

*Who do you think you are?*

*Differences between undergraduate and  
graduate identities in speech and language  
therapy*

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NOREEN O'LEARY: MSC CLINICAL EDUCATION, NUIG

RESEARCH SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR PETER CANTILLON, NUIG

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# Background

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- Historically, research in the health professions on preparedness for work has focused on the quality of graduates' clinical knowledge, skills and problem-solving.
- Such research ignores the role that professional identity formation plays in determining readiness for clinical practice and how this can be fostered during undergraduate training.
- As healthcare practice becomes increasingly complex and role boundaries increasingly diffuse, professional identity becomes ever more important.

# Study Outline

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## Sample

- Final year SLT students and new graduate SLTS (less than 18 months experience)

## Research Approach

- An exploratory, interpretivist approach

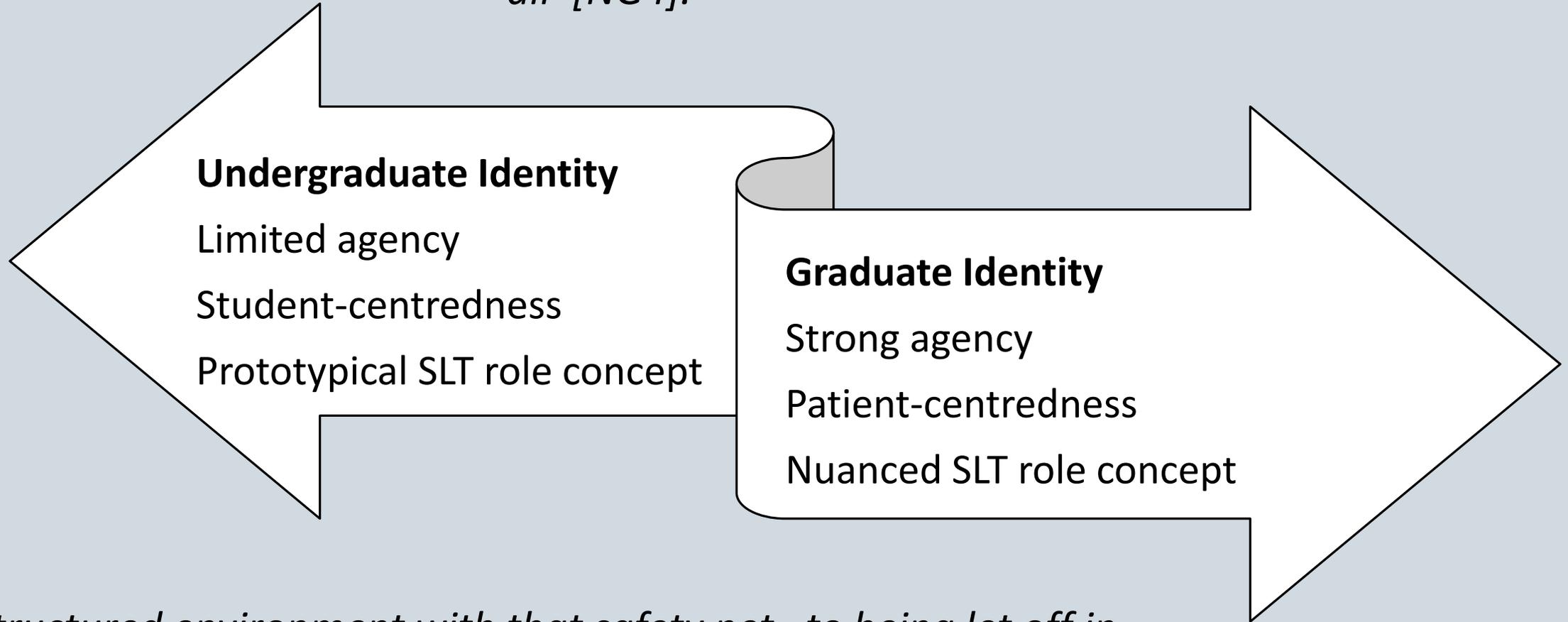
## Data Collection

- One-to-one semi-structured interviews

## Data Analysis

- Qualitative descriptive methodology: thematic analysis
- Findings interpreted using constructs of Figured Worlds

*'I enjoyed my placements but it's not the reality of working at all' [NG4].*



*'a structured environment with that safety net...to being let off in the big bad world' [NG1].*

# *From Limited Agency to Overwhelming Agency*

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*'I wasn't directly involved in goal setting [for the patient] but I thought maybe they're beyond this for their age and what's important' [S7].*

- Undergraduates' experiences of involvement in decision-making were peripheral at best. This undergraduate positions herself as having insight into what would be important to this patient, yet lacks the agency to give voice to this.

*'The massive jump of having to run every little thing by a supervisor in college to all of a sudden being **thrust** into doing everything' [NG7]*

- Graduates experienced a stark change in how they were positioned in terms of agency. Their acknowledged role in the workplace granted them considerable agency.

# *From Student-centredness to Patient-centredness*

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*'You might get to do a speech assessment or something but it's just for the sake of doing one' [S5].*

- Undergraduates perceived their participation on placements as assessment driven, The language *'or something'* suggests ambivalence and that undergraduates are aware their interventions may not be meaningful to patient management.

*'You're really trying to work for the benefit of patients in therapy' [NG2].*

- Graduates now self-author their identities as working primarily for the good of patients Investment in meaningful patient goals contrasted with some undergraduate accounts of not seeing meaning in interventions.

# *From Prototypical to Nuanced SLT roles*

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*'Supervisors pick out if there's such a thing straight forward presentations'*  
[NG7]

- Undergraduates are very much exposed to typical cases and activities of SLTs and participation is limited to prototypical roles

*'The role of SLT...it is to be all things to everyone sometimes'* [NG5].

- Upon entering the world of work, graduates were unprepared for the more nuanced identities that they needed to assume. This was exacerbated by the challenge of maintaining orthodox professional identities in the context of real clinical practice

# Bridging the Gap

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Greater involvement  
in decision making  
process

Involvement in  
complex and atypical  
cases

Exposure to all  
aspects of the role

*‘Why shouldn’t we do that on placement if we’re doing it in the real world?’[NG2].*

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Thank  
You