to avoid personal repercussions, including financial and career limitations. In light of these perspectives, it is evident that while institutions hold potential for impactful activism, addressing the prevailing toxic work culture and providing adequate support

¹⁸ The word ‘unpaid’ is in all capitals in original quote.

and incentivisation are necessary to retain talented individuals and promote meaningful engagement in academic-activism.

In conclusion, while there are signs of potential and positive change, addressing the challenges surrounding academic-activism requires comprehensive institutional support, re-evaluation of values and strategies that encourage meaningful engagement. A shift towards a more inclusive and supportive academic culture can enable academics to embrace activism without compromising personal well-being and career prospects, ultimately contributing to transformative policies and empowered social structures needed in these emergent times.

The following section provides a summary of the qualitative content analysis.

5.4.8.4 Summary of Qualitative Content Analysis

The findings of the qualitative content analysis shed light on the influences on academic-activism work in Irish Higher Education Institutions and provide valuable insights into the experiences of academic-activists. Participants highlighted the multi-faceted nature of academic-activism and its potential benefits to wider society beyond traditional academic duties. However, they also encountered limitations rooted in institutional constraints which were understood through heavy workloads, an emphasis on quantifiable outputs and selective acceptance of activism which has hindered participants' activist work. In cases where institutional approval was absent, participants faced obstacles in their careers and personal friction with colleagues and management. Consequently, in the prevailing institutional climate, it is increasingly common for individuals who feel undervalued to leave academia rather than struggling to align their academic roles with their aspirations of benefiting wider society

The responses underscore that academic-activism has the potential to challenge the perception of academia as an elitist institution, but its effectiveness varies among individuals and is dependent on institutional perceptions of activism and the individual's role and positionality within the academic context. Therefore, it is apparent that the complex interplay of individual perspectives, institutional constraints, and broader societal dynamics shapes the experiences of academic-activists.

In summary, the qualitative content analysis provides insights into the influences of the external political and social environment, the institutional environment and personal

values, beliefs, and motivations on academic-activism in Irish academia. The findings highlight the challenges and limitations faced by academic-activists while recognising the potential for transformative impact. The following section will outline the discussion of the qualitative content analysis before concluding on the overall findings.

5.4.8.5 Discussion of Qualitative Content Analysis

The findings of the qualitative content analysis identified two categories that support the overarching theme of the study: the practical application of academic-activism. These categories are: academic “influencers”: connecting academia and the outside world through activism and “the tricky line”: barriers between academia and activism. This discussion explores the challenges and opportunities that arise when academics engage with activism, with a focus on the ways in which academics can connect with the outside world and overcome barriers between academia and activism. In addition, the analysis has led to key insights into meaningful collaboration between academia and activism, contributing to ongoing debates on the role of academics in social change. Furthermore, the experiences of academic-activists engaged in diverse forms of academic-activism are examined, emphasising the importance of flexible academic roles that bridge the gap between academia and the public sphere. Academic-activists are shown to offer alternatives and challenge mainstream narratives, making academic work more accessible and valuable for external communities. However, a contrasting discussion reveals the barriers faced by academic-activists in fulfilling their potential impact, including institutional undervaluing, personal and professional costs, precarity and the need for support networks. These insights from participants align with existing literature and will be further explored in the following section.

The first category, academic “influencers”: connecting academia and the outside world through activism, explores how academics can bridge the divide between academia and society by utilising their academic roles and expertise. Participants in the study viewed academic-activism as a form of public intellectualism, challenging the notion that academics operate primarily within elitist institutions and produce inaccessible work (Courtois and O’Keefe 2015; Power et al. 2013; Ivancheva et al. 2019). Therefore, similar to the motivations reported within the literature, participants further highlighted the need for academic roles to be flexible and visible beyond institutions to make academic work

more accessible and valuable for the wider public (Furco 2010; Sliva et al. 2019; Reyes Mason 2020).

In this sense, academic-activism can involve a combination of traditional approaches, such as publishing in journals and alternative approaches, such as outreach activities. Through combining both approaches, academic-activism can provide a wider range of benefits to society via journal articles, critical pedagogical methods, advocacy work, media appearances, and social media engagement (Grollman 2015; Sliva et al. 2019). However, participants acknowledged that neoliberal values within institutions, for example: promoting efficiency and productivity, can restrict the potential of academic work to benefit individuals and communities outside academia (Berlatsky 2019; Lynch and Grummell 2018; Marginson 1997; Phipps and McDonnell 2021; Reyes-Mason 2020). Despite these challenges, the literature suggests that academics can resist neoliberal trends within academia and create impact beyond performance-based metrics by utilising alternative approaches to engage with social issues and provide diverse perspectives.

In light of this, participants highlight the need for academic-activism to actively challenge hegemonic structures that perpetuate inequalities in society, particularly for marginalised and oppressed voices. While traditional forms of dissemination, such as journal articles, are useful in certain contexts, academic-activism also requires alternative approaches to teaching (e.g. critical pedagogy, informal education workshops) and dissemination (e.g. advocacy work, media appearances, social media). Similar to the experiences of academic-activists within the literature, participants commonly resist these neoliberal trends in academia by creating space and time for activism; leveraging the flexibility of their roles (Atkinson and Standing 2019; Eschle and Maiguashca 2006; Grey 2013; Fleming 2021; Lund and Nabavi 2008; Pereira 2016). By doing so, academic-activists can go beyond the divisions between academia and society to offer more informed and holistic insights into social issues and problems (Cox 2015; Flood et al. 2013).

Despite these challenges, participants find that alternative approaches to academic work, such as critical pedagogy and non-traditional dissemination, more effectively inform students about diverse perspectives within society. Their focus on developing critical thinking skills equips potential audiences to challenge social injustices stemming from political, economic, social and institutional structures (Altman 2018; Choudry 2020; Furco 2010; Pease 2015). Thus, academic-activism is considered a practice that enacts

positive social change through teaching, research, publishing and community-based representation which is key for wider forms of influence such as shaping public discourse while providing students with the necessary skills to have similar wide-reaching impacts within society (Baird 2020; Cox 2014; Cox and Grummel 2013; Phakathi 2014; Villanueva and O’Sullivan 2019).

However, this can be complicated to implement given current negative connotations associated with activism from an institutional perspective. The second category: “the tricky line”: barriers between academia and activism, identified several barriers, including institutional undervaluation of academic-activism, personal and professional costs, the impact of precarity, and the challenges of building support networks which were reflective of the existing literature.

Academic-activists often find that their activism is undervalued by institutions, which may appropriate tokenistic or symbolic forms of activism to enhance their reputation. Such initiatives are often conducted in line with performance-based research metrics or for reputation-building purposes, rather than genuine commitment to social change. As noted within the literature, this is largely due to institutions being concerned about activism disrupting their objectives (such as attracting external funding or attracting students) by taking positions on potentially controversial issues (Ahmed 2017; Allmer 2018; Altman 2018; Collini 2012; Dolhinow 2017; Grey 2013; Marginson 2014; Mercille and Murphy 2015; Pereira 2016; Reyes Mason 2020). Moreover, the undervaluation of activism is also evident in the hiring and promotion processes, where academic-activist work is often not adequately recognised. Instead, academic-activism is more likely to receive pushback than widespread approval, further contributing to its devaluation within institutions (Flood et al. 2013; Pereira 2016; Rose 2017).

Participants found that the neoliberal values (such as efficiency, productivity, individualism, and competition) promoted by institutions, hinder academic-activists in their mission. The emphasis on high volumes of institutionally approved outputs and conforming to institutional norms and/or strategies can conflict with the values, beliefs and motivations for those engaged in alternative/informal forms of academic-activism. As such, this alternative approach to academic work creates a hindrance to job security for academic-activists who challenge institutional norms and values meaning that you

may face negative individual impacts (such as limited career progression) due to your motivations and intentions for academic work (Flood et al. 2013; Rahal et al. 2023).

Engaging in academic-activism often comes with personal and professional costs, especially for those in precarious employment. The prominence of casualised labour, limited secure job opportunities and the complexity of building support networks that share similar values and beliefs create additional challenges in a competitive environment where burnout is increasingly common due to demands placed on academics (Clarke et al. 2015; Cox 2011; Delaney 2020b; Fitzsimons et al. 2021; Lashuel 2020; Woolston 2019). While support at the departmental level may be available, it can be limited by staff politics which creates an isolating experience for academic-activists. Hence, the employment model in academia creates different expectations, obligations, and responsibilities, hindering solidarity-building between academics. As described in the literature, this poor communication and disparity between staff and management further limits opportunities to support diverse expressions of academic freedom beyond what is widely supported at an institutional level (Clarke et al. 2015; Flood et al. 2013; Merga and Mason 2020).

These findings highlight the complexity of making a meaningful impact through academic-activism, given the institutional outlook on activism, the challenges of precarity, time constraints and limited solidarity-building opportunities. Greater recognition and support are needed for academics engaged in activist work, along with addressing the structural and institutional barriers they face. With this in mind, institutions must create a more supportive environment for academic-activism with consideration for its potential to promote positive social change. The following section will outline the overall discussion of the analyses outlined in this chapter.

5.5 Part Four: Overall Conclusion of Discussion

This section summarises and concludes on both the statistical analyses and the qualitative content analysis, as well as highlighting the role of the PPCT model in shaping the research design and understanding of data. This is followed by a summary of the key significant statistical analysis which revealed significant relationships between gender, class and academic-activism. Next, the qualitative content analysis findings are briefly noted before highlighting that the insights from the studies inform the subsequent study by providing the thematic foundation for the interview guide.

The current study's initial survey and design, influenced by the PPCT model, displays the importance of a multifaceted approach to exploring academic-activism. This significance is further heightened by the analysis, which highlights the interaction of external environments and their influence on activism. Thus, adopting the multidimensional framework, shaped by the PPCT model, proves essential in comprehensively exploring and assessing the complex concept of academic-activism.

The sub-scales developed in the study, namely: the social and political environment, institutional culture and restrictions and activist motivations demonstrate a clear alignment with the ecological systems of the PPCT model. The social and political environment sub-scale (which resonated with the macrosystem and exosystem) reflects the current sociopolitical contexts and external influences that shape academic-activism. The institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale (which closely aligns with the exosystem and mesosystems) reveals the interplay between external institutions and immediate academic surroundings in influencing academic-activist experiences. Lastly, the activist motivations sub-scale correlates with the microsystem, focusing on the personal values, beliefs, and motivations of academic-activists within their immediate networks.

The statistical analyses performed on the scale variables and categorical variables revealed a significant relationship between gender and class with academic-activism. Gender showed a significant relationship with the overall academic-activist orientation scale and its sub-scales. Although class did not have a significant relationship with the overall academic-activist orientation scale or the social and political environment and activist motivations sub-scales, it was significantly related to the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale. These findings were consistent across various statistical tests and analyses. Race and contract type, on the other hand, did not show any significant relationship with academic-activism, indicating that these variables did not play a substantial role in shaping engagement with activism among academics in this sample.

The results underscore the need to address gender and socioeconomic inequality within academia to foster greater levels of academic-activism. It is important to note that the lack of statistical significance between race and contract type in relation to academic-activism does not imply the absence of a relationship between these variables. However, in this study, it suggests that the evidence is insufficient to support such a relationship. These findings have implications for our understanding of activism in academic contexts,

indicating that efforts to increase engagement with activism among academics should focus on addressing the intersection of gender and class in shaping experiences and opportunities for activism within academia and other environments.

Moreover, the qualitative content analysis explores diverse forms of academic-activism and exposes the challenges posed by external environments. This resonates with the PPCT model's recognition of the interplay between individual experiences and their positionality within interconnected systems. This becomes evident in the analysis which highlights the influence of sociopolitical contexts and the institutional environment in shaping academic-activists' impact and perspectives. While the open-ended responses varied in depth, they provided a glimpse into the experiences of academic-activists. To this end, the qualitative content analysis raises questions about the meaning attributed to academic-activism by those engaged in it and the influence of external environments (such as political, economic and social) on academic-activism.

To address the quantitative and qualitative findings, which highlight the need for further investigation into the experiences of academic-activism among individuals from marginalised and diverse backgrounds (as well as those on precarious contracts), the interview study was designed to further investigate the tension between academic work and activist commitments. Therefore, the insights and issues identified in the analysis informed the development of the interview guide for Study Two. The interview participants provided additional depth to the initial survey responses that required further exploration, for example: a lack of incentivisation of activism from institutions. These findings will be detailed in Chapter 7 where the thematic analysis of interview transcripts will be outlined.

Overall, this study significantly contributes to the understanding of the factors that shape engagement with activism among academics. By demonstrating the significant relationship between gender and class with academic-activism, it highlights the importance of addressing social inequality to promote social change within academia and beyond. The absence of a significant relationship between race, contract type, and academic-activism suggests the need for further research on these factors in relation to academic-activism. The qualitative content analysis sheds light on the challenges faced by academic-activists in utilising their privileged position within academia to promote social change and the ways in which institutional constraints can hinder their

effectiveness in this regard. However, the open-ended responses suggest the need for additional exploration in the interview stage to uncover more nuanced and personally-driven experiences of academic-activism.

The following chapter will outline Study Two's methodology which outlines the analytical procedure of the thematic analysis of interview transcripts.

Chapter 6: Study Two Methodology

6.1 Introduction

The current study explores the motivations and barriers for academics who engage in activism, and how these factors vary across different academic roles and types of activism. This aim is addressed in Study Two (in depth interviews with Irish academic-activists) by exploring the experiences of academic-activists and their understanding of academic-activism within their current institutional environment. This is achieved by investigating whether the engagement in activism effects the academic interviewees experiences of academia, in particular, the challenges they face in balancing activism with their professional responsibilities. Study Two utilises a qualitative analytical approach where the reflexive thematic analysis of interview transcripts is triangulated with the findings from the previous survey-based study (Study One) to inform best practice guidelines and recommendations for academic-activists. Therefore, this chapter discusses: the research design, the materials used, the sampling and recruitment strategy, as well as the procedure involved in data collection and the subsequent thematic analysis of interview transcripts. Figure 23 provides an overview of these steps taken in Study Two.

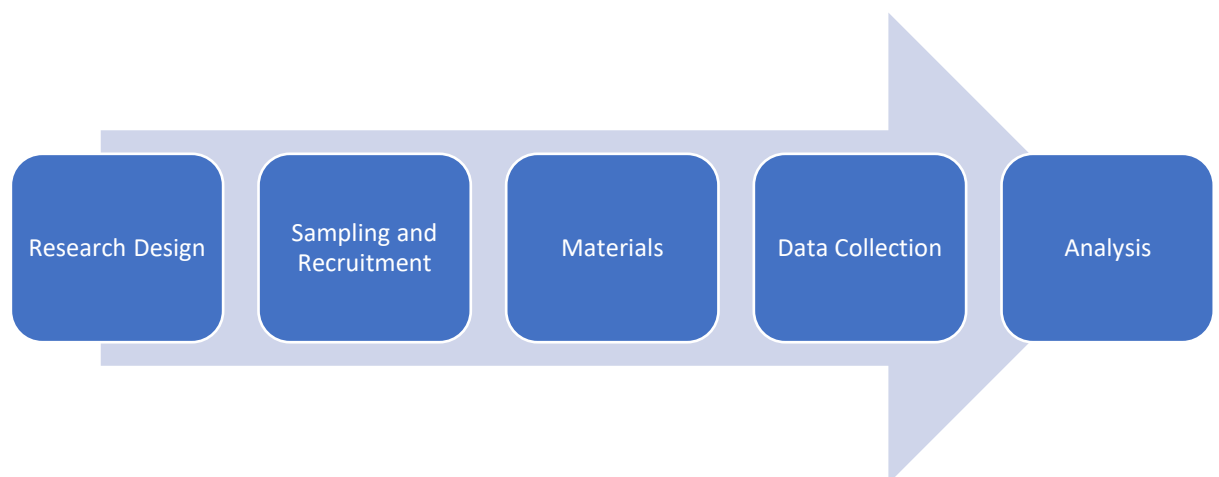


Figure 23. Overview of Study Two.

6.2 Research Design: Interviews with Irish-Based Academic-Activists

In-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with 33 Irish-based academic-activists via Zoom. Chiang et al. (2015) state qualitative research is an important

alternative or compliment to quantitative (or mixed methods) research as it affords the researcher to avail of a wider scope of data that meets the requirements of the research question. Under qualitative research, semi-structured interviews provide a balance between structured (strict questioning and scripted) and unstructured (some general questions with added prompts if necessary) interviews (Atkinson 2018; Bryman 2012; Chiang et al. 2015). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to adhere to a line of formal questioning with the opportunity to pose additional questions based on the exchange between interviewee to interviewer which hold a relevance to the research question (Chiang et al. 2015).

Oppenheim (1992) states that the main goal of a semi-structured interview is to gather qualitative data and in-depth insights from participants about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and motivations related to a particular research topic. Semi-structured interviews require the interviewer to reduce their role to a minimum in order to allow narratives, concepts and theories that arise during the interview process to be explored and/or discussed (Bryman 2012; Oppenheim 1992). Semi-structured interviews are beneficial within qualitative research as they allow for the researcher and participant to engage in a conversational style of data collection. Therefore, this allows for an element of spontaneity within the interview itself should an interesting insight that would further develop the research question arise (i.e. prompts) (Bryman 2012). This type of questioning arose during the interviews when an answer provided a platform for further examining the experiences of individuals engaging in academic-activism.

As the qualitative semi-structured interview study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives, the critical realist ontological perspective allowed for the exploration of underlying social structures that shape participant's experiences (i.e. political ideology) (Braun and Clarke 2022). In addition, the weak social constructionist epistemological perspective allowed for the researcher to understand how participants interpret and make sense of their experiences based on the discourses and social contexts they are exposed to (i.e. institutional culture, societal attitudes, etc.) (Braun and Clarke 2022).

The use of both perspectives, in line with the reflexive thematic analysis, allowed for a more comprehensive insight into participant's experiences of academic-activism from a professional perspective. Specifically, the combination of both perspectives aided the

triangulation of findings from both studies to inform best practice guidelines and recommendations for academic-activists as different forms of data gave a more holistic understanding of academic-activism which is outlined in the final chapter.

The next sections will outline the sampling and recruitment strategy, the data collection instruments involved in the current study, as well as the data collection procedure and the steps taken in the thematic analysis.

6.3 Sampling Strategy, Recruitment and Participants

On the final page of the survey in Study One, participants were given the opportunity to indicate their interest in taking part in a subsequent interview on the topic of academic activism by contacting the researcher via email. Thirty-four survey participants emailed indicating their interest in taking part in an interview via Zoom. Following seven withdrawals, further purposive selection and recruitment of academics in Ireland with public profiles (such as institutional profiles) indicating that they were involved in activist-themed work were directly emailed information about the project and requested to reply via email if they were interested in participating in an interview (Appendix L). A further 6 interviews were conducted based on this recruitment method. In total, interviews were completed with 33 participants.

In line with ethical advice, participant demographics for Study Two were not specifically requested but were presented naturally during the interview process. This demographic information was gathered through self-referencing and identification within the interviews. The information was then collated for analysis and is reflected in the demographic overview of interviewees. Participants in this study included: Professor (n=1), Associate Professor (n=4), Head of Department and Senior Lecturer (n=1), Senior Lecturer (n=4), Structured Lecturer (n=1), Lecturer (n=10), Researcher (n=1), Postdoctoral Researcher (n=1), and PhD Researcher (n=10). Of this participant group, 18 identified as a woman, 14 identified as a man and 1 identified as gender nonbinary. 83% of participants were from White Irish backgrounds with the remaining participants identifying with Black, Asian, white European, white British, white North American and white Latin American backgrounds. There was a near even split between class groups with 52% identifying with middle-class backgrounds and 48% identifying with working-class backgrounds.

77% of participants were from Arts, Humanities and Social Science (AHSS) with 23% of participants coming from Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) backgrounds. Participants were engaged in varied types of activism such as: political, trade union, teaching/research, feminist, community-based (e.g. class, religion, LGBTQI+, adult education, etc.), postgraduate union, work-based (e.g. social care work), human rights, criminology-based, environmental, reproductive rights, and medical/health science.

Figures 24, 25 and 26 present the demographic information described here in the following order: (i) PhD and Postdoctoral Researchers; (ii) Lecturers and Senior Lecturers and; (iii) Professors and Head of Departments.

ID	GENDER	CLASS	RACE	ROLE	TYPE OF ACTIVISM
1	Woman	Middle-Class	White Irish	PhD	Research
2	Man	Middle-Class	White Irish	PhD	Research
3	Woman	Working-Class	White Irish	PhD	Research, teaching and work-based (social care)
4	Woman	Middle-Class	White Irish	PhD	Research, teaching and community-based
5	Man	Working-Class	White Irish	PhD	Research, political and postgraduate union
6	Man	Working-Class	White Irish	PhD	Research
7	Woman	Middle-Class	White Irish	PhD	Research and community-based
8	Man	Working-Class	White Irish	PhD	Research and student representation
9	Woman	Working-Class	White Irish	Postdoc	Research and postgraduate union
14	Man	Middle-Class	White Latin American	PhD	Postgraduate union
30	Man	Working-Class	Black	PhD	Research, work-based and postgraduate union

Figure 24. Overview of PhD and Postdoc demographics.

ID	GENDER	CLASS	RACE	ROLE	TYPE OF ACTIVISM
11	Man	Working-Class	White Irish	Senior Lecturer	Research, teaching, community-based, political and trade union
12	Man	Working-Class	White Irish	Structured Lecturer	Trade union
15	Man	Working-Class	White Irish	Lecturer	Teaching, research and trade union
16	Woman	Working-Class	White Irish	Lecturer	Teaching, research and trade union
17	Woman	Middle-Class	Asian	Senior Lecturer	Teaching, research and human rights
18	Woman	Middle-Class	White Irish	Lecturer	Teaching, research, environmental/climate and housing
19	Man	Working-Class	White Irish	Senior Lecturer	Teaching, research and community-based
20	Woman	Middle-Class	White Irish	Lecturer	Teaching, research and community-based
23	Woman	Middle-Class	White British	Lecturer	Political, student representation
26	Woman	Working-Class	White European	Lecturer	Teaching, research and criminology (informing policy)
27	Woman	Middle-Class	White Irish	Lecturer	Teaching, research, feminist, political and reproductive rights
28	Man	Working-Class	White Irish	Lecturer	Teaching, research and former postgrad student activist
29	Man	Middle-Class	White Irish	Senior Lecturer	Teaching, research, adult learning, community-based and political
31	Woman	Middle-Class	White Irish	Researcher and Lecturer	Research
32	Man	Middle-Class	White British	Lecturer	Academic precarity
33	Woman	Working-Class	White Irish	Lecturer	Academic precarity

Figure 25. Overview of Lecturer demographics.

ID	GENDER	CLASS	RACE	ROLE	TYPE OF ACTIVISM
10	Woman	Working-Class	White Irish	Associate Professor	Adult learning and community-based
13	Man	Working-Class	White Irish	Professor	Political, community-based and environmental/climate
21	Woman	Middle-Class	White Irish	Associate Professor	Political, anti-racism, trade union, feminism, reproductive rights, housing and community-based
22	Man	Middle-Class	White North American	Associate Professor	Political and healthcare
24	Woman	Middle-Class	White Irish	Associate Professor	Political, community-based and feminist
25	Nonbinary	Middle-Class	Asian	Head of Department (and Senior Lecturer)	Did not identify as an activist* *This is clarified in Study Two analysis, Chapter 7

Figure 26. Overview of Professors and Head of Department demographics.

6.4 Materials

Study Two involved conducting 33 semi-structured interviews with academic-activists in Ireland. The semi-structured interview guide was informed by the findings from Study One as well as the literature review themes identified in Chapter 2 (see Appendix H). Drawing from participants' previous survey responses and my own experiences as a precariously employed, early-career academic-activist ensured that this research aligned with the PAR approach. This participatory approach meant that interview questions reflected the experiences of academic-activists in a comprehensive manner. This further supported the development of the guidelines and recommendations produced for the final chapter as they are directly informed by participants' contribution to the study (i.e. doing research with and for participants through collaboration).

The questions present in the interview schedule corresponded to the three thematic contexts examined in Study One (see also Appendix H for more details regarding prompts):

Theme 1: (Social and Political Environment)

Q1. What does it mean to you to be an academic-activist?

Q2. Do you feel you can influence change within the academy and in wider society through activism?

Theme 2: (Institutional Environment)

Q3. A survey response stated that there is a "tricky line" between academic work and activist commitments. Would you agree with this assessment? Why/Why not?

Q4. Similarly, a separate survey response stated: "I do not believe that the current academic career path recognises or allows for activism." How can HEI's encourage academic-activism and academic freedom in a way that aids career progression for all academics?

Theme 3: (Individual Academic-Activist)

Q5. In what ways do you identify as an activist?

Q6. What are the benefits/pitfalls to being an academic-activist?

Final Question:

If you could offer one piece of advice or insight to other academic-activists, what would it be?

The next section will outline the data collection procedure for the current study.

6.5 Data Collection

Following the recruitment phase, participants were sent an information sheet and consent form explaining the purpose of the study (Appendix I). Participants were asked to review and sign the consent form, indicating their voluntary participation and confidentiality of their information. A suitable date and time to meet via Zoom was then arranged with participants.

After participants joined the Zoom meeting (and prior to recording), an informal conversation and introductions took place to establish rapport before commencing the interview. Participants were reminded of the purpose and the recording of the study. In addition, participants were reminded that there was a pre-interview question to ensure participants were not experiencing any untold stress in relation to their work. The pre-interview question stated (see Appendix H):

Before beginning the interview, it must be ensured that you are not currently experiencing any form of distress in relation to your work. At present, are you experiencing levels of high stress or emotional stress as a direct result of your employment? If the answer is No, we can proceed with the interview. If you change your mind at any stage in the interview, or feel that some questions are causing you to feel anxious/stressed, you can request to pause the interview or stop it entirely.

