Crossing the Divide – Professional Transitions Within Higher Education

By

Ann Patey (FAUA, FHEA, MA)

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Abstract – Crossing the Divide – Professional Transitions within Higher Education

In any organisation people are crucial to its success and universities are no exception. The successful operation of an educational institution requires competent administrators working alongside the team of academics who are employed to deliver the teaching, to enable the learning, and to carry out important research activities. In all work situations groups of staff have to work together for the good of the organisation, but in higher education there are often fractious relationships between diverse communities of staff which can impact on their professional lives. For many years the boundaries between academia and administration have been blurring due to the changing nature of roles undertaken by university staff, and many administrators are now taking on aspects of work which were historically undertaken by academics.

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether there is an academic/administrative divide in universities in the United Kingdom, and if there is, how it operates, and to explore whether professional transitions are possible within the confines of structural boundaries. The study aimed to address four research questions which evolved from the title and a number of themes and questions emerged from these. These were:

- Is there an academic/administrative divide in universities and if so, what is its nature and what are the factors underlying this?
- In what ways do administrators in higher education form identities through their work and roles within their institutions?
- To what extent do administrators in higher education inhabit hybrid roles and are these shaped by organisational factors (including line management and organisational culture)?
- In what ways are administrators supported in making the transitions to academic work (or taking on academic roles) and gaining acceptance within the academic community?

In trying to answer these questions a number of recommendations have been considered, some of which may be seen by university management to be radical, that could address this perceived imbalance of professional values between communities of staff and to start to deconstruct the divide.

Key words: Divide, Relationships, Identity, Transitions, Hybridity, Esteem, Status, Credibility, Third Space, Culture, Partnerships

Acknowledgements

List of Contents

List of Tables

List of Appendices

Chapter 1 - Introduction to the Thesis

1.1   Introduction to Chapter One

This chapter introduces the research study, exploring the rationale, defining the subject matter, clarifying the aims and locating the concept of the research in the historical development of the changing nature of employment in universities which has brought about a blurring of activities and expectations of university management, staff and students. Relationships between the different communities of staff are often uneasy and ambivalent and tensions and rivalry between academics and administrators have been longstanding features of the university landscape (Conway, 2009). This is often because of the lack of understanding of each others' roles, and the pressures that each group encounters whilst supporting students. In universities, there is a movement towards change as senior positions which were historically held by an academic are now being filled by people from university administrative backgrounds or industry.

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether there is a perception of an academic/administrative divide in universities in the United Kingdom, and if there is, how it operates and how it affects the relationship between different groups of university staff, exploring whether it is possible to move from one professional role to another. The term 'administrator' being used for this study is the group of staff working in traditional non-academic or partly academic roles who are likely to have climbed the 'career ladder' and are now holding senior positions of a hybrid nature, which cross the normal boundaries associated with educational roles. It is inevitable that there will be tensions in organisations as they are made up of people who will have different personalities and egos, there are likely to be power issues and clashes of professional cultures or tribes, all with competing agendas, but Conway (2009) suggests that this could be viewed as healthy tension. Andrews (2011) suggests that:

> Professional status is not simply about the structure but about the way in which the members of the profession gain legitimacy to control their work. (p.39)

There is often a conflict between administrators and academics and the perception of many academics is that administrators' work is related to the management of the university (Andrews, 2011). This is changing and in many modern universities more academics are line managers and many take on management related roles. Trow (1993) cited in Miller and

Higson (1999) supports this when he suggests that the Government has set up a process that has "required the de-professionalisation of the academic workforce and their transformation into middle-managers" (p.4), and as Foskett and Lumby (2003) suggest staff should be involved in setting the aims and objectives for the institution and be involved in management. Trow also recommends control through 'soft managerialism', as a form of university administrative leadership, as he sees managerial effectiveness as being important in the provision of high quality education. As individuals, there is a sense of continuing professionalisation of the role of professional managers and administrators (Barnett and Di Napoli, 2008), but possibly more importantly, it could be argued that academics appear to lack any understanding about the drivers behind the work of administrative staff (James, 2003). Conversely administrators often have a lack of understanding about academic work and the drivers behind what academic staff have to do in relation to higher education policy initiatives that are heavily structured around teaching, quality assessment and research assessment (James, 2003).