It was confirmed that participants had reviewed and provided consent before recording.

The interview was conducted in line with the interview guide with flexibility in the order of questions based on the participants' contributions, thoughts, experiences and perspectives on activism. Interviews took anywhere between 45 minutes and 2 hours to complete. Following the end of the interview, participants were thanked for their valuable participation and contribution. All Zoom recordings were securely stored and managed according to data protection regulations on a password protected SETU OneDrive folder for transcription.

The next section will outline the reflexive thematic analysis utilised to explore the interview transcripts.

6.6 Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Interview transcripts were analysed in line with Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2012; 2019; 2022) reflexive thematic approach, which features a robust six-phased process. Braun and Clarke (2022) state that reflexive thematic analysis is a method for developing, analysing and interpreting patterns across a qualitative data which involves systematic process of data coding to develop themes, which are considered the key purpose of thematic analysis. Reflexivity in this method involves the practice of critically reflecting on both your own positionality within the research, as well as your research approach which is influenced by your own unique identity (i.e. personal background, social and cultural identity, attitudes, beliefs, etc.) within the wider context of the study (Braun and Clarke 2022).

Given its reflexive element, Braun and Clarke (2022, pg. 10) state reflexive thematic analysis offers "clear processes" rather than "rigid rules". This means that researcher subjectivity is a critical tool in the thematic analysis process. The interpretation of data and "good coding" can be achieved independently as this method values researcher subjectivity, noting that "it is not a problem to be managed or controlled and should be treated as resource for doing analysis" (Braun and Clarke 2022, pg. 8).

As a white, working-class male academic-activist and PhD researcher who has personally experienced precarity in academia, my own background and perspectives potentially shaped my interpretations in the analysis. Recognising the potential impact of my identity and lived experiences, I approached the analysis with an awareness of how these factors may influence the coding and identification of themes. This reflexivity allowed me to critically reflect on how my personal background and social position may have intersected with the data. By embracing the subjectivity inherent in the analysis process, I aimed to harness my own unique perspective as a resource for conducting the thematic analysis.

Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2012) suggest reflexive thematic analysis is well-suited within a PAR methodology. However, due to potential limitations in collaborator (participant) engagement and availability, involving participants in the coding process was not always feasible (Fletcher et al. 2015). To address this, the current study utilised a member-reflection stage in the analytical process. During this stage, participants offered feedback on potential codes and themes in their transcripts and were given the opportunity

to further emphasise crucial aspects of their experiences (e.g. feeling unsupported within their department). This collaborative approach allowed participants to act as co-researchers and contribute to the final guidelines and recommendations for best practices (Fletcher et al. 2015).

For example, one particularly insightful moment that came during the member-reflection stage involved Participant 21 sent back her preliminary analysed transcript to highlight a key aspect of her experience that I had potentially overlooked. Participant 21 pointed out how jealousy and even hostility from peers in a competitive academic environment had been a significant challenge for her as a woman given a strong sense of jealousy and hostility from peers who write a lot about social movements and equality, but do not have the same organic connections. Academia is an extremely competitive environment and can be a tough place to work, especially for women, when your motivation is equality and the motivation for those around you is vertical progression up the academic ladder and some sense of academic kudos. This feedback offered deeper insights into the explicit and discrete challenges facing women in academia and enriched the final analysis by drawing attention to the social dynamics within the academic environment.

The reflexive thematic analysis took an inductive approach to the development of codes and themes. Methodologically, this meant that themes and codes were driven from the researcher's interpretation of the data (Braun and Clarke 2022; Byrne 2021). While this inductive approach is rooted in data, it is important to acknowledge how my own positionality influenced the analysis. Although my identity aided the analysis, I also approached the research as a relative newcomer to the sector. This allowed me to learn and gain perspective from more experienced practitioners within the field of academic-activism.

However, given my apparent newcomer status, many of the more experienced academic-activist participants used the opening moments of the interview to assess my credentials and background (through more casual chat) to determine whether I was someone they could trust. In this sense, my own identity and academic-activist experience helped build rapport. This trust enabled participants to feel more comfortable sharing their experiences openly, ultimately leading to richer data collection which aided the analysis.

This combination of personal experience and new insights created an interesting lens through which I interpreted the data. My working-class background and familiarity with

precarious employment resonated with certain themes of institutional barriers and inequalities, while my ongoing learning about the sector enabled me to approach the analysis with an open, critical mindset. This reflexive stance acknowledges that while my experiences informed the analysis, they did not dictate it, as I remained committed to letting the data guide the development of themes.

Similar to Study One, while the theoretical framework does not directly inform the analysis of Study Two (inductively driven thematic analysis), the themes identified reflect the researcher's understanding of concepts relating to academic-activism from the extensive review of relevant literature, highlighting the relevance of how an individual is impacted by interactions within their immediate and external environments (i.e. PPCT model). The PPCT theoretical framework will be utilised at a later stage in the research, in the final chapter, in the discussion of both studies within the context of the model.

Figure 27 outlines the process followed in the reflexive thematic analysis process in line with (Braun and Clarke 2022). The cyclical diagram below highlights the reflexive, non-linear process involved in this approach. Within reflexive thematic analysis, the researcher may move between steps before finalising. As such, reflexive thematic analysis relies on the ability of the researcher to recognise that certain steps may need to be redone (Braun and Clarke 2022).



Figure 27. Overview of reflexive thematic analysis process.

Familiarise yourself with data: I began by listening to audio transcripts before transcribing the interview. Interviews were transcribed verbatim both manually and automatically through Microsoft Word via the SETU OneDrive platform which has a transcription function. This involved uploading the recorded file to a Word document. Following the automated transcription, the researcher listened through the interview recordings to check for accuracy of information and editing the transcript where necessary (inaccuracies or errors generated by the automated transcription). Transcribing interviews by this method was key for conducting the subsequent reflexive thematic analysis as it allowed for a detailed examination of participants' words, expressions and nuances.

Having transcribed the interview, transcripts were re-read before forming interview summaries for each participant. This allowed me to make initial analytic notes and generate early ideas.

Initial coding: Following the familiarisation phase, the transcripts were systematically read multiple times to identify interesting, relevant and/or meaningful areas of the text. Coding, which was conducted via Microsoft Word's comment function, was guided by a combination of semantic (explicit; surface level) and latent (conceptual) coding to best capture my interpretive analytic take on the data. After completing 5 interviews, I would re-engage with the reading and initial coding process. This allowed for the collating of codes with similar meanings within the data, as well as the tracking of changes for codes

(such as shorthand iterations, for example: permanent vs precarious experience = p vs p) in a continuous process of reflection and analysis (See Appendix J for example of initial coding).

Initial theme generation: Codes that shared patterned meaning across the transcripts were grouped together. Clusters of codes were compiled that appear to be linked to similar meanings and concepts. Themes were broader than the codes and indicated a pattern across the data. See Appendix J for an example of the initial theme generation.

Theme development and review: Having generated initial themes, developed themes were revisited and reviewed to determine their appropriateness to the overall analysis. This resulted in what Braun and Clarke (2022, pg. 35) refer to as “radical revision”. The initial themes did not present a “compelling story” (Braun and Clarke 2022, pg. 35). Therefore, some themes were discarded (such as themes that were repetitive of others or themes that lacked substantial data support) and others were revised and integrated into other thematic areas of the analysis. As an example, one of the initial superordinate themes, ‘Comfortable and Uncomfortable Academic-Activism’ was incorporated into other sub-thematic areas during the analysis process because it encompassed relevant elements, such as the impact on career mobility, that enriched the overall comprehensiveness of the analysis.

Theme refining, defining and naming: Following the development and review of themes, a brief summary of each superordinate and sub-theme were written to consider the overall narrative or picture the theme(s) tell and how these align to form a complete story within the analysis. By summarising each theme, it allowed for an examination of their alignment and contribution to the overarching story of the data, ensuring that the analysis captured the complete narrative and provided a cohesive understanding of the research question. This is to ensure that each theme is well-defined and based around a core concept, such as the impact of external factors (e.g. political ideology, life experiences, etc.) on academic-activism.

As an example, one of the four initially identified themes: ‘The Purpose and Role of Academic-Activism’ was discarded during the refining process as it was repetitive of other themes and disturbed the flow of the analysis. This redundancy undermined the clarity and cohesiveness of the analysis by introducing unnecessary repetition. By reducing the initial four themes to three superordinate themes due to repetitiveness, the

overall flow and progression of the analysis were improved, allowing for a more streamlined and coherent representation of the research findings.

The concluding key steps in this process involved setting final names for themes and sub-themes, which were descriptive and informative of the overall concepts included within the theme. See Appendix J for an example of the initial steps in the theme refining and naming process.

Write up: The final step involves the write up of the analysis. See Chapter 6 for the analysis of Study Two.

6.7 Ethics

Institutional ethical approval was granted by the Waterford Institute of Technology (now South East Technological University or SETU) Ethics Committee for Study Two on the 17th June 2021 (See Appendix K). The main ethical considerations throughout the project are briefly outlined below.

Data protection:

To safeguard personal information, access to interview data was restricted to the researcher, principal supervisor, and co-supervisor. Transcripts and recordings were securely stored on a password-protected device and SETU OneDrive, ensuring compliance with GDPR and protecting participant information. Participants had the right to request information about the data collected, the purposes of processing and the duration of storage. Additionally, participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their privacy and confidentiality during transcription and analysis (e.g. Participant 16). This was also done in the case where participant's named their place of employment or other affiliations; activist or otherwise. Contact details for the researcher and supervisory team were provided to address any participant queries or concerns regarding their rights.

Research Integrity and Practices:

In order to maintain research integrity, the study strictly adhered to established research practices, ensuring the design, methodology, analysis were reliable. The overall management, organisation and plans for disseminations were organised by the researcher and supervisory team.

Participants Protection and Participation:

Interview questions were informed by previous stages of the research which ensured the questions would not cause any unnecessary stress to participants. In addition, participants were informed verbally and through an information sheet that illegal activism is not the focus of the study and any disclosure or suggestion of involvement in illegal activities will result in immediate cessation of the interview and withdrawal of their data. The same information sheet informed participants of their right to decline or exercise their right to erasure within six months of the interview.

Participants Protection and Data Analysis:

Participants were not asked to identify their current or previous employers, nor compare their experiences of activism within different employment contexts. If participants provided identifying information, it was redacted during transcription, ensuring privacy. Similar to the previous study, the target population for this study does not fall under the category of vulnerable groups given their level of education and expertise which enables them to engage in the research process effectively and provide valuable insights throughout.

Risks to the Researcher:

Any potential risks to the researcher were mitigated through regular reflexive practice which is encouraged within the PAR framework. Risks were also mitigated through regular and open communication with the supervisory team as mentioned in Chapter 4. The intended areas for the dissemination of results and the development of guidelines and recommendations for the academic community will contribute to the researcher's career and progression in this research area.

Risks to the Participants:

Participants may face risks related to economic, job, and social security. To mitigate these risks, participants will receive a detailed study description, including aims and their right to withdraw before consenting to participate. A list of supports and contact numbers was also provided. De-identification techniques, such as pseudonyms and redaction, was used to protect participant identity and confidentiality throughout the research process.

Overall, the project did not involve any tests or procedures that carry risks to the health or well-being of individuals. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring their understanding and agreement to participate. Consent forms provided an overview of the project, including data publication and storage. Participants' personal data, including consent forms and pseudonyms, was securely stored on a password-protected device and OneDrive. Data retention adhered to GDPR guidelines and SETU's Data Retention and Policy Schedule, ensuring data is retained for a necessary period and allowing participants' rights to be upheld.

By addressing these ethical issues, the research prioritised the protection of participants' privacy and confidentiality while maintaining research integrity. The measures implemented minimised risks to both the researcher and participants, respecting participant rights and informed consent throughout the research process. The findings of this study contribute valuable insights and develop guidelines for social change, benefiting the academic community.

6.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has outlined the research design, which outlined the use of the qualitative approach that is informed by both critical realist ontological and weak social constructionist epistemological perspectives. The recruitment and sampling procedure was described in detail, along with a brief synopsis of the participant demographics. The materials used in the study were also discussed, as well as the analytical procedure of reflexive thematic analysis. In addition, the key ethical considerations that were taken into account when designing this research study. The following chapter will present the analysis and discussion of Study Two's interviews with academic-activists.

Chapter 7: Study Two Analysis and Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of 33 semi-structured interviews conducted with academic-activists based in Ireland. The aim of this study is to explore academic-activists' understanding and experience of academic activism within the current institutional environment, as well as their motivations for academic-activist work. This study investigates the supports and barriers presented to academic-activists and considers how this intersects with their academic role; the type of activism they engaged in, and their specific societal contexts (e.g. political, economic and institutional environments). The interview guide was informed by the analysis of survey responses in Study One and the literature review.

Themes across the interviews were actively identified and interpreted using reflexive thematic analysis as per Braun's and Clarke's (2022) six-phased guidelines. Through this reflexive approach, three superordinate themes were identified due to their prominence within the academic-activists' experiences. Two additional sub-themes were identified within each of the three superordinate themes. Sub-themes were identified based on their appropriateness and relevance within the super ordinate themes and given their fit within the overall analysis (Byrne 2021).

Figure 28 provides a summary of each theme and related sub-theme in line with their relevance within the PPCT model. It is important to note the approach and considerations that informed the link of themes to the PPCT model. The development of themes and codes was not initially guided by the PPCT model itself given the reflexive thematic analysis approach of this study. However, the PPCT model has always held a prominent position in the background of this study's research process and design. While the themes in the following sections were developed based on the researcher's interaction and interpretation of data, they were subsequently linked to the PPCT model based on their resonance with the experiences and content shared by participants. This interplay between themes and the PPCT model not only serves as a testament to the flexibility of this research methodology, but also underscores the dynamic nature of the research process. A more comprehensive exploration the themes connection to PPCT model is outlined in the concluding section of this chapter. Quotation marks reflect a participant quote.

Theme 1:	Key Points:
“That kind of collectivism that we need”: negotiating neoliberalism and building solidarity	This theme provides a clear introduction that gives context to the subsequent discussion of the two sub-themes which outline the impact of the social, political and economic environment on activism.
Sub-Themes:	
1a: Neoliberalism’s impact on solidarity	Neoliberal values act as a barrier to activism.
1b: Inequality as a motivator for allyship	Participant’s life experiences act as a motivator to promote social change.
Theme 1 Link to PPCT Model: Macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem and chronosystem.	
Theme 2:	Key Points:
“Academia doesn’t like activism”: institutional barriers to academic-activism	This theme serves to establish a clear context for the exploration of the two sub-themes related to the role institutions have in restricting activism.
Sub-Themes:	
2a: Permanency and precarity: contrasting experiences of academic-activism	Academia’s employment model restricts the academic freedom of those in precarious work.
2b: Attitudes towards academic-activism	Institutional attitudes towards academic-activism provide limited space to engage in activism both inside and outside of academia.
Theme 2 Link to PPCT Model: Mesosystem, microsystem, exosystem and chronosystem.	
Theme 3:	Key Points:
“They have different senses of time”: balancing academia and activism	This serves as a background for the two sub-themes which detail the complexity of sustaining academic-activist work.
Sub-Themes:	
3a: “Dual roles”: navigating academic and activist spaces	The challenges of balancing academic work and activist commitments.
3b: “Build your networks”: the importance of support networks for academic-activists	Diverse networks of like-minded individuals can help reduce the challenges of engaging in academic-activism.
Theme 3 Link to PPCT Model: Chronosystem, mesosystem, microsystem.	

Figure 28. Summary of themes and sub-themes in line with its connection to the PPCT model.

The first theme, “that kind of collectivism that we need”: negotiating neoliberalism and building solidarity outlines the impact of social, political and economic factors on solidaric actions within academia according to the participants’ experiences. Following from this, participant’s experience and awareness of inequality is discussed as a motivator for academic-activism. The second theme, “academia doesn’t like activism”: the impact of the institutional climate on academic-activism outlines the challenges faced by academics based on their contract type, as well as highlighting the role of institutional attitudes (which are sensitive to altering social and cultural perceptions) in supporting and/or restricting academic-activism. The last theme, “they have different senses of time”: finding the balance between academia and activism focuses on the demanding nature of academic-activist work and ways in which academic-activists attempt to overcome the barriers presented to them in this context through building support both internally (i.e. academic-based) and externally (i.e. traditional activist networks).

The following sections discuss in further detail the analysis of the 33 interviews, contextualised within the literature described in Chapter 2.

7.2 Theme 1: “that kind of collectivism that we need”¹⁹: negotiating neoliberalism and building solidarity

Most of the participants discussed how the political, social and economic climate has had a fatiguing impact on solidaric actions within Irish society, which has been an obstacle for academic-activists to overcome. Interviewees refer to Ireland’s latent conservatism, as well as the role of neoliberalism in the encouragement of individualism and competitiveness within Irish society. As a result, the overarching political ideology is deemed to be a barrier to building collective action, which is seen as a factor in Ireland’s lack of activist tradition and irregular activist movements and campaigns with varying outcomes. There is some indication that this may be changing, as the current political, economic and social climate (which has been seen as a deterrent of activism) has begun to inadvertently encourage a push for activism within Irish society (and some interviewees in particular). In addition, within this theme, it is also considered how living in a neoliberal society and witnessing its consequences over time has been a central factor in the development of participants’ activist stances.

¹⁹ Quote from Participant 01 (Woman, Middle-Class, White Irish, PhD Researcher).

Using examples and quotes from participants, this is further outlined in the following sub-themes:

- Neoliberalism's impact on solidarity.
- Inequality as a motivator for allyship.

7.2.1 Sub-theme 1a: neoliberalism's impact on solidarity

This section explores the complexities surrounding academic-activism in the context of Ireland's cultural attitude of ambivalence; shaped by neoliberal values and attitudes. The discussion focuses on the challenges faced by activists due to the prominence of individualism and competition driven by the prevailing neoliberal ideology in Irish society. Therefore, this section highlights the challenges of engaging in academic-activism within the context of Ireland's socioeconomic climate which hinders collective action, as well the difficulty of constructing a collective identity within the academic environment. Overall, the analysis highlights how neoliberal values in Irish society (including academia) limit collective efforts and contribute to an environment where activism faces significant obstacles. The following extracts from participants illustrate the central tenets of this sub-theme:

A lot of people involved saw it in quite an individualistic sort of light and they saw the importance of preparing the case; lobbying for reform and that sort of thing [...] but it completely lacked any sort of focus on what the vehicle actually would be and that our strength was in collective organisation (Participant 05, Man, Working-Class, White Irish, PhD Researcher).

Yeah, I mean Ireland, I find...if I may speak a bit bluntly, it's really a joke compared to other places I've been. I mean the lack of tradition of activism or organised changes is very poor (Participant 22, Man, Middle-Class, White North American, Associate Professor).

I do sometimes get less support, I think within my own department, [...] there's almost a sense of: 'Why are you getting caught up in all this political stuff?' (Participant 21 Woman, Middle-Class, White Irish, Associate Professor).

The influence of neoliberal ideology, has emerged as a significant impediment to activist efforts as revealed in participant quotes. In the present context, Ireland's latent conservatism has fostered a cultural ambivalence, making change a slow progress,

according to Participant 19 (Man, Working-Class, White Irish, Senior Lecturer). The prevailing socioeconomic climate has reduced the appetite for activism, with individuals prioritising personal security concerns such as the cost of living crisis, the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic and job security. As a result, some participants suggest that Ireland lacks both the motivation and tradition for activism. This cultural disposition, shaped by the dominance of neoliberal ideology, seems to influence the irregularity of activist movements and their limited success as is evident in the lack of support shown towards activism.

Within the current socioeconomic climate (referred to by a participant as ‘a dig and gig economy; an extractivist precarious work based, modern, neoliberal economy’), a lack of individual personal security means that activists tend to be outliers (Participant 13, Man, White Irish, Working-Class, Professor). This borrows from an earlier point where the current socioeconomic climate, in line with cultural and societal attitudes (e.g. ambivalence), tends to clash with enacting positive change within society. This resonates with Rhodes et al. (2017, pg. 6) claim that academic-activists are considered to be “modern day cranks” for both resisting and challenging the neoliberal discourses that are present within society and academia. As such, academic-activists are considered to be somewhat of a stubborn opposition within the context of the current social, political and institutional environment.

Neoliberal values impact on the culture of wider society (including its social institutions and individuals who interact within them). In the literature, this ideological stance is often likened to a business model that governs societal interactions and institutional operations by advocating the idea that individuals should function like entrepreneurs, prioritising the safeguarding of their own economic interests to ensure survival (Fleming 2021; Olssen and Peters 2005; Power et al. 2013). Therefore, activism in this context, can be seen as an unnecessary threat to individual’s pursuing such self-interests (or what is simply required to survive). As Participant 12 (Man, Working-Class, White Irish, Structured Lecturer) notes: ‘it [neoliberalism] doesn't lead to a culture of cooperation and collaboration between academics, but it does lead to individualism’. In line with Flood et al.’s (2013) study on academic-activism, a culture of competition amongst colleagues is symptomatic of neoliberal values present within wider society, which is deemed to reconstruct the purpose of the academic environment and complicates the manner in

which collective action can be enacted (Alakauvklar 2020; Flood et al. 2013; Rahal et al. 2023).

For example, similar to Eschle's and Maiguaschca's (2006) findings in relation to the clashes between academia and activism, particularly from a feminist perspective, Participant 01 (Woman, Middle-Class, White Irish, PhD Researcher) finds that this limits the type or amount of activism you can do as an academic, stating: 'neoliberalism is a bit of an issue because it goes against, particularly in my own research [feminism-based], that kind of collectivism that we need. It's too much based on the individual'. Given this, academia is argued to favour neoliberal values which relate to individualism and competitiveness which promotes the growing importance of performance-based research in comparison to other academic duties (e.g. administration, teaching, emotional labour, etc.) (Burford 2017; Newcomb 2021; O'Connor 2001; Strunk 2020). This further relates to Atkinson's and Standing's (2019) study where it was found that current neoliberal discourses within academia are restrictive of activism and/or academic work focused on promoting social change through pushback on alternative pedagogical approaches, challenging institutional structures, as well as women-only reading and study groups.

Moreover, the influence of neoliberalism on the current academic landscape is evident in the insufficiency of higher education funding and the scarcity of secure academic positions. This prevailing environment forces colleagues to compete for limited resources, such as tenured contracts, simply to meet the escalating costs of living (Courtois and O'Keefe 2015; Cush 2016; Fitzsimons et al. 2021; Flynn 2020; Irish Precarity Network 2022; ISE 2020; Loxley 2014; Whelan 2021). Participant 17 (Woman, Middle-Class, Asian, Senior Lecturer) highlights that: 'while the university's budgetary requirements are expanding, the government's funding is not', leading to an acute shortage of secure work within academia—a situation acknowledged as a crisis within the literature (McGuire 2015). Consequently, amidst this climate, individuals prioritise personal security, which may inadvertently impede their ability or motivation to partake in collective action (Marginson 2014; Marginson 1997; Rahal et al. 2023)

The sentiments expressed by participants in the opening paragraphs highlight the challenges in fostering collective action within an academic environment that promotes competition for limited resources, such as contracts and funding. Within Ireland's individualised culture, apathy towards others' concerns becomes apparent. For instance,

academics, particularly those at the PhD level, face significant hurdles due to varying working conditions (paid/unpaid teaching and differing stipend amounts), leading to a reluctance to engage in activism that does not directly impact them. From this perspective, advocating for PhD workers' rights can be tainted by an individualised culture where competition trumps collegiate action (Merga and Mason 2020; ISE 2020; Rahal et al. 2023; Rhodes et al. 2017; Woolston 2019).

This apparent individualism and apathy appear to be a common problem amongst activists attempting to build movements in Ireland, given the impact of neoliberal ideology encouraging individualism within cultural attitudes. A lack of activist tradition along with a historical dearth in strong movements to point towards does not aid collective organisation. Similarly, Cox (2012) and O'Flynn and Panayiotopoulos (2015) found in their experience that this is the result of a lack of continued dialogue between left-leaning groups (e.g. trade unions) that can offer an alternative to current neoliberal discourse in Irish society. However, it is suggested by Participant 15 (Man, Working-Class, White Irish, Senior Lecturer) that there are potential signs of change in people's attitudes towards collective action. Participant 15 states: 'we live in a moment where we're on the cusp of really, really huge societal changes. You can kind of feel it, and it's a question of what kind of shape that kind of [change] takes'. However, as reflected in the opening extracts, Ireland is not considered by participants to be an ideal environment to shape this societal change.

From the participants' perspectives, the previous success of the Repeal the 8th, Water Charge Movements and current trends in housing activism indicates a shift in cultural attitudes. However, Ireland's weak activist record is perhaps better reflected in a lack of alternative political options. This is because the current social climate deters activism and makes it difficult to build something successful or meaningful in Ireland at a consistent rate. From the position of academic-activists, this change will require the construction of a collective identity. However, building this type of collective identity is difficult in an environment where the majority of academics are in high pressure roles with extensive workloads. As a result, those with activist motivations are outnumbered by an ambivalent majority according to Participant 19 (Man, Working-Class, White Irish, Senior Lecturer).

The concerns related to building a strong collective identity within academia reflects upon common issues identified across the literature where the heavy teaching workloads faced

by academics reduce the time to engage in other academic duties which are considered important for career progression (e.g. applying for funding). Within the context of academic-activism, mismanaged workloads have reduced the ability of academics to build networks that are required to build successful activist movements (Allmer 2018; Clarke et al. 2015; Flynn 2020; Ivancheva et al. 2019; Merga and Mason 2020; O’Keefe and Courtois 2019).

Thus, as Participant 20 (Woman, Middle-Class, White Irish, Lecturer) notes: ‘constructing a collective identity will rely on the interconnection between the mission of institutions, the ordinary academics (or troops on the ground) and those in hierarchical positions’. However, the aforementioned culture of ambivalence has meant that activists who attempt to challenge societal norms can be labelled negatively within their departments. Hence, it is more likely that people become disinterested in achieving social change once they have achieved a sense of personal security in the current socioeconomic climate according to Participant 09 (Woman, White Irish Working-Class, Postdoctoral Researcher). Furthermore, it is broadly communicated by the majority of participants that the neoliberalisation of Irish society (particularly academia) has created a culture of competition, elitism and individualism which impacts on collectivism, collegiality and communication centered around social change amongst peers (Clarke et al. 2015; Cox 2011; Lynch and Grummell 2018; Maslach and Gomes 2006).

The above discussion has outlined the complexity of engaging in activism within a societal context that both directly and indirectly attempts to restrict activist measures through encouraging cultural attitudes that evolve around individualism and competitiveness. While the current socioeconomic environment restricts activist thought and measures to some extent, living in a neoliberal society has encouraged an activist drive (i.e. morals, values, beliefs, etc.) amongst some participants. The next sub-theme highlights an understanding of how the individual’s academic-activist stance develops, relevant to the political, social and economic context of Irish society. This is discussed in relation to the impact of both directly experiencing and developing an awareness of various forms of inequality which encourage participants’ journeys into activism.

7.2.2 Sub-theme 1b: inequality as a motivator for allyship

This sub-theme explores how backgrounds influence academic-activist stances in Irish society. Participants from marginalised/disadvantaged backgrounds attribute their activist

perspectives to politically informed and socially conscious upbringings, while privileged participants describe later awakenings to activism during their academic journeys. Academic-activists from marginalised backgrounds feel a natural connection to their causes, experiencing inequalities first-hand. Conversely, those from privileged backgrounds recognise their cultural capital and use it to promote allyship and social change. The section explores these contrasting paths, emphasising the significance of diverse perspectives in fostering collective action and driving activism in Ireland. The following extracts from participants demonstrate the focus of this sub-theme as described:

It was very much my parents who embodied that notion of activism, of challenging power. That's one side, union activism. The other were more lowkey dissenters; rural Ireland pushing back against the church or pushing back as observant Catholics, but pushing back against clerical power, pushing back against ostracising of single parents in the 1940s and 1950s, those sorts of things. Challenging the authority of the more powerful people in villages and rural parishes. So, I think that notion of that, that's what my parents modelled for me in many respects; not being afraid to talk back to authority. Not being afraid to kind of shout and heckle (Participant 28, Man, Working-Class, White Irish, Lecturer).

For me it's growing up in poverty and growing up poor in inner city Dublin and you know, knowing that you're very much an outsider in Irish society, knowing that your community, in inner city, Dublin has a certain stigma to it [...] You see all the networks and how it works and what you begin to realise is however talented you might be, however much you can compensate for the inequality you've experienced with by dint of graft and determination and whatever talent you can bring to that. You are always going to have that stacked against you [...] I have a strong sense of solidarity with them [marginalised groups] and what they must feel [...] Growing up, certainly knowing what inequality feels like, knowing you've been stigmatised, knowing your accent, where you're from (Participant 11, Man, Working-Class, White Irish, Senior Lecturer).

People are born into situations where they have very little control, and they have to make the most of whatever, you know. So it's not up to middle-class people like me to be pointing the finger at them or judging them. And that's why I was trying

to step back and open up a different perspective on the situation (Participant 31, Woman, Middle-Class, White Irish, Researcher and Lecturer).

I began to notice class oppression and I know that sounds awful, but I'm middle-class so I was trained not to notice. I didn't see my middle-classness. I didn't have that belief that I had a supremacy. Because I didn't feel that I had a supremacy over other classes, but I began to understand from kind of my early 30s that I was given a dominance and an advantage over others. And that operated every single second. And so I've been [...] trying to disaffiliate from that privilege. Understand it first and find ways to disaffiliate and find ways to ally. In particular, with women who are socioeconomically marginalised. And I still feel even though I'm over two decades at that work, I still feel I'm just at the start of it (Participant 24, Woman, Middle-Class, White Irish, Associate Professor).

As highlighted from the above extracts, participants from marginalised or/disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g. working-class, religious minority, minority ethnic, etc.) comment that growing up in politically informed, socially conscious households shaped their academic-activist stance (Brook and Michell 2012; Granfield 1991). This development toward activism was amplified by witnessing and experiencing inequality first-hand as a result of the repercussions of wider environments (namely neoliberal or conservative politics), for example, experiences of: poverty, political neglect and economic recession on disadvantaged communities/people within society. In particular, similarly to Byrne's (2015) and Pease's (2015) insights, Participants 03 (Woman, Working-Class, White Irish, PhD Researcher), 05 (Man, Working-Class, White Irish, PhD Researcher), 26 (Woman, Working-Class, White European, Lecturer) and 28 (Man, Working-Class, White Irish, Lecturer) described their family's community roles, union involvement, left-wing politics and roles within socialist movements as being influential in wanting to help others in society from an early age.

In advocating for the collective within an individualistic and competitive society, participants from disadvantaged/marginalised backgrounds often had a sense of being a 'cosmopolitan, global citizen where the idyllic future would be one without borders' (Participant 26). Complexities in achieving this is illustrated further by Participant 03 who states: 'people in general society haven't had the opportunity to interact with people from an enormous range of backgrounds, from different countries, different cultures,

different language, food preferences, all those different traditions’. Hence, by interacting with a more diverse range of individuals and cultures it is more likely that that people will develop an understanding of others, as well as a willingness to pursue social justice that benefits not just ‘individual, local or social movements, but global movements’ (Participant 20, Woman, Middle-Class, White Irish, Lecturer).

This outlook on academic-activist work is key in producing work that can effectively combat issues concerned with social justice. Within the literature, it is noted that this global outlook can aid solidarity building amongst different groups in society and academics. From this, it is more plausible to engage in research where social change takes priority over publishing specifically for journals and specialist audiences (Altman 2018; Choudry 2020; Furco 2010; Halfacree 2004; McKenzie 2017). Therefore, experiencing the impact of Ireland’s political, economic and social neglect first-hand (e.g. poverty, lack of opportunities to mobilise, drug epidemics, etc.) resulted in working-class participants (in particular: Participant 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 28 and 29) becoming involved in activism that was born out of experience. As a result, disadvantaged/marginalised academics are commonly found to be involved in activism which empowers communities they identify and empathise with (e.g. adult education/literacy programmes, safe access zones, trade unionism, etc.) which is also common amongst academics from similar backgrounds within the literature (Crew 2020; Crew 2021; Lund and Nabavi 2008; Pease 2015; Sliva et al. 2019; Simic 2015).

In contrast, those from privileged backgrounds (e.g. ethnic majority, middle to upper-middle class, etc.) describe a later activist awakening that occurred during their academic careers. While previously unaffected by societal or political issues, interviewees from privileged backgrounds mention the importance of this realisation in their current activism. This realisation was informed by both self-education on current issues (such as housing), as well as the encouragement of those within their immediate networks (family, friends, students, etc.).

It is not being suggested that their activism is of lesser importance or relevance in comparison to those who directly identify with their activist causes. Rather, a later awareness of privileges (e.g. class-based) means that academic-activists from privileged backgrounds can use their cultural capital to promote social change for those experiencing ‘repression, oppression and discrimination’ in Irish society (Participant 02, Man, Middle-

Class, White Irish). This is also representative of insights within the literature which indicate that those from privileged backgrounds have the necessary cultural capital to utilise academic output as a form of activism when compared to disadvantaged/marginalised academic-activists (Allmer 2018; Simic 2015; Warnock 2016).

Another consideration is whether education plays a crucial role in these different timelines of awakening for working-class and middle-class academic-activists. For the working class, the combination of lived experience with education may lead to a more organic awakening to social and political issues, where their direct encounters with inequality are reinforced by educational exposure. In contrast, for those from middle-class backgrounds, education combined with time and exposure to diverse experiences during their academic careers seems to play a more prominent role. While the working class may be driven by the immediacy of their lived experiences, the middle class might require extended periods of reflection and engagement within educational environments to become fully aware of their societal privileges and the structural inequalities faced by others.

With regards to aiding collective action within an individualistic society, allyship in this manner can expose and compare differences between class, race and gender. Building diverse relationships and networks (through activist groups with individuals of different backgrounds) can help to uncover privileges and bring greater realisation to the inequalities that exist within society to benefit activist movements. This is also reflected in Lund's and Nabavi's (2008), as well as Sobande's (2018) findings where individual privileges can be utilised to eradicate inequalities and social injustices. Thus, in a society where cultural attitudes appear to be influenced by the wider ideological positioning of Government's past and present, it is common for those from privileged backgrounds to be unaware of their privileges that are associated with marginalised backgrounds (such as a lack of social mobility). However, it is important to recognise that once they become aware of these privileges, they can choose to use their position and influence to actively support and initiate the process of inclusion for disadvantaged/marginalised groups. Through continuous dialogue and the establishment of allies across diverse identities and backgrounds, it becomes feasible to raise awareness among individuals from disadvantaged/marginalised backgrounds about the aspects from which they might be excluded.

The above discussion highlights the potential role of allyship within Irish society in helping to combat prevalent attitudes of individualism and competitiveness which can restrict the success of activist movements. From the perspective of academic-activists identifying with marginalised backgrounds, their life experiences (such as witnessing the impact of poverty) has been key in the development of their activism over time. While not as prevalent within those identifying with middle-class (and upper) backgrounds, a later developed awareness of the prominence of inequality within Irish society in particular, encouraged their move into activism. The following section provide a synopsis and conclusion to Theme 1.

7.2.3 Concluding Comments for Theme 1: “that kind of collectivism that we need”: negotiating neoliberalism and building solidarity

The data demonstrated a broad exploration of the impact of the political, social and economic environments on individuals, their activist stance, and both their current and previous experiences with activism that was largely representative of the literature. Encouragement of competition and individualism amongst colleagues and peers is detrimental to the success of activist movements and the development of academic activism. From the participants’ perspectives, the ideological positioning of Irish Governments has created an insecure economic, political and social environment where personal security trumps collective action. Although there have been signs that there is an attitudinal and cultural shift with regards to activism in Ireland, academic-activists believe that there needs to be further progress made in this direction before impactful activism can become normative and measurable.

The development of academic-activists’ stances over time highlight why successful activist movements have been uncommon in Irish society. Participants from disadvantaged backgrounds found activist involvement to be somewhat of a natural progression based on life experience. However, academic-activists from privileged backgrounds stated that they have been unaware of the inequalities that exist within Irish society up until later stages in their lives. This realisation was generally ignited by events that illuminated the range of differing experiences in Ireland based on the socioeconomic standing of individuals and groups.

If a clear divide exists between the privileged and disadvantaged within society with an absence of unity and solidarity, then current trends of individualism and competitiveness

in Irish society will continue. This creates an environment where activism of any kind struggles to thrive. The following sections explores the second superordinate themes: the impact of the institutional climate on academic-activism.

7.3 Theme 2: “academia doesn’t like activism”²⁰: institutional barriers to academic-activism

While factors external to academia, such as cultural attitudes, can limit the success of activism, academic-activists also find that the current working environment can be restrictive of their activist work. Generally, the success and/or ability to engage in activism is dependent on the academic’s position (e.g. academic role, identity, reputation, etc.) within the context of their respective institutions. Furthermore, academic-activists must be capable of being able to navigate between shifting societal perceptions and institutional attitudes towards activism to enact positive social change in various manners (e.g. research, protesting, etc.).

Thus, this theme outlines how political, social and economic environments impact academia, and consequently, academic-activism. Participants indicated that an employment model that encourages individualism and competitiveness is indicative of institutional attitudes towards academic-activism; a climate described by many participants as restrictive of academic-activism. Where institutes must cut and manage costs (via employment arrangements) and rely mainly on external/third-party funding, academic-activism is seen as a peripheral activity within a business-like environment. The manner in which academics (at various career stages) navigate a business-led environment that is sensitive to external influences (e.g. economic/market, social attitudes, etc.) is considered within this theme.

Specifically, this theme focuses on the employment model within academia, which has created a two-tiered system and impeded the universality of academic freedom based on contract type or academic role. Restricted freedom to engage in activism is compounded by attitudes towards academic-activism at an institutional level. These attitudes are considered to be impacted by external forces within the environment (e.g. socioeconomic climate, public perceptions and attitudes, etc.). Therefore, this theme explores how academic-activists navigate the institutional environment and attitudes toward the doing

²⁰ Quote from Participant 19 (Man, Working-Class, White Irish, Senior Lecturer).

of their activism, relevant to their academic role. This superordinate theme consists of the following two subthemes:

- Permanency and precarity: contrasting experiences of academic-activism
- Attitudes towards academic-activism

7.3.1 Sub-theme 2a: permanency and precarity: contrasting experiences of academic-activism

This sub-theme outlines the experiences of tenured academics in comparison to those who are restricted by a lack of academic freedom (i.e. precarious/early-career stage academics). To highlight the differences between career stages, the past experiences of academics who have recently been made permanent after a period of precarity are also presented. The experiences of academics transitioning from precarity to permanency stress the positive impact of secure contracts on academic-activism. However, the current institutional climate fosters individualistic attitudes and competition, exacerbating the challenges faced by early-career academics. This is demonstrated in the following examples and quotes from participants which capture the focus of this sub theme:

In an Irish context, I think we're rather privileged as academics to have employment contracts on legislation that supports and enables us. And I think in terms of activism, we can be active, we can be active in political contexts, or we can be members of political parties and be active in social movements. We can be active with advocacy groups and campaigns, human rights and social justice, and so on (Participant 12, Man, Working-Class, White Irish, Structured Lecturer).

I will say that the conditions I've been employed under have not lent themselves to making it easy for me to do sustained research so far [...] I'm not paid a cent for research, so I have a 9 month contract, meaning that I starve for 3 months out of 12 which is the time that they [tenured staff] would normally have to conduct research Participant 32 (Man, Middle-Class, White British, Lecturer).

Being precarious, does have a massive impact on your ability to be an activist, and your security of being an activist and so being permanent now makes me feel like I have more freedom to do those things. I'm permanent now, so there is a real sense of freedom to be more of an outspoken person on issues that are important

to me [...] As somebody who's a permanent academic, I'm in a very privileged position. You know, I'm well paid. I have a secure job so I have a lot more opportunity to be involved and to take up those kind of causes and be involved in them (Participant 33, Woman, Working-Class, White Irish, Lecturer).

Within the institutional climate, tenured academics can directly (and indirectly) benefit from the exploitation of precarious/early-career academics 'to get their publication record to get their promotions to move up a system where everybody else is stuck on these kind of crap contracts' (i.e. via teaching buyouts, unpaid research/pastoral care, etc.) in a 'self-perpetuating system which exploits those at the bottom' for the benefit of those with secure contracts (Participant 09, Woman, White Irish, Working-Class, Postdoctoral Researcher). Participants claim that institutional management are 'disconnected from reality', and are 'unaware of exploitative work practices' (Participant 08, Man, White Irish, Working-Class, PhD Researcher). This results in differing academic-activist experiences based on job security. Those with permanency spoke generally about their level of freedom and security, whereas those in precarious/early-career roles spoke about exploitation and fear regarding their futures.

A number of participants considered academia to be an environment where only those with tenure/permanent contracts are granted the security to engage in academic-activism. This is also reflected in the literature (see for example, Alakauvklar 2020; Nkomo 2009). Participants 23, 24, and 31, who were permanently employed and established academics, were unaware of any potential limits to academic freedom based on their current academic role or contract type. However, the other permanently employed academics perceived their secure contracts as a source of freedom and security, affording them a suitable platform to participate in various forms of activism within a global context where academic-activism has become a contested practice given a rise in oppressive regimes in different countries (e.g. Turkey and Hungary) (Acar and Coskan 2019; Baird 2020; Donmez and Duman 2021).

The academic-activist themed literature often outlines recommendations for permanent staff to overcome potential challenges to their activism. The manner in which permanent academic-activists are capable of actively overcoming obstacles typically relates to their own personal job security which allows them a degree of freedom to tackle challenges

through, for example, altering the approaches to publications and varying the type of activism they are engaged in to fit within institutional demands (Cancian 1993; Flood et al. 2013; Harré et al. 2017; Maxey 1999; Routledge and Driscoll-Derickson 2015). As well as the security afforded to tenured academic-activists by their contracts, some participants spoke about the protections of their activism by their respective institutions which is essentially guaranteed as a result of their contracts.

In particular, Participants 21, 26 and 27 (permanently employed academics) found that their academic freedom (and academic-activism) was protected by their institute. In previous instances where their activism (activist-led teaching and research) upset members of the public, members of the civil service, Government officials and students, Participant 26 noted: ‘the university did very well and they protected me, my freedom of speech and my academic integrity’. Similarly, Participant 21 stated: ‘they fully supported me. They gave a really strong statement to the press. They rebuked [politician] comment and said academics have academic freedom and all this.’ Participant 27 believes that one of the major privileges a permanent contract brings is: ‘there is absolutely nothing that I can say or do that would lose me my job’.

Therefore, in situations where controversial incidents arise, permanent staff can confidently rely on the support of laws, such as the Universities Act, which safeguard their academic freedom; a sentiment expressed by Participants 12, 21, and 27 (permanently employed academics) The benefit of being able to self-police in the knowledge that you will be protected is something that the majority of tenured academic-activists believe would not be possible during their period of precarity in academia. As Participant 10 (Woman, White-Irish, Working-Class, Associate Professor) states: ‘we can afford to do it because we have tenure. We're well paid. We have security.’ However, the prominence of precarity in academia has meant that the freedom and security experienced by tenured academic-activists is not universal. Rather, the absence of freedom, security and protection is considered a key barrier in the inclusion of activism within academic work on a broader scale (Phipps and McDonnell 2021).

Each of the early-career academic-activist participants (mainly PhDs and Postdocs) realise this apparent obstacle with regards to the expression of their academic freedom through academic-activism. Consequently, each early-career stage participant states that

academic-activism currently is ‘risky’, given increased vulnerability to threats and attacks on their work in comparison to tenured staff (Delaney 2020a). Early-career academic-activists used phrases such as: ‘don’t stick your head above the parapet’ (Participant 09, Woman, White Irish, Working-Class, Postdoctoral Researcher), ‘don’t rock the boat’ (Participant 06, Man, White Irish, Working-Class, PhD Researcher), and ‘my card is marked’ (Participant 05, Man, White Irish, Working-Class, PhD Researcher) when describing the potential impact of their activist involvement on future prospects. This is largely due to the undervaluing of public facing scholarship within the wider academic context which results in reduced reward for engaging in academic-activism in a general sense (Altman 2018; Bonsanquet and Rytmeister 2017; Dolhinow 2017).

So, rather than being encouraged to exercise academic freedom, precarious and junior academic-activists are advised to limit their engagement in activism to avoid potentially upsetting prospective employers. The experiences of early-career academic-activists in the current study is reflective of the literature which suggests that due to the uncertainty of career prospects within academia, it is not expected that those in precarious roles would be vocal on issues concerned with social justice. This is problematic as it restricts and silences a cohort of academics based on indirect threats to their career progression, as is commonly found in the literature (Altman 2018; Gill 2009; Grey 2013, Marginson 1997; Marginson 2014; Rojas 2013; Woolston 2019).

Similar experiences are described by those on precarious contracts. It is noted by precariously employed participants that it is ‘impossible to do the public facing role required of an academic given the absurd demands and exploitative conditions faced by those in precarious roles’ (Participant 32, Man, White British, Middle-Class, Lecturer). Those with tenure appear more capable of expressing their academic freedom via activism in comparison to precarious and early-career stage academics. Given the clear difference between permanency and precarity in terms of academic-activism, it is interesting to note the experiences of tenured academic-activists who found noticeable changes in how they could exercise their academic freedom over time. Although the academic career path is not a linear process (i.e. from precarity to permanency), if an individual can overcome the complexity of academia’s structural conditions (namely the prominence of precarity), there are noticeable benefits in their general experience as an academic-activist (Flood et al. 2013).

Participant 11, 18 and 33, who recently obtained permanent positions express a growing sense of confidence and freedom in their tenured roles, suggesting that familiarity with the position contributes to this newfound empowerment. This observation highlights how academic freedom becomes a privilege for securely contracted academics, fostering increased self-assurance within their roles. Similarly, these participants acknowledge noticeable changes in their ability to engage in open expression. They also note that precarious academics often need to establish their reputation and secure permanent positions before feeling more comfortable voicing their activism, a sentiment supported by previous research (Flood et al. 2013)

Through the lens of academic activism, the security and freedom demonstrated by permanent academics stands in contrast to the exploitation experienced by precarious academics, as discussed. Those without security are limited in the wider impact they can make and understandably appear more concerned with future prospects. This can potentially limit the opportunity to build a personal and professional reputation as part of an academic-activist identity. With regards to the literature, such conditions were often the cause of academics leaving academia entirely (Lalor 2010; Lee 2015; Grey 2013; McKenzie 2021b; Rahal et al. 2023; Roberts 2007).

Fostering a suitable environment for activism in academia requires addressing issues within the current employment model. The present institutional climate often leads to fluctuating expectations and responsibilities for academics based on their roles and contracts, inhibiting the potential for impactful activism due to a lack of holistic support for academic work (ISE 2020; Rhodes et al. 2017; Clarke et al. 2015). This is compounded by the defunding of higher education which further fosters individualised attitudes and competition among colleagues, leading some permanent staff to display limited concern for precarious academics struggles as suggested by Participant 09 and Participant 16 who are both under fixed/temporary working conditions. A lack of concern and empathy for colleagues indicates that the current situation may continue to deteriorate as suggested by Participant 10 and Participant 21 (who are permanently employed, but have been involved in challenging academic precarity). The upcoming subtheme will explore how this institutional climate is influenced by external factors such as the socioeconomic climate and societal attitudes, further impacting academic activism.

7.3.2 Sub-theme 2b: attitudes towards academic-activism

This sub-theme explores institutional attitudes towards academic-activism by examining the limited space provided for engagement both within and outside academia. It also explores the impact altering societal attitudes, which influence how institutions respond to activism and the time-sensitive nature of this process. Additionally, the sub-theme addresses the initial career mobility concerns of early-career academics and the challenges faced by tenured academics, as discussed in the previous section. The influence of activism type and the sociopolitical identity of individual academic-activists is also considered within this sub-theme. This is reflected in the quotes from participants which highlight their experiences with attitudes towards academic-activism which has impacted their academic careers and working experiences dependent on their academic role, contract type and identity:

So everything you need to know about academia is all about metrics. Everything has to be measured. Their measuring of impact is prestigious papers and if you got grant money in to do the work. So that's how they measure impact. So everything about promotion, everything about working in a university is about measuring impact on a very, very weird, strict criteria of metrics which are linked to global rankings. If we don't publish in a recognised international peer reviewed journal or we don't get funding for the work, the university has no way to measure the impact and so therefore they don't count it [...] I know that being an activist has damaged my academic career and has damaged my academic prospects, but I'm going to continue to do it and eventually maybe the conservative institute I work with will catch up with my activism (Participant 19, Man, Working-Class, White Irish, Senior Lecturer).

It [the university] very often trivialises the work that I am committed to and that it undervalues the work that I do, it's disinterested, it has no interest in it in the work that I do. In many respects I sometimes feel in many ways that I'm tolerated within the university because I provide kind of a service, which is that I can rack and stack large numbers of students in a lecture theatre and no budget (Participant 15, Man, Working-Class, White Irish, Lecturer).

A university which simply doesn't have the funding, but also simply has no interest in looking after people. I mean the stories I've encountered and my own personal

experiences; it's pretty savage stuff, and so, age, determination, resources, it's very easy to fall off that, and if one or two things had gone wrong, I would have changed life course (Participant 29, Man, Working-Class, White Irish, Lecturer).

I used to think: why doesn't everyone do what I do in terms of working in an area that involves bringing about social change? But if anything goes really badly for me, I have parents who have a nice home that I can stay in. They've money they can support me with, they can help me access mental health services for example. But the reality is, a lot of people can't afford to live on the salary of a PhD student. So I've a massive security blanket. Also the fact that people will be less likely to dismiss me or consider me a problem/problem student/problem employee if I do things (Participant 02, Man, Middle-Class, White Irish, PhD Researcher).

To be labelled at [university] as an academic-activist; it is not something that would be seen in a positive way, especially as an ethnic minority [...] So who has the power? Who has the privilege? Who has the ability to say this? On a wider issue, who becomes an academic-activist is a very interesting question because Ireland hasn't even answered the question about who is Irish? Who is accepted as an Irish person? Since I've been here, from death threats to my office, to my office being alarmed; a physical alarm, I have an alarm in my office, right. I mean this is all connected to the questions that we have failed to answer, not just within our university system but outside of the university system. Who is accepted? (Participant 25, Nonbinary, Middle-Class, Asian, Head of Department/Senior Lecturer).

Participants in this study highlight that academic-activists' outputs are sensitive to internal and external attitudes, encompassing societal perceptions and institutional norms/strategies. This observation aligns with existing literature that signals to the increasing influence of external fields within academic institutions (Foster et al. 2020). These attitudes have exacerbated the difference in the ability of individuals to engage in academic-activism based on their academic role, contract type and identity. The current institutional climate was described by several participants as resembling a business model, with accelerated neoliberalisation where 'costs are cut as often as possible which makes the situation worse' (Participant 21, Woman, Middle-Class, White Irish, Associate Professor). The situation in question refers mainly to the two-tiered employment model

outlined in the previous section, resulting in what Participant 16 (Woman, Middle-Class, White Irish, Lecturer) refers to as the: ‘erosion and undermining of the profession of academia, perpetrated by individuals at the top’.

Interestingly, this is noticed by academics at various career stages. Participants 14 (PhD Researcher), 17 (Senior Lecturer) and 27 (Lecturer) assert that current budgetary issues lead to a situation where institutional management is left to attract revenue from external funders, student fees, and market/commercial partners which dictate the management of academic institutions. The extent of this business-influenced management style is reflected in how institutional management refers to staff and students as ‘units’ (Participant 27, Woman, Middle-Class, White Irish, Lecturer).