I will be investigating whether this group of administrators consider they have a professional identity and whether their interests are analogous or divergent to those of academic staff. This links to the way in which they are positioned within the wider community and their parity of esteem across the disciplines (Nixon, 1996). This was a consequence of my own experiences and I wanted to investigate whether this was likely to be a universal theme for administrators working in other universities. I also considered that it was important to find out about the qualifications this group of administrative staff have. I am aware that professional development is encouraged in education institutions and I wanted to examine whether gaining academic qualifications had helped with their (administrators) credibility in the eyes of their academic colleagues, particularly if they aspired to cross the professional lines into roles normally associated with academia. Historically, university academics have had a university education and will have achieved their qualifications before entering the institute, but administrators were normally appointed for their secretarial and administrative qualifications and experience, and many have gained academic credentials whilst undertaking their roles (Whitchurch, 2007). This is changing and administrative staff are now being appointed as graduates into roles which, in some cases, may, in the past, have been the domain of academics.

My research will investigate whether a divide exists between different communities of higher education staff due to the blurring of boundaries mentioned above, and if so, whether this is real or perceived (Conway, 2008) and if there is any impact on the career aspirations of administrative staff. I will be exploring how administrators endeavour to move into different

roles, crossing boundaries, along with the factors that enable or constrain this. The study will also consider whether the notion of a divide impacts on organisational harmony and cohesion (Gill, 2009) and whether this is likely to be a problem for university management. This will be explored through the stories of individuals who have made, or attempted to make, the transition and the factors which they experienced.

In order to demonstrate why this subject is of such interest and importance to me, I have prepared a professional pen-portrait to set the scene for my research.

1.2   A Professional Pen-Portrait

I commenced working in the University in 1988 to take on a role as a Personal Assistant to the Director of Nurse Education, in the School of Nursing, which was to become part of the University of Portsmouth, and to manage a very small team of staff. At this time I had no formal qualifications apart from four O Levels and a number of secretarial qualifications. Over the next twenty years I continued to develop in my role, taking opportunities to undertake further administrative and managerial studies to become a senior administrative professional, working my way up to a middle management position, where my staff management responsibilities increased to a team of over thirty administrative staff. During this time, many changes occurred in the university/higher education institution in which I worked and eventually my role expanded to take on the administrative management of five departments in the University. Over the next few years I ensured that I took professional opportunities as they arose in order to expand my knowledge of the educational environment. I was then given the opportunity to develop a Foundation Degree for administrators working in educational establishments such as universities, colleges, and schools. As this was an area in which I was extremely interested, I undertook research into whether this would appeal to this group of staff. In 2006 the first intake of administrators commenced a very new, innovative degree, which understood the diversity of roles educational administrators undertake.

I was required to complete a Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, a course for new university lecturers, before I was considered suitable to act as Course Leader and able to teach on the course which I had successfully developed and had validated, despite being considered as an expert in my field, that is, educational administration. Many barriers were put in the way before this was achieved, because of the divide between administration and academia. One example was that one month before the course was due to start I received an email to say that two members of academic staff had contacted Personnel querying my role on this course, and one had visited the Faculty Office

to complain about my involvement with the course as I was an administrator. The same email noted that *'no member of support staff can carry out academic duties and if this happened it would be brought to the attention of the recognised Trade Unions and further action would follow'.* Subsequently an existing member of academic staff was given the job as course leader and I was informed that I could only have involvement as a 'School Manager'. Many meetings took place following this, and I was asked to apply for a 0.4 full-time equivalent lecturing post for the following year, but without the support of the Head of School, as an academic champion, I would not have been able to move into this position and to take over the role of Course Leader for a course that I had developed from the outset.

Alongside this area of work, I had taken on the challenge of acting as Partnership Manager for the full-cost contracts run by the School of Education and Continuing Studies and managed the partnerships between schools, colleges and the university for all teacher training, a major part of which is liaison with schools and colleges for placements and quality assurance. This is a role which is undertaken by a member of academic/teaching staff in other Teacher Training Providers. This started in a small way, working with approximately thirty schools to organise placements for the Initial Teacher Training trainees. Nine years later I now work with approximately ninety schools and colleges and have been organising placements for approximately six hundred students a year from a diverse range of courses. I was also the Course Leader for four other short courses and the Foundation Degree in Education Administration and managed all the full-cost contracts run by the School of Education and Continuing Studies. (Unfortunately, due to the latest government cuts, these contracts have now come to an end). I am now classed as a full-time academic member of staff, but this was not necessarily a move I wanted to take as I had to choose to lose important and interesting elements of the administrative role that I really enjoyed as I was not now 'an administrator'. During the period mentioned above another member of academic staff had provided an independent view that *'a dual role of academic and support staff would cause a number of problems and should not be encouraged'.* The way that the university was structured meant that I could not use my skills to undertake a true hybrid role of managing administrative staff (administrative) and managing a course for administrators (academic), which I feel would have benefited both myself and the university.

Describing my personal journey and the challenges involved in transitions from administrative to academic work has outlined why I am interested in researching this topic. I have demonstrated that a hybrid/blended role such as mine can be successful and can work to the benefit of an organisation, however, it can also be seen that there was a great deal of resistance which could have prevented me from pursuing my wish to run a successful

course for administrators, but for which I had to sacrifice an important constituent of my role. I wanted therefore to find out if there were other people who have been in a similar situation.

1.3   Background to the Changes in Higher Education

Changes in the higher education sector have meant that many of the non-academic elements of campus life have become more important, resulting in universities having to re-think the quality of services they provide to students (Gill, 2010). The advent of tuition fees across the sector has altered the landscape in which higher education institutions operate and there is an increasing focus on the economic value of higher education to the student and the nation as a whole (Barnett, 2005). Widening participation to a much broader range of students has meant that new modes of delivery have had to be considered and there is greater accountability, financial constraints and increased competition within a market driven economy (Miller and Higson, 1999). This has impacted on the work of administrators as their roles have expanded to become more diverse in supporting these changes. This is discussed further in this chapter.

Research has been undertaken about changing identities in higher education, including work by Whitchurch (2007, 2008) who has investigated the changing roles of professional managers in higher education, and Clegg (2008) who has concentrated on academic identities under threat. Although my research will discuss academic identities, what is of real concern is whether administrators consider that they have a professional identity and whether identities can be changed and formed by our experiences. As Barnett and DiNapoli (2008) suggest "identity is 'a state of being'; it is a dynamic but shifting unity – comprising both the social and personal – that has some coherence" (p.114), my research will investigate whether this can happen. They go on to suggest that much of what is known about identities is derived from interactions with others as:

> Their verbal and non-verbal communication of appraisal influences our views of self and our roles in relation to other members of the group. (p.114)

Whitchurch (2008) suggests that despite an on-going process of professionalisation, the roles and identities of administrators and managers in UK higher education are neither clearly conceptualised nor understood. Professionalisation establishes the group norms of conduct, and for administrators who belong to a Professional Body, they are likely to adhere to a professional code of conduct, but for those who do not, the position can be far less clear.

5

There are many political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental implications for professionals working in higher education. Higher education institutions both mediate and manage government policy, there has been a rise in academic management and together with the rise in consumerism and political concerns, have produced new organisational cultures and professional priorities (Morley, 2001). Foskett and Lumby (2003) suggest that decentralisation in higher education may "confront government with the need to consider a delegated system of [school] management" leading to debate on "the nature and purpose of education" (p.10). As higher education institutions have expanded and diversified to take account of government initiatives, the roles of the people working within them have become fragmented and boundaries are being breached (Whitchurch, 2007).