This aligns with a common debate in the literature, which questions activism’s suitability within the current higher educational setting, given an apparent clash of ideals (Barsky 2006; Berlatsky 2019; Cox 2015; Mahon and Bergin 2018; Rojas 2013; Rouhani 2012; Suzuki and Mayorga 2014; Wells 2018). Consistent with existing literature, participants observed that the business-oriented approach prevalent in society is also evident within academia; creating a transactional environment. This is exemplified by the growing perception of students viewing themselves as consumers (Collini 2012; Deer 2003; Lynch et al. 2012; Phakathi 2014). Academic-activists find that students treated as consumers within higher education make it harder to embrace and create space for critical thought and activism, such as through classroom and lecture hall teaching (for example see: Cox and Grummell 2013; Rouhani 2012; Villanueva and O’Sullivan 2019). However, creating space in this manner is not considered to be part of the major workings of the university. This resonates with the experiences of activist-led educators in the literature who have encountered resistance from their respective institutions while seeking to use critical pedagogical approaches to enhance students’ employability skills (Rose 2017).

While some participants have been involved in the delivery and development of academic-based postgraduate courses that combine academia and activism; academic-activists find that informal, community-based education, such as adult learning and LGBTQI+ education in schools, is a more nurturing and rewarding experience compared to traditional teaching. However, introducing democratic, flat, non-hierarchical spaces within academia does not appear to align with the ‘rack and stack bums on seats’ strategy from institutional management. In this regard, institutional attitudes towards activism in

the form of teaching risk losing fruitful spaces to build knowledge and to confront certain ideological aspects of wider society.

The literature reflects this issue, as academic-activists find that the traditional teaching environment within classrooms limits their ability to engage in activist-led teaching (Baird 2020; Cox 2014; Rouhani 2012). Instead, academics find themselves engaging in teaching as a form of ensuring students meet an employability checklist regarding their learning before graduating (Cox and Grummel 2013; Holborow 2012; Mercille and Murphy 2015). Through alternative learning approaches, academic-activists find teaching and learning can become a more holistic and informative process that encourages critical thinking, rather than teaching purely to improve upon employability skills in a fiercely competitive labour market (Maisuria and Cole 2017; Osborne and Grant-Smith 2017; Sin et al. 2017).

Similarly to insights from the literature, many participants feel that, as a consequence of this, academic institutions are focused solely on operating with business-like strategies year-on-year (for example: monetary gain and expansion through student recruitment, corporate partnerships, etc.) (Mahon and Bergin 2018; Mercille and Murphy 2015). Participant 10 (Woman, Working-Class, White Irish, Associate Professor) believes that while there has been some resistance to the neoliberalisation of the university, the ‘overall tide is going the other way’. Hence, in an increasingly neoliberal environment that sees its role as serving the economy and industry, academic-activists find that their work is undervalued unless the activism directly benefits the reputation of the university. This view was also shared within the literature, which indicates the risks from an institutional perspective of broadly supporting activism which can potentially damage their reputation and opportunities to receive funding (Cox 2012; Courtois and O’Keefe 2015; Mahon and Bergin 2018; Mercille and Murphy 2015; O’Flynn and Panayiotopoulous 2015; Phakathi 2014).

Many participants have argued that academia needs to change to become a more inclusive and open place to work. They believe that to enact change, academics need to be encouraged to be more public facing with their academic work. However, the current institutional climate and emphasis on metrics make this difficult. Academic-activists find that the current academic structure does not reward or encourage individuals to challenge norms and push boundaries. To overcome this, some participants have called for the

creation of more radical spaces in which alternative ways of thinking and acting can be developed and nurtured to encourage critical thought and activism (Cox 2015; Ollis 2012; Sin et al. 2017).

However, the reception of activism efforts is reliant upon current institutional and societal attitudes. Participants described a delicate balance between gaining recognition and facing ostracism based on the timing and context of their activism. This results in activists celebrated in some periods while facing negative repercussions in others. Similarly, Pereira (2016) observes the sensitivity of academic-activism to changing attitudes, as institutions may embrace certain causes to bolster their reputation. Consequently, institutions may engage in ‘reputation saving’ by appropriating activist causes, leading to tokenistic support for issues previously deemed unimportant (for example EDI initiatives, visibility days, ending Direct Provision, etc.) (Participant 09, Woman, Working-Class, White Irish, Postdoctoral Researcher).

The challenges faced by academic-activists extend beyond institutional attitudes, as they must navigate restrictive norms and strategies that limit the impact of their activism on society (Furco 2010; Rhodes et al. 2017; Sliva et al. 2019). Engaging in uncomfortable forms of activism²¹ risks compromising precarious/early-career academics’ career trajectory. The competitive nature of academia, coupled with concerns about personal security, makes it challenging for academics to embrace activism that may cause friction with colleagues and management. However, participants note that conducting activism in a comfortable²² manner merely ‘pays lip service to public engagement’ and stifles creativity (Participant 16, Woman, Working-Class, White Irish, Lecturer). This restriction of activism is emblematic of wider issues and narratives within academia and wider

²¹ Uncomfortable academic-activism was a term used by participants to describe activism that may potentially cause controversy (in society and/or academia) and is often separate to your contractual obligations as an academic. Findings have shown that uncomfortable activism has seen academic-activists blacklisted, isolated and overlooked for promotion in some instances. Those engaged in uncomfortable academic-activism were often from marginalised backgrounds or openly aligned with left-leaning political ideologies which clashed with the neoliberal attitude of the academy.

²² Comfortable academic-activism was a term used by participants which refers to academic-activism that is institutionally approved or appropriated for the benefit of the institution’s public reputation. Generally, it is academic-activism which contributes to promotion, performance metrics or is carried out through traditional academic outputs (i.e. journal publications, conference presentations, etc.). Comfortable academic-activism is often done within the confines of your contractual obligations and is therefore unlikely to cause friction between colleagues, managers and institutional hierarchy. Those who engaged in comfortable activism were generally from middle-class backgrounds and had a secure/permanent contract.

society (particularly Irish society) where this limited investment in critical thinking and social justice issues, particularly in the face of prevailing societal issues (Cox 2012; Marginson 1997; Martin 2009; Moore et al. 2017; Phakathi 2014). Given a lack of value in activism from an institutional perspective, academic-activists, this means they may have to suppress their activism (which could potentially delay their career mobility) to pursue career progression.

A fear of hindered career progression and restricted creativity was a reality for tenured academic-activists, particularly for those who engaged in activism that related to their own sociopolitical identity. Such activism often resulted in delayed career mobility due to the expression of academic freedom and activist thought. Even when not explicitly experienced, participants acknowledged that activist work could delay their progress within academia, particularly for individuals from working-class, trade union backgrounds, or those vocal in their activism. Moreover, left-wing political and community-based activism directly impeded the advancement of some academic-activists, especially those identifying with disadvantaged/marginalised backgrounds, who used their academic expertise to support these communities (Crew 2020, Crew 2021; Grollman 2015; Papadelos 2015; Pearce 2020; Pease 2015; Warnock 2016).

The homogeneous system within Irish academia predominantly comprises white, eurocentric, middle to upper middle-class individuals who are men (Kempny and Michael 2021). The prevailing uniformity and lack of diversity within academia create barriers for academics deviating from the norm, particularly those from marginalised/disadvantaged backgrounds (Appel 2014; Binns 2019; Forsey 2015; O'Brien 2018; O'Neill 2020; Papdelous 2015; Power et al. 2013; Reynolds 2018). Consequently, identities outside this uniform experience higher instances of disadvantage, including: precarious contracts, lack of support, labelling, threats to personal safety and increased isolation (Courtois and O'Keefe 2015; O'Connor 2001; Delaney 2020c; Grollman 2015; Ivancheva et al. 2019; Sobande 2018). The assumption held by marginalised and disadvantaged participants in particular, is that those not conforming to the uniform will struggle to succeed in academia (Pearce 2020). This is in contrast to those with identities fitting this uniform, such as White Irish and middle-class academics, who note that they are capable of taking risks in their activism due to financial security (Participant 02 and Participant 07).

Academic-activists' ability to promote change and diversity within institutions is often met with pushback, particularly for minority ethnic academics who challenge mainstream narratives (Glausiusz 2019; McGuire 2020; O'Brien 2021b). This pushback discourages activism and leads to the underappreciation of diverse perspectives, particularly those from minority ethnic staff when advocating for individuals and groups they identify with (Grollman 2015; Huerta 2018; Papadelos 2015; Sobande 2018). This lack of support for minority ethnic academics can lead to threats and hate mail in response to their work, which encourage them to leave academia (Dutt-Ballerstadt 2020; Gorski and Erkat 2019). Activism amongst minority ethnic academics is further discouraged for those with precarious visa conditions, as institutional threats to their visa status act as a form of intimidation (Participant 30, Man, Working-Class, Black, PhD Researcher). Overall, the existing structural conditions and industry-based strategies in higher education challenge the creativity and freedom of academic-activists, limiting their potential impact within communities and perpetuating the risk-reward scenario for activist work (Clarke et al. 2015; Rhodes et al. 2017; Marginson 2014).

In conclusion, academic-activists face challenges in navigating institutional and societal attitudes towards activism. While some forms of activism gain recognition over time, existing structural conditions and industry-based strategies limit the external impact of academic-activist work. Coexisting beyond neoliberal values requires evaluating research based on societal influence rather than just academic metrics. The homogeneity in academia further hinders marginalised academics, making it difficult to build successful careers. To overcome these barriers, universities should foster an ethos encouraging activism beyond measurable outcomes. However, the scarcity of secure work poses a challenge for most self-identifying academic-activists. Despite these obstacles, persisting in promoting social justice through activism can lead to positive change in academia and society. The next section provides a summary of Theme 2.

7.3.3 Concluding Comments for Theme 2: "academia doesn't like activism": institutional barriers to academic-activism

The interviews provide evidence of the impact of the economic, political and social environment on the exercising of academic freedom through academic-activism. Within academia, a prevailing emphasis on individual career progression and exploitation is evident, shaping the outlook and experiences of academic-activists based on their role, contract type, and identity. This means that throughout the interviews, there is a noticeable

difference in the outlook of academic-activists based on their academic role, contract type and identity. Those in tenured positions express a sense of security and freedom when discussing their activism (given the security of their contracts), although this is not without personal and professional costs (for example: potentially damaging their reputation through controversial incidents with politicians).

Those who have endured periods of precarity and gained permanent positions have observed immediate benefits in their academic-activist output. Increased confidence, contractual protections, and support from institutional management have positively impacted the effectiveness of their academic-activism. However, this system implies that academic freedom is not universal and predominantly reserved for tenured academics. Precarious academic-activists remain sceptical of support from those in permanent positions, as the current institutional climate tends to exploit precarious and early-career staff to mobilise the careers of more secure academic-activists. Practices like teaching buyouts grant permanent staff additional time for research and academic engagements, while precarious academics face increased teaching and administrative workloads, limiting their opportunities for activism.

The institutional climate reflects a business-oriented approach necessitated by insufficient direct governmental funding. However, this focus on financial gain has led to a lack of serious consideration for activism within academia. While some instances show support for academic-activism, participants generally perceive academia as an unsupportive environment for activism. The preference for measurable outputs and individual career advancement over societal impact restricts the career mobility of academics whose identities deviate from the neoliberal, business-oriented ideals that prevail in academia, particularly for marginalised or disadvantaged academic-activists.

Moreover, institutions are highly sensitive to societal attitudes and perceptions, leading them to refrain from supporting activism that could tarnish their reputation. However, these attitudes are dynamic and may change over time, causing institutions to shift their stance on certain activist causes for image enhancement. This creates uncertainty for academics regarding the acceptable level of activism, resulting in a challenging balancing act. Coping with this unsupportive environment and navigating the complexities of activism and academia become essential for academic-activists. Given the apparent complexity of engaging in academic-activism in the current institutional environment, the

next theme explores the ways in which academics cope within this unsupportive environment, as well as how academia and activism are balanced from an individual perspective.

7.4 Theme 3: “They have different senses of time”²³: balancing academia and activism

This theme explores the implications of involvement in social activism from a professional perspective. As indicated by previous themes, academia and activism are different spaces, making it complex for academic-activists to utilise academia as a platform for their activism. Due to the limited time and space available for activism in higher education, achieving a balance between academic pursuits and activism presents a distinct challenge. The ability to balance both commitments effectively is also indicative of how permanency and precarity dictate the academic freedom of an academic-activist. Regardless of freedom and security, academic-activism is still an activity which has implications for personal and professional reputation. Building support networks is seen as a key way in which to overcome the negative repercussions of academic-activism (e.g. isolation, burnout, blacklisting, etc.) However, participants note that this is not a guaranteed way in which to successfully engage in academic-activism.

Therefore, the analysis outlines the challenges faced by academic-activists who deal with substantial academic workloads and extensive activist commitments. Given the increased demands on academic-activists’ time, the analysis focuses on how academics manage expectations and responsibilities. This was understood through the importance of building a network of like-minded individuals who support both the academic and activist work. In this case, the complexities of building adequate networks and managing expectations of being both an academic and an activist are outlined (e.g. losing support for conducting performance-based academic work). Academic-activists found this was important in order to offset instances of isolation, loneliness and burnout as a result of heavy workloads. Overall, this theme considers the complexities of managing the responsibilities and expectations of being an academic-activist. This is done with consideration of external influences from the perspective of both tenured and precarious/early-career stage academic-activists.

Theme 3 was categorised into two sub-themes:

²³ Quote from Participant 24 (Woman, Middle-Class, White Irish, Associate Professor).

- “Dual roles”: navigating academic and activist spaces.
- “Build your networks”: the importance of support networks for academic-activists.

7.4.1 Sub-theme 3a: “Dual roles”²⁴: navigating academic and activist spaces

This section explores the challenges faced by academic-activists as they navigate the dual roles of academia and activism. Participants highlighted the distinct differences in expectations, responsibilities, and time allocation between these two spaces. This sub-theme explores how academic-activists manage their academic workloads alongside extensive activist commitments. The analysis highlights the impact of permanency and precarity on academic freedom and personal/professional reputation. From the perspective of tenured staff, tensions often arise between academic and activist duties, while precarious/early-career stage academic-activists find that activism closely aligned with their academic work provides better balance. Therefore, this sub-theme explores the dual role of academic-activists and how they navigate varied spaces in an effort to find balance between academia and activism. This is highlighted in the following extracts from participants:

Academia involves very slow and difficult work to produce one small piece of research, activism is much more speedy and requires bold interventions in the public sphere. It takes a lot of time to build up a movement, build up coalitions, but windows open up, or you can force the window open just for a narrow amount of time and you have to strike while that's hot. It is sensitive to time and the attention you build up over time from the media, policy makers, etc. [...] I must keep a high standard of how I behave. I have to be conscious of my role in position in that I am required to be a professional and that means to have my understanding of being a professional is to have quite a zip on emotions in public. So there's a quite a limited range of emotions that I'm allowed. I can't rage or rant because that's not what I'm being paid to be, to be an academic, and I must always be cognisant that I'm an academic (Participant 24, Woman, Middle-Class, White Irish, Associate Professor).

²⁴ Quote from Participant 19 (Man, Working-Class, White Irish, Senior Lecturer).

If you want to be successful in the mainstream (state institutions, higher education institutions, funding agencies), through mainstream means with these institutions, so gaining research funding, being promoted, then yes, I think you have to temper your radical side. It goes from things like when you put in a research proposal, you have to put in very pragmatic stuff in terms of developing toolkits that are useful in terms of contributing to the student who's gaining skills, and is employable in terms of feeding into very real policy debates. Nothing utopian, nothing too abstract, nothing too long term, nothing undoable (Participant 26, Woman, Working-Class, White European, Lecturer).

If I was younger and less experienced, there is absolutely no way that I would be able to give the time to activism that I currently do. At least I have the experience with the job that I can go in and I can manage that and so on. It is enormously time consuming. It's phenomenally time consuming and of course, like any campaign waxes and wanes, so sometimes you're just tipping away slowly and it's very manageable and other times it's not. When you're doing this kind of work, there's never a time I couldn't say to I'll definitely be a bit quieter whenever 'cause I'm never ever that quiet. So, yeah. How do I balance it? Badly. Very badly, let me tell you (Participant 27, Woman, Middle-Class, White Irish, Lecturer).

How much is your involvement in activism going to cost what you're contracted there to do? I think if it's [activism] at the cost of what you're contracted and supposed to do, and you're responsible to do, it's probably not going to end well. Because at the end of the day, it's very easy to go: well, you're not achieving your, your contractual obligations. So, why the hell am I gonna listen to you? You know, what I mean? It is a very easy stick to be bet away with. I suppose it's very, very hard line to assess how much activism is the right amount of activism (Participant 08, Man, Working-Class, White Irish, PhD Researcher).

Before commencing the interviews, participants were asked a screening question to ensure they were not experiencing high levels of stress or emotional stress as a result of their employment. While participants assured me that they were happy to proceed, some interviewees used the screening question as a platform to voice their disdain for the current workload expectations within an environment that glorifies the ideal of overwork. In particular, a number of participants cited the impact of increased workloads and large

student enrolments which have created a stressful working environment for all academics (Clarke et al. 2015; Courtois and O’Keefe 2015; Flynn 2020; Ivancheva et al. 2019). Participant 22 (Man, Middle-Class, White North American, Associate Professor) does not ‘understand why active academic work and activism should really be separated that much, but academia tries to separate them completely’. The apparent separation of academia and activism requires practitioners to be reflexive and flexible to combine both spaces if a key objective of their academic work is concerned with social justice within the context of a stressful working environment (Cox 2015; Eschle and Maignashca 2006).

In the Irish context specifically, being an academic is a privileged role that has contractual obligations where activism is seen as something separate (Participant 12, Man, Working-Class, White Irish, Structured Lecturer). From the perspective of tenured staff, this dual role often brought about tensions between duties (i.e. academic vs. activist). These tensions are best understood by considering the impact of time and the need to adapt behaviour according to the space in which the academic-activist operates. This often results in activism needing to be conducted outside of normal working hours and duties (Cancian 1993; Flood et al. 2013; Pereira 2016). As a result, academics are forced to ‘juggle activist commitments with other things’ (e.g. work, activism, family, etc.) (Participant 29, Man, Middle-Class, White Irish, Senior Lecturer), which can be detrimental to the individual’s academic role when they are ‘more committed to the work [activism] than career’ (Participant 15, Man, Working-Class, White Irish, Lecturer).

In light of this, academic-activists discuss the need to consider their role in an environment that is sensitive to constantly evolving cultural attitudes and societal perceptions (Pereira 2016). Thus, you must be able to act appropriately in both spaces often at separate times in vastly different contexts (Cancian 1993; Flood et al. 2013; Routledge and Driscoll-Derickson 2015). This was a common issue present within the literature where academic-activists who found a lack of adequate time and space for activism to thrive was, ultimately, restrictive of potentially impactful academic-activism (Cox 2014; Gill 2009; O’Flynn and Panayiotopoulous 2015; Rojas 2013; Rouhani 2012). This is because the success and drive of the activist movement is particularly time sensitive and is reliant on the individuals involved (i.e. reputable, high profile, etc.) and the attention they can attract from the media and policy makers (or persons of influence). Therefore, managing and protecting your personal and professional reputation is subject to both performativity in different spaces and acting appropriately relevant to the type of

activism and current societal context (Dolhinow 2017; Flood et al. 2013; Merga and Mason 2020; Pereira 2016; Reyes Mason 2020).

According to Participant 31 (Woman, Middle-Class, White Irish, Researcher/Lecturer), making an impact with your activism is largely dependent on ‘the climate in Ireland at the time’. It is noted that some interviewees feel it is difficult to impact change in activist areas given the attitudes of institutional management, colleagues and a general lack of awareness within society of activist causes (such as ending academic precarity). Thus, while conducting impactful activism is sensitive to time (in terms of altering societal contexts), it is also reliant on the ability of the academic to balance their academic output and activist work (i.e. time commitments) simultaneously (Pereira 2016; Rose 2017). This can prove challenging given the institutional environment at present.

Occupying both spaces takes time. As a result there can be suspicions regarding the character or ability of academic-activists within wider academic networks to successfully navigate academic and activist spaces given the increased workloads that are common in the current institutional climate. In the literature, this issue was typically related to a clash of ideals between academia and activism regarding the motivations and intentions for academic work (Altman 2018; Flood et al. 2013; Grey 2013; Pereira 2016). In particular, the literature found that an emphasis on performance-based research was key to understanding the undervaluing of alternative forms of academic work (e.g. alternative forms of publishing) (Donmez and Duman 2021; Foster et al. 2020; Sliva et al. 2019; Rhodes et al. 2017).

Committing to academia and activism creates a work-life balance that runs the risk of burnout. Given that current demands on academics’ time, in tandem with activist commitments, the current institutional environment is considered to be detrimental to an individual’s well-being with issues such as burnout, exploitation, feeling used, lacking in self-worth commonly cited amongst the literature (Cox 2011; Delaney 2020b; Fitzsimons et al. 2021; Gorski and Erkat 2019; Lashuel 2020; Maslach and Gomes 2006; Whelan 2021; Woolston 2019). Often, contractual obligations and increased workloads in the current institutional environment risk putting aside activist causes based on a lack of time (Donmez and Duman 2021). However, there appears to be a privilege afforded to tenured academics in this sense.

While it may not appear as such, there remains a freedom to engage in activism from a permanent position. Therefore, time management (of academia and activism) comes with the territory. Generally, tenured academic-activists are not as concerned about career progression and accept that their involvement in activism has perhaps delayed their career mobility. Participant 29 (permanently employed) notes that: ‘if you become disenchanted with it as a space [academia as a site for activism], you're quite likely to stay in the job because the conditions are still, in most places, are pretty good’. Regardless of the complexity of managing both academic and activist roles, they are employed permanently with relatively good pay/conditions and are practically free to engage in various forms of activism which can align or be separate to their academic roles (Cancian 1993; Flood et al. 2013; Harré et al. 2017; Maxey 1999; Routledge and Driscoll-Derickson 2015).

This contrasts with those in precarious/early-career roles who do not have an option to vary their forms of activism. As a result, management of dual roles differs for precarious/early-career stage academic-activists. Given that it is perceived by participants as unadvisable for those in precarious/early-career stage roles to step out beyond the remit of their traditional academic work, the majority of academic-activists in these roles engage in activism that is linked to their PhD, teaching, research, writing and separate profession (e.g. social care, medical, community-based) (Merga and Mason 2020; Rahal et al. 2023; Woolston 2019). This is due to concerns about doing potential damage to their personal and professional reputation. Instead of conflicting dual roles, precarious/early-career stage viewed finding the balance between academia and activism related more to applying good work practices and recognising their own positionality within the wider academic context (Rahal et al. 2023; Woolston 2019).

Balancing the dual role becomes less about time commitments and responding to altering societal attitudes and more about balancing ‘fighting for the rights of others while not wanting your name to be out there’ (Participant 30, Man, Working-Class, Black, PhD Researcher). In this regard, balancing the dual role relates more to being hesitant of potential latitude to push boundaries (with activism) in order to maintain their personal and professional reputation so as to not negatively impact upon networks which can impact career trajectory. This is largely consistent with concerns held by those in the early-career stage who are concerned about potential employment opportunities (Merga and Mason 2020).

From a precarious/early-career perspective navigating academic and activist spaces is more manageable if academia and activism closely align. At this career stage, there is a recognised need to be cautious of what will best provide individual security in a socioeconomic climate that provides very few assurances (Bone 2019; Merga and Mason 2020; Woolston 2019). When referring to precarious/early-career stage colleagues, Participant 07 (Woman, Middle-Class, White Irish, PhD Researcher) notes that balancing time should focus on doing what is necessary to be competitive in the academic job market rather than taking risks with activist work.

Yet, as indicated throughout, this limits the potential impact of academic-activism in wider society. At the risk of ‘ascribing far more moral coherence or intellectual coherence of the institution than it deserves’ (Participant 17, Woman, Middle-Class, Senior Lecturer), it appears that the business-like academic environment actively strives to silence activism in both explicit and discrete ways (Flood et al. 2013). Academics with job security should be expected, within reason, to adhere to their contractual obligations. However, an environment that both directly and indirectly penalises academics (via increased workloads, burnout, etc.) for attempting to manage outside activist commitments is discouraging.

There needs to be a wider appreciation and encouragement of academics who seek to support vulnerable individuals and communities in various forms; lessening the idea of academia as an ivory tower occupied by the ‘middle-class fluffy ones’ (Participant 10, Woman, Working-Class, White Irish, Associate Professor). Those in precarious/early-career stage roles appear to be strongly discouraged from operating beyond their academic duties. Again, while this should be expected, creating an environment where penalisation (damaging future career prospects) is a common threat will further nurture an environment of slow-moving change, political ambivalence and encourage a culture of compliance.

Having discussed the balancing act between both academic and activist commitments at different career stages, it is evident that current academic practices limit the ability of academics to extend their beyond academia. Therefore, the next sub-theme focuses on how academic-activists at various career stages cope with the intense culture of overwork within a business-like environment. Beyond self-management of their dual role, the next

section specifically focuses on how academic-activists surround themselves with others in order to withstand their busy schedules and adapt to different environments.

7.4.2 Sub-theme 3b: “Build your networks”²⁵: the importance of support networks for academic-activists.

This sub-theme explores the role of support networks in mitigating burnout, facilitating impactful outcomes, sustaining academic-activist work and nurturing resilience. Specifically, this details the role of diverse networks in allowing tenured academic-activists to challenge the restrictive norms and strategies within academia to help make an impact in the public sphere. In the case of early-career and precarious participants, this section outlines how various networks (immediate/personal, activist, research, etc.) can help those at this stage in their careers to navigate the academic environment to reduce the impact of current structural conditions and avail of greater support for their research. Overall, this exploration unravels the complex dynamics of support networks, highlighting their key role in fostering a conducive environment for academic-activism to thrive. The role of support networks in addressing current challenges in academia and emboldening the individual’s academic-activist work is presented in quotes from participants here:

You need an advocate. You need somebody who will support the type of work that you're doing (Participant 10, Woman, Working-Class, White Irish, Associate Professor).

You do your fight where you are, with whom you have around you. We [union group] have an understanding that we have a common framework. So, in that regard, yeah, it protects me because it gives me access to paths of trusts with people that I also trust because we share a political agenda (Participant 14, Woman, Middle-Class, White Latin American, PhD Researcher).

I've been able to join a lot of research networks in the [country] where there's a lot of similar research going on and I found that to be really great despite working remotely. It's like, I was kind of saying to my supervisor, it's like, I was able to find my tribe (Participant 07, Woman, Middle-Class, White Irish, PhD Researcher).

²⁵ Quote from Participant 11 (Man, Working-Class, White Irish, Senior Lecturer).

I found my tribe, and so the academic association and the academic grouping that I'm part of is one that's populated by people who self-identify as academic-activists. You know, scholactivists, practitioners, instructors whatever, and who work with radical spaces, alternative spaces and so on. So that's what brings joy to the academic process, right? And it also it helps overcome one of the major costs, which is often feeling isolated, fear of critique, petty pushback and impostor syndrome (Participant 28, Man, Working-Class, White Irish, PhD Researcher).

I know people who have been silent for 90%. They're actually silent. And I tell them like, look, nobody will ever penalise you for this. If you feel like you have a question that you want to ask, just Zoom me and tell me, explain to me and I will speak on your behalf. I will speak on your behalf and say: okay, there's someone who is afflicted with these kinds of issues. And if it is something that can be sorted, it will be sorted out, and it will benefit all the other PhD researchers (Participant 30, Man, Working-Class, Black, PhD Researcher)

Participants at different career stages described 'finding your tribe' is an integral part of being an academic-activist (Participant 07, PhD Researcher) (Participant 10, Associate Professor) (Participant 28, Lecturer) and (Participant 33, Lecturer). Previous discussions have shown that academic-activism can appear as a reserved arena for tenured academics. However, while of particular importance for marginalised academics (including precarious/early-career stage academics), building your networks was considered to be of particular importance for the majority of academic-activists in this study. While the role and type of support networks varied, support networks allowed academic-activists at differing career stages to minimise the impact of the institutional environment (e.g. support for research, reduce risk of burnout and isolation, etc.). Beyond academia and workplace relationships, the role of those within the academic's immediate networks (e.g. family, friends, partners, etc.) allowed participants to deal with the potential challenges that arise from engaging in academic-activism (e.g. labelling, delayed career mobility, etc.).

The majority of participants either openly aligned with left-leaning political beliefs or engaged in academic-activist work which clashed with the business-like ideals of academia (e.g. trade union organising, research for NGO's and left-wing political campaigns, etc.). In this instance, tenured academic-activists found that the neoliberal-

influence within academia and society posed complex barriers to their academic-activism. In navigating this complex system, it is perceived as important for academic-activists to surround themselves with those who self-identify as academic-activists.

To withstand internal pressures (such as institutional time demands) and external pressures (such as societal attitudes) that may restrict their work, academic-activists can foster resilience by insulating themselves in a network of like-minded individuals who comprehend the processes and goals of academic-activism in the current institutional environment (Atkinson and Standing 2019; Burford 2017; Clarke et al. 2013; Eschle and Maignaschca 2006; Flood et al. 2013; Lashuel 2020). In addition, good support networks can sustain the efforts of academic-activists to deliver meaningful and impactful outcomes, as well as offset issues such as burnout (Cox 2014; Grollman 2015; Lashuel 2020; Pearce 2020; Rouhani 2012).

However, a general lack of support can impact on academic-activism's reach; making it difficult to bring ideas from academia into the community. However, participants found that robust networks (both local and global academic and activist networks) can provide comfort when attempting to challenge the 'hardnosed business attitude of academia' (Participant 11, Man, Working-Class, White Irish, Senior Lecturer) and impact positive social change through academic-activist output (research, teaching, outreach projects, etc.)

In building networks, tenured academic-activists can aid both their personal and professional reputation, as well as enhancing their capabilities as academic-activists (via diverse research, community outreach, etc.) in order to build trust with both academic and activist networks (MacCionnaith 2015). In addition, engaging in academic-activism in this manner can also add depth to academic work and provide academic skills to activist networks (such as report writing) as noted by a number of participants involved in union-based, community-based and left-wing political activism. Participants involved in these particular types of activism note that the support received from those within these networks meant that they could continue to become involved in wider social transformation in areas related to feminism, unionism, reproductive rights and policy reform. In this regard, diverse and broad connections inside and outside academia can positively impact your activism, while still being able to bring sustain your academic role/obligations (Clarke et al. 2015; Flood et al. 2013).

The role and availability of support networks varied for those in precarious/early-career stage roles. Some tenured staff participants spoke about the role of senior staff in helping those in junior or precarious roles to ‘navigate the system’ (Participant 11, Senior Lecturer) or ‘play the game’ (Participant 21, Associate Professor) given their ‘powerless position within academia’ (Participant 25, Head of Department/Senior Lecturer) and the lack of transparency and inability to challenge, for example, differences of pay in stipends and exploitative work practices. Similarly to Woolston’s (2019) findings, precarious/early-career academics, in particular, have signalled a need for greater transparency within academia regarding work practices. This may require an ideological or cultural shift within academic practices that make the working environment more supportive for those in insecure working conditions. Without a significant change in the support offered to precarious/early-career academics, it is expected that instances of insecurity, low self-esteem and limited job prospects will continue to cause high turnover amongst this cohort of academics (Bone 2019; Merga and Mason 2020; Rahal et al. 2023).

An environment that glorifies overwork, individualised careers and rewards the exploitation of those in precarious/early-career roles limits this type of collegiate support available on a wider scale. Given the circumstances, it is perhaps not feasible for tenured staff to dedicate additional time to offer support to those in precarious/early-career roles. Participant 16 found that change (such as better working conditions) could be possible if precarious/early-career academic-activists: ‘recognise themselves as a class for themselves’. That is to say that precarious/early-career academic-activists must learn to mobilise and support each other in order to impact the changes they require. This is easier said than done in the current climate.

Those in precarious/early-career roles noted a noticeable dearth of adequate support networks within their own institutions (such as inactive student unions, a lack of postgraduate representation and no support from senior colleagues). An absence of support attached ‘huge risks to dedicating your whole research; your whole career to it [academic-activism], especially if you’re early-career or PhD’ (Participant 04, Woman, Middle-Class, White Irish, PhD Researcher) (Merga and Mason 2020; Rahal et al. 2023; Woolston 2019). However, participants indicate that institutions with substantial union presence and representation for precarious/early-career academic-activists allow those in these career stages to better express their academic freedom.

A number of participants involved in postgraduate union activism or challenging the prominence of academic precarity found that instances of isolation, burnout and threats to individual career development can be reduced through the empowerment offered within peer support networks (for example: union groups, research groups, activist campaigners, etc.). The same participants comment on the significance of surrounding themselves with like-minded colleagues to offset the negative aspects associated with academic-activism, such as: blacklisting and delayed career mobility. Thus, the support and insight offered by colleagues/peers provides a clearer image of what is needed to improve the academic-activist experience for precarious/early-career staff in a system that is complex to navigate.

Moreover, participants involved in postgraduate union and academic precarity activism find there is a general experience shared by precarious/early-career stage academics where they are most likely ‘struggling to pay rent, already being overworked, as well as working under different pay and conditions’ (Participant 33, Woman, Working-Class, White Irish, Lecturer). This limits their potential to express academic freedom (Bone 2019; Delaney 2020a; Fitzsimons et al. 2021; Merga and Mason 2020; Rahal et al. 2023; Woolston 2019). In these circumstances, those challenging poor working conditions in academia encourage peers within their networks (namely postgraduate union groups) to seek support on such issues. This type of activism and support makes it possible for colleagues/peers to mobilise and challenge academia’s structural issues.

Furthermore, precarious/early-career participants indicated that not being limited to Irish-based or subject-specific networks opens up opportunities for precarious/early-career academic-activists to build support networks in other countries/research areas. Aside from providing a sense of unity on wide-ranging issues facing the majority of precarious/early-career stage academics, building diverse networks can aid in forming collaborative efforts regarding research ideas that can benefit your career. Collaborative efforts in this sense can aid in alleviating institutional barriers which can be restrictive of engaging in activist-led research for the purpose of enacting positive social change (Byrne 2015; Choudry 2020; Pease 2015). Through collaboration, precarious/early-career academic-activists have been able to create opportunities to produce impactful academic-activist work at an early point in their careers.

As discussed, engaging in different types of activism as an academic can be either aided by the support of those within their networks in both a personal and professional sense. Participants appear to lessen the potential impact of external environments on their activism by surrounding themselves with like-minded colleagues and peers primarily through instances of collaboration, communication and general support. This demonstrates how diverse networks can empower tenured academic-activists to challenge the norms and strategies within academia, thereby enabling their impactful contributions to the public sphere. For precarious/early-career academic-activists, this section illuminates how various networks serve as navigational aids within an academic landscape that provides barriers for expressing academic freedom. Overall, this section highlighted the significance of support networks in aiding academic-activists at different career stages to sustain their work. The next section offers a conclusionary note on Theme 3.

7.4.3 Concluding Comments for Theme 3: “they have different senses of time”: balancing academia and activism

The data demonstrates academia’s demand for academics to navigate the dual responsibilities of academic and activist regardless of whether activism is integrated with academic pursuits or pursued separately; the increasing academic workload can still restrict academic-activism. This dynamic portrays academia as an environment where activism becomes an extension of academic efforts in the majority of instances.

For tenured academic-activists, this dual roles tension manifests through time constraints, evolving societal attitudes and the need to adapt to institutional challenges. Despite potential obstacles, a sense of security and freedom, as discussed earlier, empowers them to manage this balance adeptly. Balancing academic-activism can be precarious, with the risk of compromising both academic and activist endeavors. However, the financial stability experienced by tenured academics allows them to undertake such risks.

Precarious/early-career scholars face a relatively straightforward task of balancing academia and activism, given their position within the institutional setting. Yet, the absence of academic freedom beyond traditional responsibilities complicates this balance. Their activism often aligns directly with research and teaching to avert backlash. This balance involves finding a middle ground between expected duties and avoiding the

perception of disruption. Despite potential barriers, these participants use academic-activism as a tool to effect social change and broaden career prospects where possible.

In this regard, building support networks becomes a pivotal strategy to harmonise the dual role of academic-activism. Particularly for precarious/early-career academics, the individualistic nature of academia hampers engagement in academic-activism and network-building. Challenging dominant narratives necessitates seeking support within networks to drive societal change. However, guaranteed peer support in the Irish context is not assured. For both tenured and precarious/early-career academic-activists, fostering connections within activist circles bolsters personal and professional reputations, as well as support for their work. Precarious/early-career scholars rely on open communication with peers for potential mobilisation and solidarity. Encouragingly, exploring connections in diverse research areas and other countries is advised.

However, a discernible division is evident between the experiences of tenured and precarious/early-career academic-activism in managing the dual role and establishing supportive networks. While support networks aid in this balance, the current institutional and socioeconomic context subjects academic-activists to multifaceted challenges in their endeavors such as cultural and ideological influences which impact academia's environment, posing challenges to balancing academic-activist work.

The next section outlines an overall conclusion of the analysis and the connection of themes to the PPCT model.

7.5 Conclusion and fit to PPCT model

In this concluding section, the analysis of interviews with 33 Irish-based academic-activists are summarised in line the themes and sub-themes relevance within Bronfenbrenner' and Morris' (2006) PPCT model. Across three superordinate themes, this section highlights the interaction of personal experiences and contextual influences, which suggest that academic-activism is an intricate and dynamic method of impacting social change. In particular, this concluding section emphasises the need for further consideration of academic-activist experiences within Irish higher education to aid in reimagining the academy as a supportive and public facing institution that provides academics with the necessary means to influence positive change.

The experiences of 33 Irish-based academic-activists offer valuable insights into the barriers, motivations, costs and benefits associated with academic-activism, reflecting trends and observations found in the literature. However, the prevailing individualistic norms, practices, and beliefs within the academic environment hinder the potential for meaningful social change. It is imperative for society and its institutions to embrace values of unity, solidarity and collective action to effectively utilize the privileged platform and expertise of academic-activists for societal betterment. The current trajectory risks limiting the scope of academic-activism to specific, controlled circumstances, reliant upon an individual's identity, activism type and their positioning within academia and society.

The thematic analysis of interviews with self-identified academic-activists in Ireland has unveiled a complex and multifaceted picture of academic-activism. The overarching themes, encompassing the influence of neoliberalism, the institutional climate and the balancing act between academic and activist roles offer valuable insights into the challenges and possibilities encountered by academic-activists. These themes are briefly summarised below highlighting their alignment with specific facets of Bronfenbrenner's and Morriss' (2006) PPCT model:

Theme 1, "that kind of collectivism that we need": negotiating neoliberalism and building solidarity aligns with multiple dimensions of the PPCT model. The macrosystem, representing the sociopolitical context, is evident as neoliberalism permeates academia, placing barriers on academic-activists through encouragement of individualism and competitiveness. The exosystem, encompassing external institutions and influences, aligns with how societal inequalities fuel the motivation for activism. Additionally, the mesosystem, capturing the interactions between different aspects of an individual's life, further shapes academic-activism, highlighting the complex interplay between personal values, beliefs and external influences. The chronosystem, reflecting the evolution of values, beliefs and experiences over time, underscores the ever-changing landscape that academic-activists must navigate.

Within Theme 2, "academia doesn't like activism": institutional barriers to academic-activism, the mesosystem, which involves the interplay between academia and activism that impact academic-activist experiences is central to this theme. The microsystem, representing the immediate academic environment, plays a significant role in shaping the

opportunities and challenges faced by academic-activists. The exosystem or the external factors beyond academia, indirectly influences academic-activism by shaping societal attitudes and norms toward activism. Moreover, the chronosystem factors in with career progression from precarity to permanency affording academics greater latitude to engage in activism.

Theme 3, “they have different senses of time”: balancing academia and activism, captures the temporal dimension of academic-activism through time commitments, which is central to understanding the delicate balance between academia and activism. The mesosystem highlights the interactions and interrelationships between academia and activism within an individual's life. The microsystem, representing the immediate academic and activist environments, shapes how academic-activists navigate their dual roles on a day-to-day basis.

Aligning these themes through the lens of the PPCT model offers a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of academic-activism. The contextual influences of the macrosystem and exosystem, the intricate interplay within the mesosystem, and the time-based elements outlined by the chronosystem collectively contribute to the complex landscape of academic-activism. This research enriches the discourse on academics' potential to influence social change, stressing the need for continual exploration into the multifaceted nature of academic-activism. Moreover, these themes illustrate the intricate interplay between contextual factors and personal characteristics. Factors like the economic, political, and institutional landscape, coupled with societal attitudes either impede or facilitate engagement in academic-activism. Simultaneously, individual academic roles, availability of support networks and sociopolitical identity relevant to external contexts are also pivotal in shaping academic-activism engagement.

Despite its intricacies, the current study highlights the significance of academic-activism in driving social change. Identifying barriers and motivations for engagement offers a foundation for institutions and individuals to develop strategies that better encourage academic-activism. From a personal perspective, as a working-class, PhD researcher navigating the precarious academic landscape, I recognise the imperative to reconstruct the academic environment which can enable diverse and marginalised academic-activist voices to participate in reshaping academia for the greater good. In conclusion, this research contributes to the discourse surrounding academics' roles in effecting social

change; emphasising the necessity for continued exploration of the multifaceted nature of academic-activism.

This discussion will be further elaborated in the subsequent chapter, which combines the findings from both studies to develop best practices and recommendations for academic-activists.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the overall conclusions of the current study. The chapter begins by contextualising the findings of both studies within Bronfenbrenner's and Morris's (2006) PPCT model to assess its usefulness in understanding the experiences of academic-activists and academia as a site for social activism. Following from this, best practice guidelines and recommendations are outlined based on the experiences and the input of academic-activist participants within the relevant ecological systems as per the PPCT model. This chapter then outlines the limitations of the current study and highlights potential areas for future research based on the highlighted limitations which primarily relate to issues with sample size. A personal reflection is then outlined based on my experience throughout the current research, as well as my positionality within the study. This section also focuses on my reflection on the research processes that were implemented throughout the course of the project and how this influenced my interpretation of data. The chapter concludes by offering a brief synopsis of the thesis and its major contributions to academic-activism literature.

8.2 Understanding Academia as a Site for Activism within the PPCT Model

This section will reflect on the usefulness of the PPCT model in shaping the early stages of research development and will subsequently evaluate its effectiveness in relation to the findings of the studies. Through employing a multidimensional framework and theory to understand the complexities of individual experiences, Bronfenbrenner's and Morris's (2006) PPCT model provided a structured foundation for comprehensive exploration and analysis of academic-activism in Irish higher education institutions.

Prior to the data collection stages of the research, a comprehensive review of the existing literature highlighted the importance of adopting a theoretical framework that could effectively capture the influence of external environments on academic-activism. Given the prominent impact of political, economic and social factors in shaping academic-activism, the choice of theoretical lens emerged as a central consideration. It became evident that Bronfenbrenner's and Morris's (2006) PPCT model was suited to address this need. The PPCT model offered a framework that accounted for the role of time and dynamic interplay between individuals, their immediate contexts and the sociopolitical landscape. This alignment between the framework's layers and the dimensions of

academic-activism motivated the selection of the PPCT model as the guiding theoretical construct.

Furthermore, this recognition of the impact of external environments and the subsequent adoption of the PPCT model prompted the integration of research paradigms that would facilitate a nuanced exploration of data through a multidimensional lens. Adopting a critical realist ontology, a weak social constructionist epistemology and a participatory action research methodology (which embedded an intersectional lens) provided a comprehensive framework that resonated with the PPCT model's ecological systems. This approach enabled the examination of academic-activism as a multifaceted interaction between individual motivations, immediate surroundings and overarching systems; thereby aligning with the theoretical underpinnings of the research and further ensuring a holistic understanding of the intricate dynamics related to individual experiences of academic work concerned with social justice.

The adopted research frameworks provided a valuable lens through which to evaluate the significance of the findings. Figure 29 depicts how the sub-scales from Study One (online survey) are aligned with the PPCT model. The inclusion of one or more sub-scales (shown as ecological systems) within each system indicates how the systems interact and dictate how particular systems operate. The two-way arrows represent the intersecting nature of the ecological systems.

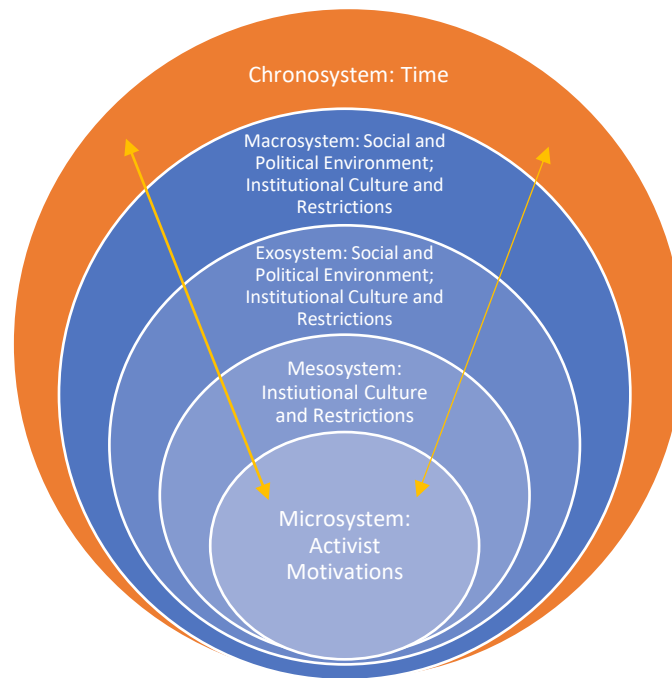


Figure 29. Sub-scales from Study One represented within PPCT model.

In addition to the mapping of data onto the PPCT model, the analysis of Study One (qualitative content analysis) and Study Two (in-depth interviews with academic-activists), which involved generating inductive themes, will be examined to highlight the effectiveness of the PPCT framework in understanding the complexities of academic-activism. With regards to the data findings, the PPCT model emphasises the movement and interaction between the layers to understanding individual experiences. Hence, the interaction between the PPCT model and the data findings highlights the model's utility in comprehending the dynamics of academic-activism.

The macro-level examination of the social and political environment illuminated the substantial influence of prevailing neoliberal ideologies within academia and society. These ideologies shape the environment in which academic-activists operate, imposing strategic navigation through a landscape hindered by precarious employment and a need for left-leaning activism to challenge the status quo. Consequently, the model effectively explains the societal and cultural factors that underscore the pursuit of academic-activism. However, this understanding also reveals the challenge of enacting meaningful social change within a climate characterised by ingrained attitudes (driven by economic and political forces) which foster social injustices as a result of prevailing individualism and competitiveness.

Exploring the institutional context further reinforces the model's usefulness. Institutional practices and policies, though often constraining academic-activism, can also foster supportive environments for activism. The tension between academic values and business-oriented strategies is clear from the participants' perspective, with the glorification of overworking and prioritisation of commercialised outputs hindering the pursuit of academic-activism. This assessment highlights that institutional cultures and policies profoundly influence academic-activism through creating an environment where resistance is both vital and challenging. Through recognising the role of institutional workplace culture in shaping these interactions, the understanding of these environments in line with the PPCT model underscores the necessity of identifying ways to bridge academia and activism to foster support networks that promote academic-activism.

The PPCT model also serves as a valuable framework for understanding the key role immediate social environments and personal networks in shaping academic-activists' values, beliefs, and motivations. By highlighting the interactions within the microsystem, the PPCT model was an appropriate framework for exploring how these networks and connections play a crucial role in guiding individuals' paths into academic-activism and influencing their ongoing engagement with activism. The model's recognition of the impact of supportive networks underlines the significance of encouraging such connections within both academia and activist communities. This understanding is pivotal for sustaining the efforts of academic-activist, as well as bolstering the impact of academic-activism, particularly in addressing the potential challenges of isolation and burnout.

The acknowledgement of the role of time within the PPCT model provides a lens through which to comprehend the nonlinear trajectories of academic-activists' career journeys, as well as the individual's evolving motivations, attitudes and beliefs. By encompassing the role of time and evolution of experiences, the model aptly captures the dynamic nature of motivations and attitudes that guide academic-activists from periods of precarity to permanency and from early-career to senior academic positions. The chronosystem's recognition of the interplay between life events and changing perspectives facilitates a deeper understanding of how these transitions shape an academic-activist's path which impact their engagement with activism. In particular, the model's acknowledgment of the influence of time stresses the need for academic-activists to align their actions with altering societal contexts in order to align their activism with current challenges.

In essence, the PPCT model's integration with the data findings from both studies has offered a comprehensive lens to examine the current landscape of academic-activism. While individual layers within the model contribute distinct insights, the model's overarching framework has proven key to understanding the complex interaction of external environments, institutional dynamics, personal networks and time-based influences. This assessment highlights the model's usefulness and appropriateness in identifying ways to support academic-activists, promote social justice and foster positive social change within academia.

This section has highlighted the usefulness of the PPCT model in understanding how factors related to academic-activism interact which allow for a deeper understanding of how academic-activists navigate and contribute to social and political change. In line with the research questions aims, through the discussion above (which triangulates the findings of both studies), it was possible to highlight participant's perceptions of the political, social and institutional environment from the perspective on individual identities. Furthermore, it was possible to explore the barriers and motivations facing academic-activists in the current climate relevant to their individual positionality within external contexts.

Overall, the findings from this research align with Bronfenbrenner's and Morris's (2006) PPCT model; highlighting the multifaceted nature of the social and environmental factors that shape academic-activists' experiences and perspectives. Through the lens of the PPCT model, it is possible to understand how academic-activists operate and navigate within multiple overlapping and intersection systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem). By understanding these systems and their interactions in this manner, insights into the individual and contextual factors that impact an academic-activists experience provide a foundation for developing best practice guidelines and recommendations to address the issues highlighted by participants within these systems. This is outlined further in the following section.

8.3 Best Practice Guidelines and Recommendations for Academic-Activists

Triangulating the findings of both studies within the context of the PPCT model provides a basis for the best practice guidelines and recommendations for academic-activism. As such, the guidelines and recommendations are based on participant's insight throughout

both studies, contextualised within the context of relevant ecological systems which impact their experiences of academic-activism.

This section will begin by outlining the guidelines for academic-activists. The guidelines have been informed by the advice and guidance offered within the Study Two interviews by academic-activists for their academic-activist colleagues and peers. Thus, the guidelines are directly informed by academic-activists to help individuals or networks make informed decisions or take appropriate actions in the context of the current political, economic and social climate. The guidelines serve as a framework for academic-activists to best inform their decision making and both their current and future academic-activist practice. The aim and purpose of these guidelines, which are informed by academic-activist participants, is to provide practical advice and strategies for other academic-activists facing challenges in their work. These guidelines offer suggestions for navigating issues related to academic-activism within the context of current institutional demands, addressing personal challenges tied to activism engagement and managing concerns about career progression.

This section will then move onto outlining recommendations for academic-activists. While the previous guidelines provided personal strategies for academic-activists to navigate challenges, these recommendations, informed by academic-activist participants, propose changes within academia to address structural issues. They address issues such as precarious employment, resource allocation for activism, recognition of activist efforts, community engagement and more inclusive approaches to equity, diversity, and inclusion. These recommendations aim to create a more inclusive and socially responsible academic environment. Therefore, the recommendations made are a product of academic-activists experience within the current social, cultural, political and institutional environments. Given that the recommendations are developed through the experiences of academic-activists, this highlights the relevance and credibility of the suggestions made to better academic-activist practice.