There may be financial implications for professionals in higher education, particularly if they are undertaking a 'hybrid/blended' role which crosses into more than one domain, either academic or administrative, in relation to pay structures and contractual requirements. There are increasing demands from students for a 'truly valuable experience' and increasing demands from society to find solutions to the country's problems, and not just economic (Melville-Ross, 2010). The productivity of modern universities, profiles of students, for example, part-time, mature, and minority students, linked to the fact that academic life has been affected by a large growth in the number of students without a matching increase in the number of academics (Anderson, Johnson and Saha, 2002), place extra pressures on academic staff, there is more use of casual/part time hourly paid staff, all of which may impact on administrative staff. The staff:student ratio has changed and has risen to unprecedented levels and with a more diversified student body, and with more emphasis on research and publication, many academic staff may be of the opinion that there is a decline in the relative status, salaries, prestige and general attractiveness of employment as an academic (Anderson, et al., 2002).

The Times Higher Education highlights that as the student experience becomes more crucial to universities' survival, administrators see a chance to step out of their supporting parts (THE, April 2011). It will be important for universities to rethink how they provide services to students. The Chair of the Association of University Administrators was quoted in this article as saying:

> Academic members of staff will need to continue to deliver on academic quality and academic programmes. But in terms of students, the concept of the student experience as simply being an academic experience will not stand the test of time. (p.42)

Demographics and lifestyle trends of applicants to universities are likely to impact on both the academic and administrative communities. The significant rise in the recruitment of international students is changing the dynamic in universities, with additional requirements of all staff to understand overseas' students' individual needs, and the recruitment of part-time mature students and distance learners mean that universities have to look at the social implications for them as consumer driven (Harris, 2005). Dill (1982) has suggested that the weakening of shared beliefs in an academic culture had been accompanied by a failure to manage it. Traditional notions of academic freedom, autonomy and purpose and the shifting of boundaries, new posts being identified because of restructuring and the diverse communities of staff in higher education who do not belong to one particular social group, have impacted on the social infrastructure of universities. The sector is experiencing changes in leadership, governance and management which impacts on the social dynamic because of the different backgrounds of staff who are now being employed to undertake these roles. Many professionals are not clear which workplace union they should belong to and which line management structure they fit into.

Although technological issues were not considered specifically in relation to this research, there are implications for the diverse communities of staff in universities. For academics, the traditional teaching role which many had conventionally undertaken, embraced curriculum development, preparation of courses, face-to-face teaching and interaction with students, assessment of students' progress and provision of feedback (Anderson, et al., 2002). This has now changed, requiring the use of more information technology, more administration and the teaching of students using on-line methods. Even feedback can now be provided on-line, so the student often becomes a 'faceless' individual who communicates with the teacher through technology. The expertise of 'non-teaching' staff, often undertaking hybrid/blended roles, such as on-line developers and administrators with high level IT expertise, can play an important part in the student experience and demonstrate to academics that they (academics) are not the sole drivers of innovation in modern universities. Again, this links to the relationships between staff in universities and this new group of administrators who are employed to support the learning and teaching of students.

The Association of University Administrators, which is the professional body for higher education administrators and managers, was formed from a merger of the Association of Polytechnic Administrators and the Conference of University Administrators, and one of its aims is to promote the professional recognition and development of all who work in 'professional services' roles in higher education. The word 'administrator' is a deceptive title for the Association's members as many senior staff come from an academic background and

7

include different constituencies such as researchers, librarians, registrars, deans, associate principals and lecturers who now undertake research and/or administrative duties (AUA, 2010). The Association does have a large number of members on lower pay levels (AUA, 2010) but the sample of staff interviewed as part of my research include researchers, registrars, deans and lecturers, and all participants are, or have been, undertaking senior administrative roles, for which the tasks they are performing do not fit neatly into either academic or administrative domains.