8.3.1 Guidelines for Navigating the Intersection Between Academia and Activism

The following sections provide guidelines aimed at addressing various challenges faced by academic-activists within the current institutional landscape. These guidelines offer practical strategies to navigate personal and professional barriers associated with engaging in academic-activism. They include considerations such as reflecting on

positionality, incorporating activism in research, building supportive networks, managing work-life balance and maintaining ethical integrity. Additionally, strategies to enhance career mobility and progression while effectively integrating activism are explored, including seeking mentorship, engaging with supervisors, and adapting communication to different contexts. These guidelines aim to empower academic-activists to navigate challenges in order to contribute meaningfully to academia and society. The guidelines are presented in Figure 30 and are outlined in more detail in the subsequent sections.

Item	Guidelines for addressing challenges to academic-activist output in the context of current institutional demands:
1. (a)	Consistently reflect on your positionality and implement both theoretical and methodological frameworks that allow for this (e.g. PAR).
1. (b)	Find employment in institutes or organisations with a collective interest in activism.
1. (c)	Bring academic research into the community or public sphere through different forms of dissemination beyond journal articles and conference presentations (e.g. blog posts, use of social media to communicate research, magazine-style articles, publishing in open-access forums).
1. (d)	Build diverse support networks (both locally and globally) that support your academic-activism (research groups, politicians, activist networks, etc.).
1. (e)	Incorporate activism within your research as much as possible.
Item	Guidelines for addressing personal challenges related to engaging in academic-activism
2. (a)	Challenge negative connotations associated with activism where possible (e.g. conferences, meetings, etc.)
2. (b)	Outside of academic and activist type support networks, it is important to surround yourself with people you can trust on an even more immediate level (i.e. peer support, family and friends).
2. (c)	Implement good work-life balance practices (e.g. compartmentalise your academic and activist work, set boundaries, no work email on your phone, treat your day as a 9-5 where possible).
2. (d)	Maintain both academic and personal integrity (i.e. think, act and conduct research ethically). This also means potentially adjusting behaviour dependent on the type of context you are operating within.
Item	Guidelines for addressing concerns over career mobility and threats to potential progression:
3. (a)	Join a union.
3. (b)	Find an academic-activist role model and/or mentor.
3. (c)	Inform your superiors (HoD, supervisors, etc.) of your work and work as closely as possible with them.
3. (d)	Tailor your CV depending on interview panel and role (be conscious of negative perceptions of activists).
3. (e)	Do what feels comfortable based on your current position/role.
3. (f)	Aim to be published in higher impact journals at the early-career stage to enhance your personal and professional reputation before becoming more vocal on activism.

Figure 30. List of guidelines.

Guidelines for addressing challenges to academic-activist output in the context of current institutional demands:

The guidelines here offer strategies for academic-activists to effectively engage with their roles. A pivotal recommendation is the ongoing reflection on one's positionality; a practice that encourages recognising individual perspectives and affiliations. Embedding this self-awareness within research is facilitated by the integration of theoretical and methodological frameworks, such as Participatory Action Research (PAR). This approach enhances the contextual relevance and impact of academic-activist work.

Furthermore, a key recommendation highlights the significance of seeking employment in institutes or organisations that share a collective interest in activism. This alignment nurtures an environment where academic-activists can make greater impacts with their output aims through aligning their personal values and institutional objectives which can diversifying the dissemination of academic research beyond traditional channels. Academic-activists are encouraged to translate their work so that it is accessible in the community and public sphere through versatile platforms. This approach enhances the reach and accessibility of their work, enabling greater engagement with diverse audiences.

This can be further enhanced by building robust and diverse support networks. Connecting locally and globally with research groups, politicians and activist networks provides avenues for collaboration, knowledge exchange and mutual empowerment for academic-activists. In addition, by aligning research aims with activist work, academic-activists can effectively bridge theory and practice that extend beyond academia. In embracing these comprehensive guidelines, academic-activists can navigate their roles to create a meaningful imprint on both academic and activist landscapes. The next section outlines the guidelines related to addressing personal challenges related to academic-activist engagement.

Guidelines for addressing personal challenges related to engaging in academic-activism

Insights shared by participants across the studies offer pragmatic guidelines for addressing personal challenges linked to engaging in academic-activism. Actively countering negative associations tied to activism, especially in scenarios like conferences

and meetings, is advised to reshape perceptions. Beyond the circles of academia and activism, it is crucial to cultivate a close network of trustworthy individuals who can offer immediate support (peers, family and friends). Establishing a robust personal support system can help provide emotional support in the face of challenges.

Strategically fostering a healthy work-life balance emerges as a paramount consideration. Techniques such as compartmentalising academic and activist commitments, setting firm boundaries, refraining from constant work-related emails on personal devices and embracing a structured workday from 9 to 5 (where possible) can aid in maintaining balance between professional responsibilities and personal well-being. Furthermore, upholding both ethical standards in academic pursuits and personal integrity becomes integral. This encompasses aligning actions and decisions with ethical principles and acting ethically within diverse contexts.

Likewise, participants stress the necessity of adapting behaviour in accordance with different situations. Recognising that ethical conduct may vary in various contexts underscores the importance of adaptable decision-making. This approach acknowledges the versatile nature of academic-activism and the diverse settings in which it operates. By observing these guidelines, academic-activists can navigate the complex environments of academia and activism to ensure positive and impactful engagement with both spheres. The following section outlines guidelines related to career mobility and progression.

Guidelines for addressing concerns over career mobility and threats to potential progression:

The advice and insights shared by participants in both studies reflect realistic and practical guidelines that hold relevance within the current institutional context, where limitations on activism can hinder the motivations of activists engaging in academic work. One prevalent recommendation to counter threats to career advancement is joining a union. With the rise of postgraduate worker unions due to exploitative work practices and the widespread precarity in academia, it is considered best practice to stand united in numbers with peers and colleagues to address the structural challenges along the academic career path. Union involvement enables academic-activists to clarify their contractual terms and ensure fair treatment and protection against mismanagement or exploitation.

Moreover, participants highlighted the significance of establishing a solid personal and professional reputation, primarily achieved through publishing in esteemed journals and presenting at local and global conferences, before taking a more active stance in activism. This advice is especially pertinent for those in early-career positions or precarious roles, given the formidable challenges in establishing a secure and thriving academic career. Considering the complexities of balancing academic and activist commitments, participants emphasised the importance of preserving both one's career and personal life. In this light, thoughtful consideration of one's desired academic legacy and seeking inspiration from academic-activist role models is recommended. These strategies offer valuable guidance in navigating academia and adapting to the multifaceted demands of academic and activist engagement, contributing positively to career development.

To conclude this section, these guidelines encompass a wide range of useful strategies for academic-activists which consider the impact of the external environments (for example: social attitudes, institutional valuing of activism, the importance of immediate networks in sustaining activism, etc.) which have been developed by academic-activists, for academic-activists. The next section details the recommendations formed to address structural issues and conditions which impact academic-activism.

8.3.2 Policy Recommendations for Transformative Academic-Activist Engagement

The following recommendations have been developed following the input of academic-activist participants throughout both studies. While the previous guidelines focused on personal challenges and experiences, these recommendations are designed to offer practical guidance for enhancing academic-activist practice from an institutional perspective. They address the specific challenges structural barriers that academic-activists commonly encounter within the Irish context. Intended for institutional and/or departmental management, administrators and policymakers, these recommendations provide actionable steps that institutions and departmental bodies can implement to transform academic-activist engagement. Therefore, the recommendations aim to assist institutional hierarchy and departmental bodies in protecting and promoting the fundamental principle of academic freedom through practical actions.

Briefly, the five key recommendations relate to ending academic precarity; putting resources into academic-activism which support flexible academic roles through allowing time and space for activism; fairly valuing and incentivising academic-activism which

focuses on current issues with the need to measure impact and undervaluing of non-traditional outputs; establishing institutional connections with communities beyond industry and; better promotion of EDI initiatives. These are outlined in Figure 31.

Item	Ending Academic Precarity
1. (a)	Eradicate all forms of unpaid and exploitative labour within academia, particularly for those at the early-career stage (including PhD Researchers and Postdoctoral Researchers). At a minimum, institutions must attempt to at least reduce the prominence and normalcy of precarious work which has negative knock-on effects to the quality of academic work and restricts academic-activism.
1. (b)	Create paid and contracted roles that are currently unpaid, underpaid or non-contracted.
1. (c)	Foster an environment that provides better insight and clarity regarding the academic career framework. This should include a reduction in the number of postgraduate researchers registering for programmes given a lack of secure roles and future job opportunities available in light of limited training opportunities that adequately equip early-career researchers for non-academic careers.
1. (d)	Provide institutional support for the personal and professional development of academics that equip them for careers external to academia (i.e. reduce specialisation of academic training).
1. (e)	Develop institutional changes that promote job security and benefits for academic-activists. For example: supporting the development of unionised or other solidaric efforts that help advocate for better working conditions and compensation at all career stages rather than currently tenured academics.
Item	Investing Resources into Academic-Activism
2. (a)	Foster interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches to research and advocacy work which can help expand funding opportunities and increase impact on social issues related to academic-activist work. For example: providing funding for research and outreach activities related to academic-activism.
2. (b)	Integrate academic-activism within department missions (e.g. module content, research groups, etc.) where relevant. This could involve creating new academic programmes focused on social justice issues, as well as integrating social justice themes and topics into existing courses and research initiatives. For example: University College Cork (UCC) have recently established a module on academic freedom.
2. (c)	Promote a culture of academic-activism by encouraging dialogue and collaboration among academics and external communities. For example: hosting conferences and events focused on academic-activism or providing personal and professional support for academics engage in activism (e.g. formal and informal supervision).
2. (d)	Institutions could support flexible academic roles which allow for better time and space for academic-activism by offering better working arrangements and lessening ever-increasing workloads. For example: remote working, flexible schedules and allowing for specific days to engage in outreach activities for all career stages. This can help to ensure that faculty and staff have the time and flexibility they need to engage in academic-activism activities without sacrificing their other responsibilities and commitments.
Item	Valuing and Incentivising Academic-Activism
3. (a)	Institutions can develop concise guidelines and criteria for evaluating academic-activism, including measures for assessing the impact and quality of academic-activism work that is engaged in beyond performance-based research or metrics during promotional or hiring

	procedures in particular. For example: fairly valuing, weighting and rewarding academic work done on behalf of NGOs or activist groups that is separate to your contractual commitments (i.e. voluntary, out-of-hours work). This can help to ensure that a variety of academic-activism (e.g. alternative forms of dissemination) is valued and rewarded in a fair and consistent way across different departments and institutions.
3. (b)	Encourage an institutional culture of academic-activism through ongoing personal and professional development training that is facilitated by; and participated in by academics engaged in social justice work. At the early-career stage, this could be incentivised through offering ECT credits for postgraduate researchers in training modules focused on engaging in academic-activist themed research. For example: SETU offer a Project Path module for postgraduate researchers that focuses on conducting transformative research in the area of EDI
Item	Establishing Institutional and Community Connections
4. (a)	Develop partnerships with community organisations (e.g. voluntary, not-for-profit organisations) that have a focus on addressing social justice issues in local communities. For example: engaging in research projects and community outreach activities which help to identify current social issues within communities and developing strategies that can help address them.
4. (b)	Refocusing institutional priorities away from governmental or industry-based partnerships, and instead, prioritise public-facing scholarship. This approach can help to ensure that research is relevant and meaningful beyond governmental and industry-led needs. For example: this could involve revising funding priorities, evaluating the impact of industry partnerships on the institution's mission and values and developing strategies for building stronger relationships with local communities. By doing so, institutions can better address the needs of local communities and contribute to greater equality within society.
4. (c)	Through supporting community wealth-building initiatives, that are designed to promote economic development and job creation in local communities, institutions can help to create more opportunities for local residents and build stronger, more resilient communities. For example: If SETU were to establish community wealth-building initiatives within surrounding council estates, they could host a range of activities that are perhaps not part of the central mission of the institute at present. This could involve hosting personal and professional development training courses (e.g. job and interview training, career guidance, and skill-building workshops); helping to fund and coordinate community garden projects and; helping to fund or facilitate education and training programmes (e.g. formal and informal education projects).
Item	Enhanced Promotion of EDI Initiatives
5. (a)	Institutions must increase transparency around their EDI initiatives by making their policies (which should set clear goals and targets). Broader institutional policies should reflect upon social justice issues that promote greater equality, diversity and inclusion beyond surface level changes (e.g. participation rates).
5. (b)	Institutions must focus on addressing systemic barriers to equity, diversity, and inclusion, rather than just addressing individual incidents of discrimination or bias (e.g. implementing gender quotas rather than focusing on apparent issues regarding racial inequality).
5. (c)	Institutions must better engage with disadvantaged communities to gain greater understanding of their needs and priorities to develop more effective strategies for promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion. For example: through establishing community-based partnerships as described above, institutions could work with organisations that are working in this area to collaborate on the design and implementation of EDI initiatives.
5. (d)	Current critiques of one-dimensional EDI charters and committees (namely Athena Swan) note the limitations of these charters in addressing issues of inequality on a wider scale by focusing on one disadvantaged category of people (e.g. gender). Given this, a more

	<p>intersectional approach should be taken with EDI initiatives which recognises and explores that numerous modes in which individuals can experience both discrimination and privileges based on their sociopolitical identity and personal characteristics (e.g. disability, sexual orientation, etc.). By taking a more intersectional approach, institutions can ensure that their EDI initiatives are more inclusive and more effective at addressing systemic inequalities.</p>
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Figure 31. List of policy recommendations.

In summary, through allocating more resources directed at academic-activism and allowing for flexible and secure academic roles²⁶, institutions can encourage academics to engage with social issues and promote positive social change beyond traditional means of dissemination. This echoes the findings of the recent Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) (2023) report which calls for a systemic change in academia given the psychological impact of precarious work on the ability of academics to effectively perform their roles. By more fairly valuing, supporting and promoting academic-activism, institutions can ensure that academics are adequately commended for their academic-activist work. Furthermore, this can ensure that their various and diverse contributions to societal change are fairly compensated. Academic-activists noted the importance of establishing institutional and community relationships which can aid in the promotion of social and economic justice in the case of local disadvantaged communities. Finally, the current approach to the promotion of EDI is considered to be too narrow and has limited impacts dependent on the focus of particular initiatives and agendas²⁷. By adopting a more intersectional approach to EDI, institutions can ensure that these initiatives better address prevalent inequities and social injustices within academia. The recommendations developed by academic-activists can better enable institutions to foster a more inclusive, public-facing and socially responsible academic culture.

The next section will outline the limitations of the current study and highlight potential areas for future research concerned with academic-activism.

²⁶ At a recent Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) conference, academics expressed their concerns for a worsening work-life balance with members citing that they are forced to work additional hours to get their work done: <https://twitter.com/ifut/status/1654854655690547200>.

²⁷ At the same IFUT conference mentioned in the earlier footnote, a motion was carried unanimously following growing concerns that Athena Swan has deviated away from its stated goal and fails to consider the impact of inequality on a wider scale. In addition, the charter is unable to explain instances of inequality (e.g. precarious work from a gendered perspective <https://twitter.com/ifut/status/1654857888278388739>).

8.4 Challenges, Study Limitations and Potential Areas for Future Research

This section is organised into three sub-sections which outline the challenges, limitations and potential areas for future research. The first section outlines the challenges encountered during the research process which relate to both research-based and personal challenges, such as new skill development and career development concerns. The second section outlines the study limitations, which primarily relate to issues with sampling and recruitment in the case of both Study One and Study Two. While these limitations may have restricted diverse perspectives in some regards, the third section outlines how these limitations can be rectified through other research projects. Specifically, these recommendations relate to aspects of the external environment and can be explored further to interrogate the impact of these environments on academic-activism from the perspective of academics, activists and various bodies and/or organisations within society.

8.4.1 Challenges

Throughout this PhD project various challenges presented themselves at different stages throughout the research. In the early research stages, one notable challenge was the scarcity of Irish-based academic-activist research within the existing literature, which presented a gap that this study aimed to address. This prompted the need to explore global academic-activist experiences and adapt these insights to the Irish context which focused more on external elements which could potentially impact academic-activist engagement (e.g. precarious working conditions). Additionally, the absence of an existing suitable scale for the specific context required the development of a new measurement instrument. This task proved particularly demanding, as it entailed acquiring an entirely new research skill set. This involved learning statistical analysis techniques with no prior experience in this area. Navigating this learning curve was a process that required specific time and effort to ensure the development of a robust measurement tool.

The majority of this PhD research took place during the COVID-19 pandemic which required all interviews to be conducted online, which had both challenges and benefits. While there was initial concern about the potential impact on rapport building, the online format proved advantageous in several ways. Arranging and completing 33 interviews was made easier by participants' increased willingness to engage virtually during this period. The online setting offered flexibility, allowing participants to fit the interviews around their schedules with greater ease. In my experience, rapport building was not

significantly impacted, as the format allowed for in-depth conversations to develop over time.

However, one challenge stemming from the pandemic was potential survey fatigue. The heightened volume of online surveys at the time may have contributed to lower response rates, affecting the survey's overall uptake. While these factors influenced the research process, the ability to complete both qualitative interviews and quantitative research online ultimately contributed to the success of the project.

In addition, navigating the challenges of engaging in academic-activism and aligning with academic-activist research was a central concern throughout the study. Recognising the potential risks associated with such engagement, including implications for career progression and potential labelling within the academic community, posed a significant challenge. It was crucial to ensure that the research was conducted while upholding academic integrity and maintaining a balanced perspective where possible. This balance was essential to address potential biases and to ensure the credibility of the findings while also creating a research environment where participants felt safe to share their experiences openly.

Having discussed the various challenges during the research and their resulting implications, the next section focuses on the limitations of both studies.

8.4.2 Study Limitations

In Study One, a relatively small sample size meant that conclusive results could not be met in certain cases. Despite the use of a range of recruitment strategies (e.g. advertisement of survey through social media platforms, contacting research centres and groups, as well as the survey being advertised by known academic-activists, politicians, journalists, etc.) the sample size was not as large as anticipated ($n = 147$). While this did not limit the ability of being able to conduct various inferential statistical tests, the small sample size meant that with particular categorical variables no significant relationships could be detected based on a lack of evidence to support the hypotheses within these particular participant groups which is described in further detail here.

As highlighted in Chapter 5 within the discussion of the findings relating to class, race and contract type, the lack of statistically significant relationships were likely related to an inadequate spread of various types of class backgrounds, ethnicities and contract types.

With regards to gender, those identifying as nonbinary ($n = 1$), could not be included in the statistical tests due to the low participant response which limited insights into other gender identities experience of academic-activism beyond those identifying as men and women. Additionally, there was no conclusive result found when testing for differences in the levels of activism across gender within the social and political environment sub-scale which was also likely related to the small sample size.

Similarly with tests relating to class (with the exception of the significant relationship found between class groups in the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale), race and contract type, the lack of conclusive results deviates away from trends within the academic-activist themed literature. However it is likely that in studies with larger sample sizes and a greater spread of participant representation in different contexts (e.g. global comparisons), there would be enough evidence to better support the guiding hypotheses.

In line with this, it is important to note the potential lack of comprehensive consideration regarding the diversity of participants' ethnic backgrounds and their statuses, such as whether they were born in Ireland or on student visas. This gap may affect the generalisability of the findings, as the study may not fully capture the experiences of individuals from different ethnic backgrounds given the narrow categories within the survey. While the participant group was already limited in size, further differentiation based on race and status could have provided deeper insights. However, this approach would require a more extensive sample and could pose additional challenges in analysis.

In addition to sample size limitations, it is important to acknowledge the absence of a comprehensive exploration of intersectional concepts such as disability, sexual orientation and gender identity factors. While these intersectional dimensions undoubtedly contribute to the complexity of academic-activist experiences, the decision to concentrate on broader gender, class, and race perspectives was made to align with the specific research aims and objectives. This narrower focus allowed for a more targeted analysis and a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by academic-activists within these particular dimensions.

Given the extensive body of academic-activist related literature that discusses individual experiences from these perspectives (gender, class and race), it was important to maintain clarity and avoid overcomplicating the analytical process. Additionally, considering a

wider range of intersectional concepts may have posed challenges in terms of recruitment and participation which were already prevalent from a class and race standpoint.

The interview-based study (Study Two) also had sampling issues regarding disciplinary backgrounds and diverse backgrounds. 77% of participants were from Arts, Humanities and Social Science (AHSS) backgrounds with the remaining 23% from Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) backgrounds. The recruitment for this study relied on participant's self-selection through the online survey. Where participants dropped out, interview participants were recruited (via email) based on the supervisory team's knowledge of the participant's suitability for the study or through snowballing where participants identified other potential participants who had extensive academic-activist experience. In a sense, this potentially contributed to extending upon the imbalance between different disciplinary backgrounds where academic-activists refer to someone in their academic field.

However, the literature notes that, it is typical for academic-activists to come from AHSS backgrounds (Flood et al. 2013). Furthermore, it is common for academic-activist themed literature to be published in, for example, psychological or sociological based journals which have a specific focus on promoting social change and development (e.g. Journal of Social Change; Journal of Social Issues). Moreover, based on the nature of AHSS subjects (e.g. modules focused on social injustice, critical views on societal structures, etc.), it is perhaps more feasible for academics to venture into academic-activist work concerned with matters of social justice given an established connection between the nature of AHSS academic work and various activist causes.

Nonetheless, better balance within the participant group may have potentially offered further insights into the experiences of academic-activists from a STEM perspective and more extensive insight into how STEM related academic-activism is impacted by external environments. However, these limitations serve as a foundation for identifying promising directions for future research, as outlined in the following section.

8.4.3 Potential Areas for Future Research

A lack of diversity is perhaps a reflection of wider issues of underrepresentation in Irish higher educational institutes. As such, attempting to increase participant diversity within the Irish context may not be guaranteed unless significant structural changes are made to improve upon issues related to representation and participation within Irish academia.

This perhaps could be addressed in larger scale projects with a better availability of resources (e.g. extensive research team, increased time to complete data collection, increased funding, etc.).

Although the statistical analyses were largely limited in drawing broader conclusions with regards to class, race and contract type in particular, a validated and reliable tool was developed (with accompanying guiding hypotheses) to be tested in future studies which can provide interesting insights into the experiences of academic-activists based on their identity with gender, class, race and contract type within external environments related to academic-activism.

Future research should aim to incorporate more detailed demographic data on race to enhance visibility of different cohorts of participants with consideration for class background and immigration status to better understand their impact on academic and academic-activist experiences. Addressing these factors could provide a richer perspective on how diverse backgrounds influence academic-activism. Despite the challenges associated with expanding the participant group and conducting more complex analyses as noted previously, such efforts are crucial for developing a comprehensive understanding of the diverse experiences within academic contexts.

While the current study focused on the dimensions of gender, class, and race, future research could expand its scope to incorporate additional intersectional identifiers, such as disability, sexual orientation, a more comprehensive range of gender identities and others as noted within the study limitations. Through recognising the diverse experiences and perspectives within the academic-activist community, this expansion could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how various identities intersect and impact engagement in activism.

Additionally, exploring the trajectories of academics who have transitioned out of activism and activists who have moved away from academia also presents an intriguing avenue for further investigation. Investigating why individuals shift their focus or disengage from either academic or activist roles could provide valuable insights into the challenges, motivations and external factors that contribute to such transitions. This research could help uncover the complications with sustaining academic-activism in the long-term, the impact of institutional structures on career paths and the role of personal experiences in shaping these transitions.

As the present study illuminated various aspects of academic activism, future research could continue to uncover unexplored facets within this field. For instance, in-depth examinations of the strategies employed by academic-activists to navigate the challenges of activism within specific disciplines could reveal discipline-specific dynamics. Moreover, investigating the influence of academic-activism on teaching methodologies, curriculum development and student engagement could provide a holistic perspective on its implications within educational institutions.

Furthermore, understanding how academic-activist initiatives are received and engaged with by diverse audiences beyond academia, such as policymakers, industry leaders and the general public remains an important area for exploration. Examining the impact of these initiatives on societal perceptions, policy changes and public discourse could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the wider-reaching influence of academic-activism beyond academia and specialist audiences.

Moreover, future research should include a comprehensive mapping exercise to assess institutional policies and support mechanisms. This scoping study would investigate how higher education institutions implement their stated commitments and what practical support they offer to various student groups. For example, this could reveal discrepancies between public support for specific causes, such as the dedicated resources for Ukrainian students at some institutions and the lack of comparable support for students affected by other global conflicts. By examining these inconsistencies, future research can provide critical insights into the alignment between institutional rhetoric and actual practices which would contribute to a greater understanding of how universities address diverse global issues and promote specific activist causes in line with their stated positions.

Overall, the limitations in both studies were related to either a small sample size (Study One) or an imbalanced sample size from a disciplinary background perspective (Study Two). The limitations of both studies provide interesting insights that could be rectified and addressed in future studies which were also described in this section. In conclusion, while this study has illuminated significant insights into the experiences of academic-activists, the field of academic activism remains rich with unexplored areas and unanswered questions. By expanding research to incorporate additional intersectional identities and investigating transitions in and out of activism and academia, future studies have the potential to uncover new dimensions, challenges and opportunities within this

dynamic and evolving landscape. The following section will outline my personal reflection of the research processes involved in this PhD project which have been guided by my own identity and positionality within the broader social and institutional context.

8.5 Personal Reflection

In this section, I reflect on the overall research process which have been influenced by own identity relevant to the project's aims and objectives. Specifically, this reflection focuses on how early examining of the literature potentially hindered sampling strategies, combatting power relations within the research through methodological frameworks and ultimately, how my own experiences and identity bolstered the conducting of the research.

From a personal perspective, a combination of my own background and an arguable lack of attention afforded to diverse voices within the literature influenced my research processes. In light of my own identity, my preliminary approach to literature inevitably gravitated towards sources that focused on experiences that related to my own. Given the aforementioned lack of attention to diverse voices, these sources were typically published in blog posts or came from the individual's personal social media. Thus, as a working-class, precariously employed academic (hourly paid Tutor and Assistant Lecturer) and a PhD Researcher, my experience within academia and early engagement with the literature dictated initial sampling approaches.

Admittedly, my own personal biases suggested that the dominant voices (for example: middle-class, white men and/or permanently employed academics) within academia did not need to be considered within this study. Although this would have created sampling and recruitment issues, it would have also provided findings that were one-sided and lacking in comparable depth with others experiences.

Failing to consider a wider variety of academic-activists would have perhaps disrupted the aim of this research by excluding participants who would potentially benefit from the final chapter's guidelines and recommendations for best practice. This could have caused potential negative knock-on effects for the individuals and communities that academic-activists seek to empower through their work. However, while continuous reflections allowed me to combat this issue, it brought about complications regarding power relations within the research.

Personally, this can bring about certain disadvantages while conducting research. As an early-career stage academic who has had experience with precarious employment, I was conscious of speaking with those in senior roles with well-established reputations. I was aware that I could be speaking to a potential future employer or colleague which can be a potential barrier to expressing yourself adequately during the interview stage in particular. In this regard, I was wary of inadvertently jeopardising potential future employment opportunities or hindering my networking building capabilities with those who could possibly have some influence in the outcome of my career (Lukes 2005).

PAR provided a suitable framework in which to address these power dynamic challenges. PAR themed literature suggests ways in which to build trust with participants in the context of research collaboration. For example, it is typically recommended that you exchange information about yourself (as necessary), your own personal experiences and your intentions for the research to build trust with the participant(s).

Interestingly, this worked both ways. While I considered myself to be at a disadvantage, it was apparent that given the sensitivity of the topic that experienced academics were conscious of providing information in some cases. In this instance, my previous experience with handling sensitive situations and building trust with individuals and communities was vital (i.e. work and research based). Participants were notably eased when I had given some information from my previous work (youth work), as well as my academic (previous research) and activist (community-based fundraising) experiences. This created an air of reciprocity where participants would provide information of their own credentials to highlight their suitability for the research. This aided both the analytical approaches and findings of this research given the trust that was created with participants.

Having discovered a wider community who share and validate my experiences as an academic-activist, I have found my identity to be a strength rather than a weakness in most instances. Through engaging with other academic-activists at various career stages and of differing experience levels, it is apparent that your experience as an academic-activist in the current institutional environment holds certain similarities. While this can be mildly comforting, being an academic-activist and researching academic-activism means you understand the implications of identifying as such both in a literary and in a personal sense. Learning that academia is a challenging environment to navigate based

on its current structural issues and conditions (more so for those with marginalised identities) can be enlightening, but experiencing it first-hand can be discouraging.

I feel that most postgraduates are aware of the structural challenges within academia, but while I shared this awareness, I had to confront these issues firsthand, both personally and within the research itself. It often felt as though I had no respite from the harsh realities awaiting me in the next stages of my career. While journaling was somewhat helpful, I was not always consistent with it. Instead, I found myself engaging in deeper reflective thought where I considered the significance of my work and the potential benefits it could offer. In this process, I sought advice from my supervisors, not only for validation but to gain insight from their experiences. With the participants in mind, hearing from those who have long been engaged in academic-activism and continue to do so despite the challenges, proved invaluable. In line with the participatory action research (PAR) framework, this reflexive process enabled me to centre participants' voices, collaborate with them and co-create guidelines and recommendations to support academic-activism.

However, I found that my own personal identity gave strength to the project. Having explored the lived experiences of activism by participants, in particular the implications of involvement in social activism from a professional perspective, my own identity as a white, working-class precariously employed academic/PhD Researcher enabled me to provide valuable insight about Irish-based academic-activists.

Initially, I understood academic-activism as a straightforward premise: if you are a permanent academic, you are given the opportunity to exercise academic freedom via academic-activism. If you are a precariously employed academic, you are less likely to partake in academic-activism given restricted freedom and concerns for personal security (e.g. future employment opportunities). While the findings have reinforced this early assumption, I have since understood academic-activism as a much more complex activity. The findings from this study have shown that academic-activism is impacted by a number of factors: the political, social and economic environment, its influence on the institutional environment and the individual's identity, role and position within academia, level of support (within and outside of the institution) and the type of activism they seek to engage with. In summary, my research journey reflects the intersection between my personal identity and research exploration, underscoring how this interplay influenced

sampling strategies, trust-building and enriched the research process. Embracing my identity as a working-class, precariously employed academic offered unique insights that reinforced the project's depth and relevance.

The next section provides a summary and conclusion of the thesis.

8.6 Thesis Summary, Contribution to the Literature and Conclusion

The key contributions of this thesis are the development and validation of a reliable tool for measuring academic-activism which can be modified or replicated in future studies (see Appendix M) and; the creation of best practice guidelines and recommendations to support academic-activist work. These guidelines and recommendations not only address the personal and institutional barriers faced by academic-activists, but also propose ways for academia to become more accessible, supportive and public-facing to benefit both academic work and efforts to deliver meaningful social change. Through a holistic and well-considered approach to their implementation, the guidelines and recommendations can potentially make academia an environment which has tangible benefits for academic-activist work. In this regard, academics concerned with promoting positive social change can have greater opportunities to make wider-reaching, meaningful and impactful developments within society.

In addition, this study also refines the concept of academic-activism. The original broad definition (which was developed for recruitment purposes, see Appendix B) evolved through participant insights, revealing academic-activism as a fluid and flexible role that transcends institutions as a form of public intellectualism in order to influence positive social change for voices that need to be amplified within society. Yet, constraints endure as a result of individual positionality and inconsistent institutional recognition, which hinder academics from realising their transformative potential as public intellectuals outside of academia on a more consistent basis. This final section will further outline these contributions through a summary of the major findings of the thesis. This section is organised relevant to the research questions and aims which guided the research.

No such study relating to academic-activism has previously been carried out within the Irish academic context, nor studies which explore the impact of the external environments (social, political, institutional, etc.) on academic-activists. Research focused on academic-activism predominantly focuses on the personal experiences of academic-activists in narrative form and rarely present insights which consider the interplay between a variety

of different systems and environments that can impact academic-activism or academic work. Thus, this exploratory study provides key insight into a relatively unstudied sample of Irish activist-academics, offering a novel contribution to the global literature related to academic-activism and academic freedom.

Through a mixed-method research approach within Study One and a qualitatively driven Study Two, the personal insights offered by academic-activist participants have addressed the three main research questions and aims: (i) how do academics' identification with gender, class and race, collegiate engagement, and perceptions of the political, institutional and social environment relate to their experiences as an academic-activist?; (ii) what are the motivations and barriers for academics who engage in activism, and how do these factors vary across different academic roles and types of activism?; (iii) how do the findings of Study One and Study Two inform guidelines that influence social change in areas of academic practice to support academic-activists?

Study One's sample size perhaps limited the conclusive results regarding the influence of the individual's identity with race and contract type. However, it was evident on the basis of the findings that an individual's identity with gender and class impacted their experience as an academic-activist. In the case of gender, it was largely shown that women scored tended to score higher than men in each of the academic-activist scales. This highlighted the impact of external environments on women academic-activists in comparison to men. In the case of class, it was shown that those identifying with working-class and lower SES backgrounds felt that the institutional environment was more restrictive of their academic-activism in comparison to middle-class colleagues.

The qualitative content analysis, which was conducted on the open-ended survey responses as part of Study One, highlighted how an individual's perceptions of the political, institutional and social environment impacts their experiences as an academic-activist. This gave initial insight into the motivations individual's had regarding their academic work which was generally understood through using your privileged position to bring academic expertise into the public sphere for the betterment of society. However, as was shown in the qualitative content analysis, this was often difficult to realise given the wide-range of barriers to academic-activism which were understood through institutional attitudes towards academic-activist, altering social contexts and perceptions,

as well as an individual's personal circumstances (e.g. academic contract, family commitments, etc.).

The qualitative content analysis provided the basis to further explore the apparent motivations and barriers for academics who engage in activism, and how these factors vary across different academic roles and types of activism (i.e. Study Two's interviews with academic-activists). The interviews further highlighted the influence of external environments on the development of the individual academic-activist over time. The participants' motivations for activism were often related to their own sociopolitical identity whereby their activist work was the result of growing up in socially conscious households or witnessing/experiencing discrimination and inequality first-hand. Where this was not the case, privileged academics cited a later realisation of social injustices that fuelled their journey into activism.

However, the barriers and challenges facing academic-activists provided complications for enacting consistent and meaningful impact with their activist endeavours. Academic-activist participants further detailed the impact of institutional attitudes towards activism and how this has limited the opportunity for participants to bring their academic work into communities. This was noticeably worsened by the individual's contract type and overall positionality within the current institutional environment given an increased sense of restricted academic freedom among this cohort as a result.

This was considered to be a great source of frustration for academics, particularly for those from disadvantaged or marginalised backgrounds who felt that institutions can co-opt and reappropriate activism to suit particular agendas or to enhance their reputation. Participants found that institutions tend to take advantage of this within altering social contexts and attitudes in order to appear on the right side of current social discourses and narratives. Regardless, the reality facing academic-activists is that within an institutional environment that glorifies overwork and espouses neoliberal ideals of competition, individualism, entrepreneurialism, commodification and marketisation; activist values are broadly misplaced.

To combat the impact of current neoliberal narratives within institutions, academic-activists have cited the importance of being able to balance the dual role of academic and activism. This often involves personal sacrifices, being able to adjust your behaviour dependent on the type of context and learning how to navigate the complexity of the

current institutional climate (such as through the use of academic-activist role models in your immediate networks). In further combatting these barriers to meet your own activist motivations and intentions, participants noted the importance of building diverse support networks both inside and outside of academia. This was considered key to sustaining academic-activist work and reducing the personal impact of burnout and isolation which were common amongst this participant group.

In conclusion, this study highlights the potential of academic-activism as a powerful force for change in society and provides valuable insights into the ways in which academic-activists can effectively navigate the complex landscape of academia and activism to make a meaningful impact in the communities they seek to represent and support. In the current socioeconomic climate, it is somewhat understandable that academia takes a reserved position on activism in favour of promoting its business interests. On the whole, there is a community of Irish-based academic-activists who are struggling to navigate the institutional environment. It is evident that there needs to be a reimagining of the purpose and/or role of academic work and how it can benefit wider society. Extreme actions (i.e. complete ideological shifts) may not be necessary. Instead, academia could focus on alleviating barriers to activism through: lessening workloads, reassessing responsibilities, ending precarity, providing adequate time and space for activism and finding ways to promote or incentivise academic-activism. On the evidence of this participant group, this is not currently being done in a manner that would have universal benefits for a wide range of academic-activists. Ultimately, this reduces the potential impact academic work can have on wider society and reinforces the ideal of academia as an ivory tower.

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Appendices

A: Copy of Survey

B: Advertisement of Survey (Poster and Email)

C: Survey Project Information and Informed Consent

D: Codebook for Survey

E: Survey Ethical Approval

F: Coding Framework for Qualitative Content Analysis

G: Development, Reliability and Validity of Sub-Scales Process (SPSS)

H: Interview Guide

I: Interview Project Information and Informed Consent

J: Example of Steps in the Reflexive Thematic Analysis

K: Interview Ethical Approval

L: Interview Recruitment Email

M: Final Scale Items

Appendix A: Copy of Survey

Appendix A presents the online survey items. For the demographic information, participants were provided with tick box options to indicate their response. For the items relating to the thematic areas, a Likert scale was utilised where Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree were the options. Appendix D provides more detail on response options.

Participant Demographics

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Race
4. What socioeconomic classification do you identify with?
5. What is your highest level of award?
6. Current role (job title)
7. Length of time worked in academia
8. Type of Contract (e.g. Permanent, Fixed Term, No Formal Contract, etc.)
Alternatively, you can write 'I do not wish to answer'
9. Marital Status
10. Children
11. Childcare is a relevant part of my life at present (Likert Scale)
12. Parental/Maternity/Paternity/Adoption leave is a relevant part of my life at present
(Likert Scale)

Political, economic and social environments

This section of the survey is about the current neoliberal climate and its impact on academia. Indicate your response by selecting 1 of the options available. The last question in this section is open-ended. You are asked to make a brief comment in response.

13. A system of meritocracy provides fair and equal opportunity to all
14. Neoliberal ideology impacts the academic environment
15. Academia is predicated on middle class values
16. Higher educational institutes are adequately supported through public funding.
17. Public funding determines my area of research/academic freedom
18. Coronavirus legislation has had a negative impact on my employment

19. Precarious employment is common in academia
20. Generally speaking, I am impacted by precarity in academia
21. My contract type determines my academic freedom
22. At my institute, all academic staff have equitable access to avail of research opportunities
23. At my institute, all academic staff have the opportunity to disseminate their research in traditional forms of publication
24. There is a need in Ireland to develop a continuing dialogue with left- leaning groups (organised activists, academics, trade unions, etc.)
25. There is a need in Ireland to develop a space in academia to challenge wider economic policy
26. Broadly speaking, the current working academic environment is competitive *
27. Broadly speaking, the current working academic environment encourages individualism *
28. What do you see as the role of an academic within the context of political, economic and social environments? (open-ended question)

Institutional Environment

This section of the survey is about the current institutional environment, institutional practices and management. Indicate your response by selecting 1 of the options available. The last question in this section is open-ended. You are asked to make a brief comment in response.

29. There is a need to develop a space in academia to challenge wider institutional strategy/policy
30. Generally speaking, my institute is concerned with financial gain
31. Publications and citations influence career progression
32. Performance-based research is more valuable to my institute than public facing research
33. My institute encourages diverse research that appeals to different audiences and disciplines
34. Institutional demands limit my academic freedom
35. My institute is concerned with the employability of students

36. At my institute, securing external funding is a higher priority than teaching/supporting students.
37. My academic freedom is restricted by my teaching workload.
38. Generally speaking, my line manager encourages academic freedom (i.e. pursuit of research in area of interest, diverse teaching methods)
39. My line manager effectively manages my workload
40. I am adequately commended for any work conducted 'out of hours'
41. My colleagues and I share similar values and beliefs
42. My relationship with colleagues determines what type of research I pursue
43. My colleagues are supportive of my research
44. In the current institutional environment, does activism have a role in the academy?
(Alternatively, you can write 'I do not wish to answer') (open-ended question)

Individual

This section of the survey is about the individual academic and academic-activism in the current environment. Indicate your response by selecting 1 of the options available. The last question in this section is open-ended. You are asked to make a brief comment in response.

45. Generally speaking, my working experience in academia has been positive
46. I find it easy to maintain work relationships in academia
47. Generally speaking, I feel that I need to 'out-work' others
48. Academics should be encouraged to pursue research projects that involved matters of social justice
49. My area of interest is a reflection of my background (gender, class, race, etc.)
50. I identify as an activist
51. I am currently engaged in projects that can be considered activism
52. Engaging in activism would damage my academic career
53. Engaging in activism has hindered my career progression
54. My gender impacts how I am treated in academia
55. My socioeconomic background impacts how I am treated in academia
56. My race impacts how I am treated in academia

57. What 'type' of activism are you engaged in? If so, how do you normally disseminate/perform this activism?(Alternatively, you can write 'I do not wish to answer') (open-ended).

Final Question

Would you be interested in participating in an interview to further discuss your experiences of activism in academia?

If yes, please email me separately – jordan.kirwan@postgrad.wit.ie Thank you for your participation in this survey.

Appendix B: Advertisement of Survey (Poster and Email)

Appendix B presents the poster which was advertised on the researcher's and supervisory team's social media accounts and the email which was sent to participants who did not voluntarily their participation following the submission of their survey response. In addition, Appendix B presents the email sent to participants who did voluntary participation following the survey submission.

Poster:

@JordanKirwan3:

Do you identify as an academic-activist? We wish to speak to participants currently employed in academia who have experience in academic-activism or are currently engaged in an activity/research that can be considered activism.

Academic-activism can be a means for actively promoting social change through your writing, research, teaching, rallying or protesting so as to promote social change. If this is you, please fill out the survey attached below!

Check out the attached image for more info!

<https://forms.office.com/r/sfBHR1B7bM>



Triumphs and tribulations: understanding academia as a site for social activism

Purpose of the study: The main purpose of this study is to provide a novel understanding of academia as a site for activism in Ireland through exploring the experiences of permanent and precarious academic-activists at varying career stages based on the intersections of gender, class and race.

Participants: All participants must be 18+ and currently working in academia and engaging in an activity that they consider to be activism.

Participants of varying career stages and experience levels will be included. Participants may be:
Early-career researchers (To include: PhD researchers and Post-doc)
Lecturers (Assistant Lecturers, Lecturers and Senior Lecturers)
Professors (Associate and Full Professors)

They may be in full time, part time, casual or hourly paid posts.

The Survey: For the survey study, you are being asked to complete a survey that is estimated to take 10-15 minutes. The Microsoft forms survey will be shared with you via an emailed link, and your responses will be anonymously recorded then imported to WIT's GDPR compliant OneDrive facility. No identifying information (e.g., your name, employer, etc.) will be asked for or recorded.

The Researcher: Jordan Kirwan (jordan.kirwan@postgrad.wit.ie) is a PhD researcher at Waterford Institute of Technology under the supervision of Dr Jennifer O'Mahoney and Dr Lorraine Bowman-Grieve. This research aims to consider a framework from which to understand the benefits and pitfalls of activist academia, and develop recommendations for ALL academics engaging in activism.

Email:

Dear [researcher/research group],

Apologies for reaching out to you directly and if you have already come across this survey.

I am a PhD Researcher based in Waterford Institute of Technology. At present, I'm researching academic-activism in Ireland and thought you might be interested in participating in my survey (which takes about 10-15 mins).

I have contacted you today based on your [type of work/experience]. I think your involvement in [type of work/experience] can be considered academic-activism, so it would be great to have you as participant(s).

I will link the survey here and more information on the research below. You are welcome to circulate where relevant:

<https://forms.office.com/r/sfBHr1B7bM>

Kind regards,

Jordan Kirwan.

Appendix C: Survey Project Information and Informed Consent

Project Information

Title of Study: Triumphs and tribulations: Understanding academia as a site for activism

Jordan Kirwan (Project Researcher): jordan.kirwan@postgrad.wit.ie

Dr Jennifer O'Mahoney (Research Supervisor): jomahoney@wit.ie

Dr Lorraine Bowman Grieve (Research Supervisor): lbowmangrieve@wit.ie

This information statement is for your own records. It is recommended that you read the document fully.

My name is Jordan Kirwan, and I am a postgraduate researcher from Waterford Institute of Technology. You are being asked to participate in an academic research project (for the award of PhD). For this project, I am carrying out a study which intends to explore and understand academia as a site for social activism. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the experiences of academics who engage in social activism in their personal and/or professional lives, and the implications of this activity in academia. The main purpose of this study is to provide a novel understanding of academia as a site for activism in Ireland by investigating and exploring the experiences of permanent and precarious academic-activists at varying career stages based on the intersections of gender, class and race. In doing so, this study will consider the relevance of the current neoliberal climate, its impact on the institutional environment and how these influence academic-activism.

As part of this overall project, you are invited to participate in a survey study which consists of questions that will help to establish a framework of academics' experiences who engage with social activism. At the end of the survey, you will be asked to consider participating in a voluntary semi-structured interview study. The researcher's contact details will be provided if you wish to take part in an interview. Given the unprecedented circumstances at hand, interviews will take place online (via Zoom).

For the survey study, you are being asked to complete a survey that is estimated to take 10-15 minutes. Your responses will be anonymously recorded then imported to WIT's GDPR compliant OneDrive facility. No identifying information (e.g., your name, employer, etc.) will be asked for or recorded. If any identifying information is included in the open-text responses on the survey, they will be de-identified and pseudonyms

assigned to names or locations to protect participants' rights to privacy, anonymity and professional reputation. Participants can choose to save or print their answers once the survey is completed/submitted.

Participants can request for the deletion of the collected data within 6 months of their submission. This signals to the use of the unique identifier present in the survey. If participants choose a unique identifier, known only to the participant, their submission can be retrieved from the grouped data and be adequately deleted. Participants will have the opportunity to review their responses and rectify any incorrectly entered information/responses.

Statements and open-ended questions in the survey will be thematically categorised under 3 main themes: 'political, economic and social environments', 'institutional environment' and 'individual'. Under these themes, the content of the statements are relative to neoliberal ideology/policy, the current academic environment and the impact of the previously mentioned themes on the individual academic. Under each theme, there will be an additional open-ended question. If you do not wish to answer this question, it is advised that you type 'I do not wish to answer'.

All copies of records and files, physical and digital, will be securely stored in accordance with data protection policy. Access to these files is restricted to the project researcher, and research supervisors, Dr Jennifer O'Mahoney and Dr Lorraine Bowman-Grieve. Contact me at jordan.kirwan@postgrad.wit.ie with any further queries.

Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a postgraduate research project being conducted by Jordan Kirwan, a WIT PhD student. The purpose of this research is to develop a novel understanding of academia as a site for social activism.

It is advised that you read this form and other correspondence carefully and ask any questions that you may have about the project before the survey begins.

Your participation is on a strictly voluntary basis and you may withdraw your data from the project within 6 months of the date of your survey submission. As it is intended to group together survey data together for analysis, WIT's Data Protection Policy under Subject Access Requests indicates that such requests can be denied if they 'breach the rights of someone else' or 'the identity of the requester cannot be determined'. In this

instance, a ‘forced answer’ text box will be provided at the beginning of the survey so participants can choose a unique identifier so that their submission can be identified at any point and safely removed. This unique identifier should be known only to you to protect your privacy.

For the project, you are invited to participate in survey that will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. The survey will be based on questions devised from existing literature and are relevant to the matter of activism in the academy. The survey intends to assess the relationships of academic-activists with their respective line managers, colleagues/peers and formal networks within the context of neoliberalism, wider society and the institutional environment relative to their demographic profile and their personal values/beliefs. The ‘Final Question’ at the end of the survey will provide details (researcher’s contract details) for how respondents can volunteer to be a part of a follow-up study which will involve a semi-structured interview. Given current restrictions and guidelines due to coronavirus, follow-up interviews will be conducted online (via Zoom). Any academic with experience in social activism is encouraged to volunteer and take part in the succeeding study having completed the survey.

Responses will be collected and collated via WIT’s password protected and GDPR compliant OneDrive. Your responses will be completely anonymous and will be collated and analysed with other participants’ responses.

All information will be protected as far as is reasonably practicable. Confidentiality, privacy and professional reputation are of the utmost importance, and will be protected using secure methods of data protection and security within the project. Under the Data Protection Act 2018, GDPR regulations and WIT’s Data Protection Policy 2019, you are awarded a number of rights for your own personnel and professional protection. Research data will be maintained for a period of 10 years so as to allow for sufficient time to analyse and write up subsequent data, as well as the possibility for data to be tracked before its destruction. Survey data collected through Microsoft Forms will be deleted after one month (live period) in line with standard practice.

The benefits to participating include being able to assist in the generating of theoretical knowledge and contributing to existing research studies of a similar focus. Your experiences as an academic-activist are seen as a vital part of this study. Any level of

contribution you provide is viewed as an integral part of developing an understanding of academia as a site for social activism.

Note: Participants indicated their consent through a tick box option following the informed consent document included within the online survey.

Appendix D: Codebook for Survey

Appendix D presents the coding instructions for the demographic items which is followed by coding instructions for the Likert scale items.

1. Demographics Coding Instructions

Gender
Prefer not to say = 0
Woman = 1
Man = 2
Nonbinary = 3

Age
Prefer not to say = 0
18-24 = 1
25-34 = 2
35-44 = 3
45-54 = 4
55-64 = 5
65+ = 6

Race
Prefer not to say = 0
White Irish = 1
Any other white background = 2
Any other ethnic background = 3

Class
Prefer not to say = 0
Upper Class = 1
Upper Middle Class = 2
Middle Class = 3
Working Class = 4
Lower WC = 5

Level of award
PhD = 1
MA = 2
HDip = 3
Hons = 4
Ord = 5

Current Role
PhD Researchers/Postgrad workers = 1
Teacher/Teaching Fellows = 2
Lecturer (Asst, Senior, etc.) = 3
Professors (Associate, Full, etc.) = 4
Researchers (Fellows, Postdoc, Officer, etc.) = 5
Tutors (Senior, etc.) = 6
Head of Department = 7
Administration (e.g. Educational Developer) = 8
Other (e.g. Project Worker, Health Care Asst) = 9

Time worked (years)
1-2 = 1
3-5 = 2
6-10 = 3
11-20 = 4
21-40 = 5
40+ = 6

Contract Type
Permanent = 1
Fixed Term = 2
No formal, casual, hourly paid = 3
PhD Scholarship/Funding = 4
Rolling = 5
Post-retirement (still teaching) = 6
Adjunct = 7

Marital status	Children
Married = 1	
Divorced = 2	
Single = 3	Prefer not to say = 0
Separated = 4	Yes = 1
Co-habiting/living = 5	No = 2
Long-term/Engaged = 6	
Unmarried = 7	

Childcare is relevant to me
0 = Prefer not to say
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree

Parental/maternity/paternity/adoption leave is relevant to me
0 = Prefer not to say
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree

2. Survey Statements

BEPSWE (Broader economic, policy and social wider environments)
0 = Prefer not to say
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree

IE (Institutional environment)
0 = Prefer not to say
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree

IND (Individual Academic-Activist)
0 = Prefer not to say
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree

(Open ended statements not included as these are undergoing a separate content analysis which informed the interview guide)

Appendix E: Survey Ethical Approval

Appendix E presents a copy of the approval letter received by the Waterford Institute of Technology (now South East Technological University) on the 31st March, 2021.