The nature of higher education management and administration is complex and many academics have managerial and administrative responsibilities, for example vice-chancellors are senior managers and in many institutions the senior management team or directorate are likely to be academics, and many other academic heads of departments or schools will also have budgetary and other management responsibilities (Middlehurst, 2004). Conversely, from my own experience of being employed as both an administrator and an academic in the same university, there are many personnel who do not hold academic posts, who undertake work that was traditionally the sphere of academics, for example, aspects of teaching and learning, interviewing, student support and pastoral care. It will be seen from this study that increasingly administrative staff are now being employed as graduates or have pursued study to gain academic qualifications and many have teaching and research experience (HESA, 2009).

By taking on these roles they are able to release some elements of the academics' work to enable them to focus on mainstream teaching and research, whereas historically administrative staff have been employed with a lower level of qualifications. It could be argued, however, that most academics do not consider that their administrative duties have reduced, and from my own experience as an academic, many have increased. These are domains which used to belong to the ranks of the so-called 'faculty' (Watson, 2000), that is, academic departments, but which now have to be supported by university members with a variety of expertise, for example, finance, human resources, estates, libraries, marketing, communications and information technology. This is supported by Burgess (2008) and Whitchurch (2004, 2006) who suggest that by bringing these groups together, university-wide views of major policies and initiatives can be developed. The rise in importance of quality assurance, strategic planning and institutional management processes, driven by the need for governance and accountability, has led to greater responsibilities for managers and administrators and with the expansions of higher education, these roles have been transformed and expanded into something very different and have become more specialised in nature (Watson, 2000).

8

The ambiguity surrounding the status of managers and administrators stems from historical developments within higher education and in less complex times, record keeping, committee servicing, accounting and providing advice were key roles (Thorley, 1998) and although these roles remain essential, these are only small elements of the complexity of roles required from an effective administrator in current times, and I would argue even more so in the future. There is an ideal and cultural image that administrators and managers in senior positions have a skill set which enables them to be good communicators, think strategically, embrace change, influence others, develop both themselves and others, be a good team worker, solve problems and consistently meet deadlines (Thorley, 1998).

I will be arguing that institutions will need to adapt and be responsive when faced with the challenges coming their way and those that survive will be the ones where there is a commonality of purpose amongst their staff, both academic and administrative. However, a vice-chancellor employed in a university in the Midlands, recently reported that "in seeking to reduce costs and be more efficient, universities are looking not just at academic savings but at ways they can run administration services more efficiently" (THE, April, 2011, p.43). He then suggested that there will be a demand for better qualified, more professional people and less demand for 'low-grade' administrators.

The following section outlines why I consider this is an important piece of research and that there is, in my view, a need for investigation based on the significant issues around higher education organisations and professional restructuring.

1.4   Rationale For The Research

I will be exploring whether universities could be restructured to be able to use their staff more flexibly, with the potential outcome of being able to embrace the notion of hybrid roles with communities of staff working together to benefit the organisation. Dearing (1997) reported that one of the purposes of higher education is to inspire and enable individuals to develop their capabilities to the highest potential levels throughout life and that a strong university system is essential to a country's economic growth. I will be exploring and identifying through my research whether there are problems faced by administrators who may wish to cross from one professional role to another, embracing those who may have recently already done so, and including those who have moved from an administrative role to an academic role. This will be explored by collecting data from a group of senior level administrators and will incorporate issues such as working relationships, parity of esteem, identity and university structures. The higher education sector has changed, reinvented itself and evolved over the last ten years (Henkel, 2000; Trowler and Knight, 2000) and is

continuing to do so, in relation to the nature of its communities, how they are produced and the location and identity of academics.

When researching information on the different universities used as part of this study I have become aware that there is little reference made to administrative functions. The advertising literature from Russell Group universities quotes: "We are committed to the highest level of academic excellence in both teaching and research" and that "Russell Group universities make an enormous impact on the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of the United Kingdom" (Russell Group, 2012). It could be argued that this applies to all universities, not just those in the Russell Group, as the purpose of higher education is to provide students with an outstanding learning experience (Russell Group, 2012). A review of the websites of the other 'new' (post-92) universities I visited, identified that their advertising literature stated very similar aims, with very little reference to the importance of their administrative functions, although this is implied when some discuss the range of other services that they offer, which includes careers' services, library services and student support services. This relates back to the fact that for the last forty years or so, there was a shared perception that universities, particularly the elite institutions, were run by academics, they had a stable structure in their nature, scope and aims, with the pursuit of knowledge being the main aim (Barnett and DiNapoli, 2008). They have now been transformed from 'communities of scholars' to 'workplaces' (Barnett and DiNapoli, 2008) and link to the theory of the theme of managerialism which is now pervading higher education institutions. Many administrators may see that this is an advantage as they will be able to take on additional roles. Deem (1998) suggests that the organisation and administration of universities have seen a corresponding prevalence of ideas and strategies promoting a more 'business focused' approach in the management of their services, sand that all professionals working in higher education are facing the challenges of adaptation and should be working together to add value to the institution's mission (Deem, 1998).

I consider this is justification of why I think my research is important and I refer back to my overarching aim of my research which is: 'To develop a theoretical and empirical understanding of whether there is an academic/administrative divide in universities in the United Kingdom, and if there is, how it operates, and how it affects the relationship between academics and administrators'.

1.5   Contextual Overview

It is clear that Universities will have to be part of the managerial environment, they will be required to be increasingly accountable (Miller and Higson, 1999), public funding will be heavily constrained over the next ten to fifteen years and the sector will need to work hard to retain the funding it has at the moment (Barnett and DiNapoli, 2008). There are concerns by all universities about government's controversial plans for higher education. A report by the Commons' Public Accounts Committee (2011) suggested student numbers might have to be reduced to avoid a spending black hole resulting from increased student loans following the raising of the tuition fee cap to £9000 per year. A Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) report in 2012 suggested that the government had underestimated the costs of its new student fees regime leaving a black hole of more than £1 billion a year (Guardian, 2012). Students' expectations are likely to be higher and there is likely to be more interest in the student experience with students expecting more services to be provided. However, there may be a number of university staff who would be sceptical and somewhat critical of the new 'business' efficient higher education we are supposedly heading for, and although the student experience will still be seen as important, it is more likely to be the interest in league table outcomes which will continue to be the main focus of university managers. As Lord Winston, speaking at the Association of University Administrators' Annual Lecture in 2010 said:

> The constant pounding of the drum to argue that universities are there to improve, support, maintain and make us economically wonderful, is a message that completely undersells what universities are all about.

In this same speech, it was suggested that this may involve a re-evaluation of the administrator's place in the hierarchy and that administrators "may have to tread carefully to prevent friction with academics" (p.42). There could be more friction and tensions created between these two groups of staff, as more administrators take on 'blended/hybrid' roles which are growing closer to that of academics, if they (academics) feel that their roles are being further eroded. These administrators are those staff who are associated with the support of teaching and learning, who are neither wholly teaching, technical or administrative. Although it is difficult to predict what will happen in the future, from my own experience over the last twenty five years, I would expect that with more pressure in the system, all staff working in higher education will be expected 'to do more with less', and therefore the discord between diverse communities of staff could increase.

My research will explore the experiences of administrative staff in thirteen diverse universities, in the United Kingdom. It will comprehensively discuss some of the key areas for these groups of staff, in the roles they undertake in higher education and the way that changes in university structures have impacted on the work of universities in the twenty first century. Over the last few years universities have seen a growth in central services, set up to be able to respond to increasing demands of students and national agendas. In my own university, the Strategic Plan (2007-2012) identified four key priorities:

- To give an excellent student experience focused on knowledge and skills essential in the global workforce
- To raise aspirations and promote access to the University
- To promote discovery, development and application of knowledge through high quality research
- To contribute to sustainable economic, social, cultural and community regeneration and development.