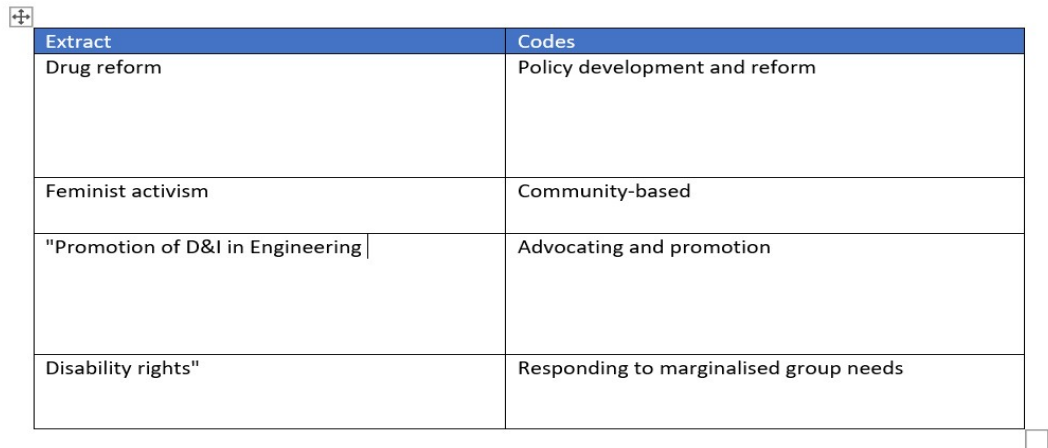
Appendix F: Coding Framework for Qualitative Content Analysis

Appendix F provides the coding framework utilised in the qualitative content analysis. A worked example of this is provided in Chapter 5, Study One Analysis and Discussion. This framework is provided in Erlingsson’s and Brysciewics’s (2017) supplementary material for researchers engaging in qualitative content analysis. Researchers begin by copy and pasting extracts into the ‘meaning unit’ column before condensing the extract into a more concise version before coding. Codes are then collated to form categories and then themes:

Meaning Units (Extracts)	Condensed Meaning Unit	Codes	Category
I'm involved with a range of voluntary agencies working with disadvantaged young people. I work to support these agencies by doing free training work, helping develop policies etc, challenging practice to take more justice and rights perspectives. I'm involved with a loose group of activists/academics looking at creative ways to challenge neoliberalism.	Community involvement to aid/influence political issues.	Organising Policy development Challenging norms and structures Volunteering Outreach	Academic “influencers”: connecting academia and the outside world through activism
<i>(add more rows as needed)</i>			

As is shown in this example, some responses provided great depth and insight into the experiences of academic-activists. In this case, condensed meaning units were subject to numerous instances of coding. Where responses were brief and to-the-point, thus making them difficult to condense further, a more simplified version of this table was created to

directly code concise responses before forming categories and themes at a later stage in the analysis. The following screenshot is an example of this process and a cropped version of a lengthier table containing briefer responses. At a later stage in the analysis, these codes were reviewed and grouped together to form categories. Hence, this screenshot reflects the preliminary coding stages:



Extract	Codes
Drug reform	Policy development and reform
Feminist activism	Community-based
"Promotion of D&I in Engineering	Advocating and promotion
Disability rights"	Responding to marginalised group needs

Appendix G: Development, Reliability and Validity of Sub-Scales Process (SPSS)

In Appendix G, a display of SPSS charts will be presented to show the developmental process, validity, and reliability of the sub-scales used in this study. This appendix serves as a supplement to Chapter 4, Study One Methodology and Chapter 5, Study One Analysis and Discussion, providing a detailed account of the procedures outlined in the aforementioned chapters. The charts included in this appendix will outline the specific items that were selected, retained, and analysed, shedding light on the rigorous process undertaken to establish the robustness and consistency of the sub-scales employed in this research. This section begins by presenting the development of the social and political environment sub-scale, then the institutional culture and restrictions sub-scale before moving onto the activist motivations sub-scale.

(i) The Social and Political Environment Sub-Scale:

Mean scores were calculated for each item to examine participant agreement.

Statistics															
	BEPSWE1	BEPSWE2	BEPSWE3	BEPSWE4	BEPSWE5	BEPSWE6	BEPSWE7	BEPSWE8	BEPSWE9	BEPSWE10	BEPSWE11	BEPSWE12	BEPSWE13	BEPSWE14	BEPSWE15
Mean	2.2041	4.4762	3.9388	1.7075	3.3946	2.9252	4.7211	3.4218	3.7551	2.0476	3.2109	4.1905	4.5170	4.4218	3.8299

Items showing higher participant agreement were retained (i.e. above 3) to assess internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha). Initially, items BEPSWE 1, 4, 5, 6, 10 and 11 were discarded as these have the lowest levels of agreement. As such, items BEPSWE 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14 and 15 were retained which gave an acceptable level of internal consistency with Cronbach's of 0.657. These items were retained for the EFA. However, while the items were suitable for factor analysis, they loaded onto 3 factors instead of 1. Therefore, based on their low or negative factor loadings with 'Component 1', items BEPSWE 8, 9 and 14 were discarded (shown below).

Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component		
	1	2	3
BEPSWE2	.843	-.045	.144
BEPSWE3	.661	-.194	.104
BEPSWE7	.561	.386	.216
BEPSWE8	.038	.739	.053
BEPSWE9	.055	.752	-.023
BEPSWE12	.735	.343	-.067
BEPSWE13	.556	.382	.054
BEPSWE14	-.058	.004	.883
BEPSWE15	.312	.052	.647

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.^a

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

Thus, items BEPSWE 2, 3, 7, 12, 13 and 15 were retained and underwent a further exploratory factor analysis to ensure the items loaded onto 1 factor. As reported in Chapter 5, Study One Analysis and Discussion, the retained items loaded onto 1 factor and underwent a further reliability to test to ensure internal consistency of the retained items.

(ii) Institutional Culture and Restrictions Sub-Scale:

Similar to the above, mean scores were calculated for each item.

Statistics															
	IE1	IE2	IE3	IE4	IE5	IE6	IE7	IE8	IE9	IE10	IE11	IE12	IE13	IE14	IE15
Mean	4.5034	4.3469	4.4830	3.5986	3.2517	3.4762	3.9320	3.6735	3.5714	3.6531	2.8163	2.1429	3.3605	2.7075	3.7415

Items indicating high agreement were retained for the initial reliability test. Therefore, items IE 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 were retained. However, these items yielded an unacceptable Cronbach's score of 0.548. Thus, further revision was needed before conducting an EFA through examining of correlation scores and overall coherence. As such, items IE 1, 2, 4, 6, 8 and 9 were retained for the EFA . Although some items, in

particular, item IE4 showed low correlations (less than 0.2), it was expected that this would be eventually discarded following validity testing.

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix

	IE1	IE2	IE4	IE6	IE8	IE9
IE1	1.000	.350	.157	.198	.209	.153
IE2	.350	1.000	.169	.296	.454	.309
IE4	.157	.169	1.000	.177	.188	.156
IE6	.198	.296	.177	1.000	.315	.381
IE8	.209	.454	.188	.315	1.000	.161
IE9	.153	.309	.156	.381	.161	1.000

Having not successfully loaded onto 1 factor, item IE 4 was discarded. A further EFA was run on retained items IE 1, 2, 6, 8 and 9. These retained items successfully loaded onto 1 factor with an acceptable Cronbach's score of 0.648 as reported in Chapter 5.

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.150	42.992	42.992	2.150	42.992	42.992
2	.939	18.780	61.771			
3	.803	16.064	77.835			
4	.640	12.793	90.628			
5	.469	9.372	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

(iii) **Activist Motivations Sub-Scale:**

Mean scores were calculated for each item to examine participant agreement.

Statistics												
	IND1	IND2	IND3	IND4	IND5	IND6	IND7	IND8	IND9	IND10	IND11	IND12
Mean	3.4354	3.4830	3.1429	4.4014	3.8163	3.7279	3.8435	2.8776	2.6054	3.7075	3.4490	3.2449

Following the calculation of mean scores, items IND 1, 2, 8 and 9 were discarded given low participant agreement. Thus, items IND 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11 and 12, which yielded an

acceptable Cronbach's alpha score of .760, were retained for an EFA. However, the retained items loaded onto 2 factors as shown in the rotated component matrix.

Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component	
	1	2
IND3	.277	.218
IND4	.693	.108
IND5	.703	-.009
IND6	.836	.248
IND7	.806	.251
IND10	.118	.784
IND11	.198	.786
IND12	.108	.746

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.^a

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Upon inspection of the factor loadings with 'component 1', items IND 3, 10, 11 and 12 were discarded. The retained items IND 4, 5, 6 and 7 underwent a further EFA. These items displayed simple structure and loaded onto 1 factor and yielded an acceptable Cronbach's alpha score as reported within Chapter 5.

Appendix H: Interview Guide

Pre-interview question and statement:

Before beginning the interview, it must be ensured that you are not currently experiencing any form of distress in relation to your work. At present, are you experiencing levels of high stress or emotional stress as a direct result of your employment? If the answer is No, we can proceed with the interview.

If you change your mind at any stage in the interview, or feel that some questions are causing you to feel anxious/stressed, you can request to pause the interview or stop it entirely.

Theme 1: (Social and Political Environment)

Q1. What does it mean to you to be an academic-activist?

Prompts: Does the current environment impact this perspective/your experience? E.g. in relation to neoliberalism/contracts/funding/precarity impact this, if so, how?

Q2. Do you feel you can influence change within the academy and in wider society through activism?

Prompts: How can this be achieved for all academics (from ECR's to experienced academics)?

Theme 2: (Institutional Environment)

Q3. A survey response stated that there is a “tricky line” between academic work and activist commitments. Would you agree with this assessment? Why/Why not?

Prompts: In your own opinion, what causes this tension between activism and academia?

Is the crossover between activism and academia ‘less tricky’ for some than it is others?

Q4. Similarly, a separate survey response stated: “I do not believe that the current academic career path recognises or allows for activism.” How can HEI's encourage academic-activism and academic freedom in a way that aids career progression for all academics?

Prompts: Incentivisation from line managers, funders, etc.? Supporting a culture of research networks/clusters within the academy to provide a space for activism? Protection and support of individual academic-activists? Is this something that is already encouraged in a broad sense?

Theme 3: (Individual Academic-Activist)

Q5. In what ways do you identify as an activist?

Prompts: How did you come to this activist stance (e.g. background, education, values & beliefs, relatability & empathy with population of interest, etc.)

Q6. What are the benefits/pitfalls to being an academic-activist?

Prompts: How do you keep going as an academic-activist?

In your opinion, are positive experiences of academic-activism reliant on more secure contracts, identity, ‘institutionally approved’ academic-activism (widely accepted research topics, e.g. LGBTQI+, environmental studies, areas of gender studies) etc.?

Do you find there are any negative connotations that come with being an academic-activist? ‘Trouble-making’, career progression, etc. Does this stop academics from being able to identify as an academic-activist?

Final Question:

If you could offer one piece of advice or insight to other academic-activists, what would it be?

Appendix I: Interview Project Information and Informed Consent

Appendix I first presents the project information sheet for the interview study followed by the informed consent form.

- (i) Project Information:

PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: Triumphs and tribulations: exploring academia as a site for social activism

You are being asked to participate in an academic research project (for the award of PhD). For this project, I am carrying out a study which intends to explore and understand academia as a site for social activism. This information sheet will inform you about the study.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to investigate the experiences of Irish-based academics who engage in social activism in their personal and/or professional lives, and the implications of this activity in academia. The main purpose of this study is to provide a novel understanding of academia as a site for activism in Ireland by investigating and exploring the experiences of permanent and precarious academic-activists at varying career stages based on the intersections of gender, class and race.

Who will be involved in the study?

Academics currently employed in Ireland, at varying career stages, who have experience in social activism.

What will I have to do?

This study involves conducting semi-structured interviews online. An individual interview will take place and be recorded via Zoom. The interview will last approximately 30-40 minutes. Questions in the interview have been informed by the findings of a previous study (online survey) as part of this PhD project.

What are the benefits?

It is anticipated that the findings of this study will aid in the development of guidelines that will aid future academic practice in this area. The benefits to participating include being able to assist in the generating of theoretical knowledge and contributing to existing research studies of a similar focus. Your experiences as an academic-activist are seen as a vital part of this study. Any level of contribution you provide is viewed as an integral part of developing an understanding of academia as a site for social activism.

What are the risks?

You might decide that you do not want to answer a question. If this happens, you do not have to answer any question that you do not wish to answer. Additionally, you will be asked before the interview if you are ok to proceed (See: Interview Guide).

What if I do not want to take part?

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose not to take part and you are free to withdraw prior to, during and up to specified times (6 months from interview date) after participation in the study without any negative repercussions, and without having to give a reason. You will be asked to give your consent for your data to be included in the research at the time of your interview and again when you receive the transcript of your interview to review. At this point, you will be asked to make any changes you deem necessary, and consider whether you are still willing to have your data included. This must be completed within 2 weeks of receiving your transcript. Once you have approved your transcript and re-iterated your consent, the data will be analysed. The original transcript will be immediately deleted after receiving the reviewed transcript. If there is no response within the 2-week timeframe, the original transcript will be used in the data analysis.

What happens to the information?

All data resulting from the study will be confidentially utilised in a way that protects the anonymity of participants using a GDPR compliant WIT OneDrive. All records and data relating to the research will be securely stored and available only to the researcher and supervisory team. The audio recordings from the interviews will be destroyed on completion of the transcription process (after 14 days). Pseudonyms will be used for interviewees and any identifying information will not be present in the final research. Research data (transcripts) will be maintained for a period of 10 years so as to allow for sufficient time to analyse and write up subsequent data, as well as the possibility for data to be tracked before its destruction. The data obtained from this research will be included in the final thesis, in any related articles, and at relevant conferences. In all cases, participant's identities and any confidential information will be protected.

What if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely event that something goes wrong during the interview, the interview will be stopped and the researcher will establish with you whether you wish to proceed or withdraw from the interview. Furthermore, participants should not disclose/suggest that they are involved in illegal activism, as this will result in the immediate cessation of the interview and withdrawal of the data from the study. If any such activity is disclosed during the interviews, it will be reported to the relevant authorities (An Garda Siochana).

Who has reviewed this study?

This project has been reviewed by the appropriate ethical review body at the Waterford Institute of Technology and has been deemed ethically acceptable.

What if I have more questions or do not understand something?

If you require further information about this study and the interview process, you may contact either the Researcher or the Research Supervisor:

Researcher:

Name: Jordan Kirwan

WIT Student Email: jordan.kirwan@postgrad.wit.ie

Research Supervisors:

Name: Jennifer O'Mahoney

WIT Email: jomahoney@wit.ie

Name: Lorraine Bowman-Grieve

WIT Email : lbowmangrieve@wit.ie

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. I would be grateful if you would consider participating in this study.

(ii) Informed Consent:

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Triumphs and tribulations: exploring academia as a site for social activism

Should you agree to participate in this study please read the statements below and if you agree to them, please sign the participant consent form.

- I have read and understood the participant information sheet for this study.
- I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary.
- I understand what the project is about, and what the results will be used for.
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions relating to the study.
- I understand that the findings from this study may be shared with others and that I will not be named or in any way identified in any of the research findings.
- I understand that interview data and contact details will be stored on a confidential database (WIT OneDrive)
- I am aware of what I will have to do as a participant in the study, and of the benefits and risks of the study.
- I am aware that my participation in this study will be audio/video-recorded via Zoom. However, if I feel uncomfortable at any time I can ask for the recording to be stopped. I understand that I can ask for a copy of the recording. I understand what will happen to the recording once the study is finished.

After considering the above statements, I consent to my involvement in this research project.

Name: (please print): _____

Signature: _____

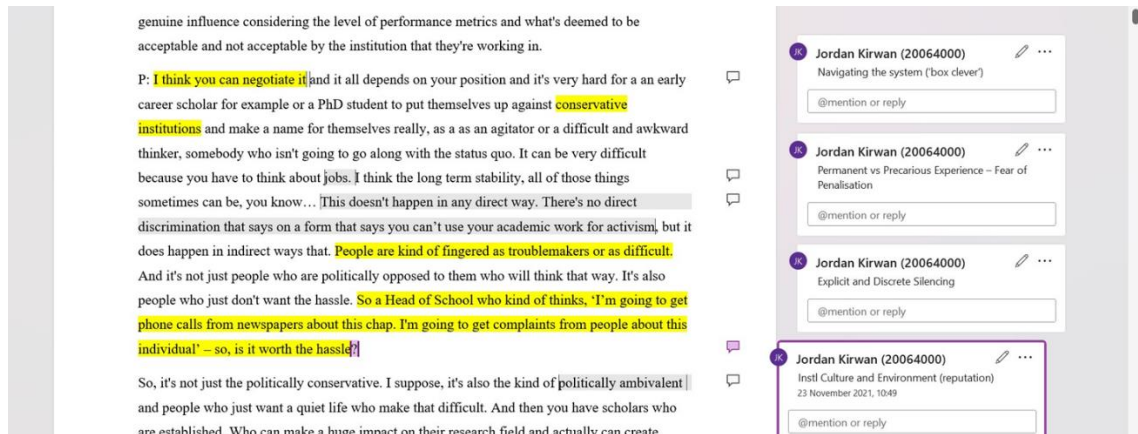
Date: _____

Researcher's Signature _____

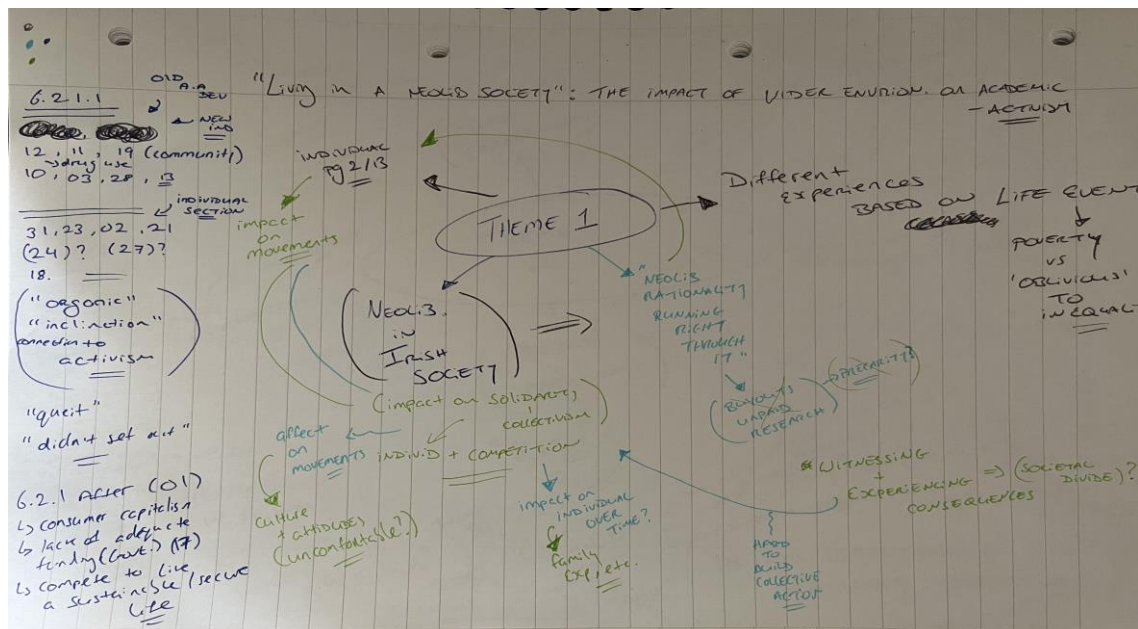
Date: _____

Appendix J: Example of Steps in the Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Appendix J provides worked examples of the reflexive thematic analysis process demonstrated in Chapter 6, Study Two Methodology. The first screenshot provides an example of the initial coding process that was conducted through the comments section on Microsoft Word. The coding process involved going line-by-line and assigning codes to phrases and longer expressions of text.

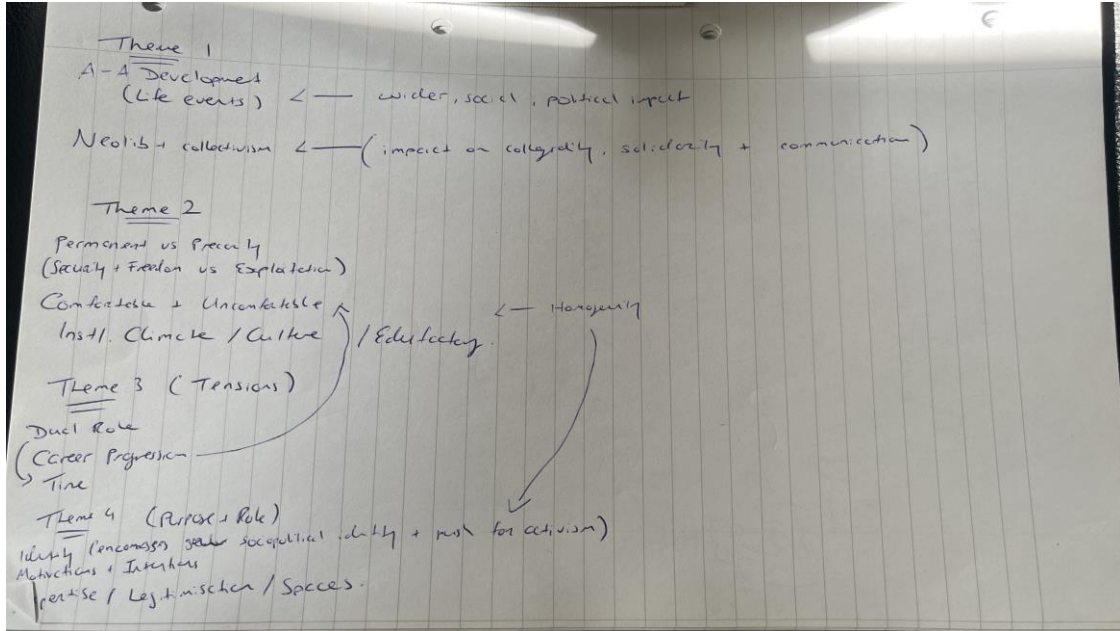


Following from this, the image below demonstrates a visual representation of the initial theme generation process where specific codes that embody thematic areas have been highlighted.



Lastly, the image below provides an example of the theme refining, defining and naming process. This image reflects early stage in this process where brief summary points (sub-themes) as to what the theme relates to is included underneath. This example also includes

the discarded theme ('Theme 4'), the Purpose and Role of Academic-Activism. As demonstrated here, there are early steps taken to highlight where areas of this theme can be utilised elsewhere within the analysis due to repetitiveness and overlapping with other themes (indicated by arrows).




Appendix K: Interview Ethical Approval

Appendix K presents a copy of the approval letter received by the Waterford Institute of Technology (now South East Technological University) on the 17th June, 2021.

Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Phort Láirge Waterford Institute of Technology

Port Láirge, Éire Waterford, Ireland
T: +353-51-302000 T: +353-51-302000
info@wit.ie www.wit.ie



Ref: WIT2021REC001

17th June 2021

Mr. Jordan Kirwan
PhD Student


Dear Jordan,

Thank you for bringing your project *'Triumphs and tribulations: Understanding academia as a site for activism'* to the attention of the WIT Research Ethics Committee which was desk reviewed in May 2021.

I am pleased to inform you that we fully approve WIT's participation in this project and we will convey this to Academic Council.

We wish you well in the work ahead.

Yours sincerely,



Prof. John Wells,
Chairperson,
Research Ethics Committee.

cc: Dr Jennifer O'Mahoney

Appendix L: Interview Recruitment Email

Appendix L presents sample emails which were forwarded to participants and potential participants prior to the interview study. The email sent to participants who indicated their interest following survey submission is presented first, then the email sent to participants who the supervisory team felt would be suited to participate in this study.

Participants who have e-mailed following survey submission to arrange interview date:

Dear [name],

Thank you for volunteering to participate in an interview as part of my PhD project and thank you for taking the time to complete my survey.

Below, I will attach: (i) Project Information Sheet (ii) Informed Consent Form and a (iii) Interview Guide/Schedule. It is asked that you read through these documents carefully and return a signed consent form before the interview.

What time and date is most suitable for you?

Kind regards,

Jordan Kirwan.

Participants who have been recruited based on their suitability to the project (non-survey):

Dear [name],

I am a PhD researcher currently carrying out research on academic-activism in the Irish context. Based on your current and previous work, both myself and my supervisors feel that your insights and experiences would be beneficial to the research. Would you be interested in taking part in an interview to discuss your experiences further?

I will attach a project information sheet and interview guide/schedule below for your convenience. If you would like to take part, we can arrange a suitable time and date.

Kind regards,

Jordan Kirwan.

[Will forward on informed consent to potential participants if they agree to participate].

Appendix M: Final Scale Items

Appendix M presents the final scale items developed in Study One which form the Academic-Activist Orientation Scale which can be utilised and tested in future studies:

The Academic-Activist Orientation Scale

The Social and Political Environment

Neoliberal ideology impacts the academic environment

Academia is predicated on middle class values

Precarious employment is common in academia

There is a need in Ireland to develop a continuing dialogue with left-leaning groups (organised activists, academics, trade unions, etc.)

There is a need in Ireland to develop a space in academia to challenge wider economic policy

Broadly speaking, the current working academic environment encourages individualism

Institutional Culture and Restrictions

There is a need to develop a space in academia to challenge wider institutional strategy/policy

Generally speaking, my institute is concerned with financial gain

Institutional demands limit my academic freedom

At my institute, securing external funding is a higher priority than teaching/supporting students

My academic freedom is restricted by my teaching workload

Academic-Activist Motivations

Academics should be encouraged to pursue research projects that involved matters of social justice

My area of interest is a reflection of my background (gender, class, race, etc.)

I identify as an activist

I am currently engaged in projects that can be considered activism