In order to achieve these priorities a large number of additional roles have been created, the majority of which are in central services. The growth in areas such as e-learning, student support services, employability, internationalisation and widening participation has meant that new administrative jobs have had to be created, often of a hybrid nature. Additional support services including units such as Academic Skills, have grown as there has been an expansion in university places and additional demands from students have increased. The roles undertaken in these areas are usually classed as 'administrative', but there is a move from decisions requiring academic judgement to those needing administrative judgement. One example of this is that in Student Admissions, administrators are recruiting and making decisions on student entry, which in the past would have been academic decisions. If universities are to survive in the current economic climate with a future marked by more competition to attract students who will be demanding more from their tuition fees of up to £9000 a year, they may need to re-think how they provide their services.

The terminology used can also be contentious and terms such as 'non-academic', 'academic support' and 'academic-related' have become unfashionable because of their connotations of subordination (Whitchurch, 2006). Whitchurch (2004) also suggests that the term 'administrator' is problematic for some because it "refers more often than not to routine clerical tasks" (p.282) which does not reflect the wide range of roles administrators are expected to undertake.

There are fixed pay scales for staff in universities which are reliant on the type of contract of employment they are initially employed on. My research will explore the implications for administrative staff if they have moved into different roles, whether the results of the Higher Education Role Analysis (HERA) impacted on them, and issues of parity of esteem across the sector between different communities of staff. The current global financial climate provides challenges for leadership in higher education, and within a ten to fifteen year timescale the sector will need to become more dynamic and more flexible (Melville-Ross, 2010). Staff and student expectations may be higher and according to Melville-Ross (2010) there will be more business models, and the need for more varied and flexible employment contracts. He argues that current academic contracts will require amendment if they amount to significant barriers to change in terms and conditions of employment and the move towards a more flexible and responsive workforce.

As anyone who works in universities will be aware, organisational restructuring is a feature of institutional life but it should be informed by the way individuals operate within the structures they join. As staff work across and beyond boundaries, they are re-defining the nature of their work and institutions need to consider giving recognition to more extended ways of working in order to maximise the contribution of their staff (Whitchurch, 2004).

1.6 Overview of Research

This research will explore the views and perceptions of university administrators about identities and relationships in higher education. For clarification a Community of Practice is a group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an on-going basis (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002). Groups of professionals are being challenged to construct personal identities and because of this may feel that their original roles are now being threatened. Whitchurch (2007) suggests that:

> Higher education institutions and their workforces have expanded and diversified to meet the demands of contemporary environments, and boundaries are being breached between functional areas, professional and academic activity and internal and external constituencies. (p.2)

I will be exploring how administrators cross the line and the factors that lead to or constrain this, and whether this brings about transformations in professional identity. I will investigate whether there are tensions between academics and administrators and whether there are issues around identities, parity of esteem, expectations and remuneration. The implications

for personal identity, which is an on-going thread throughout the study, are suggested by Burr (1995) to be:

> ... constructed out of the discourses culturally available to us, and which we draw upon in our communications with other people ... discourses of age, gender, education and sexuality, etc. (p.51)

She then suggests that "there is a danger that we can become paralysed by the view that individual people can really do nothing to change themselves or their world" (p.60). In this study I will argue and debate through the lenses of personal experiences, supported by theory, that identities need not be fixed but can be changed. Burr (1995) suggests that change is possible because:

> Human agents are capable (given the right circumstances) of critically analysing the discourses which frame their lives, and of claiming or resisting them according to the effects they wish to bring about. (p.90)

Foucault (1976) cited in Burr (1995) proposed that:

> Change is possible through 'opening up' marginalised and repressed discourses, making them available as alternatives from which we may fashion identities. (p. 90)

I will be examining and exploring these ideas further. I will be challenging participants to consider whether they have developed both professionally and personally and whether their identities have been modified accordingly until they arrived at their 'journey's destination'.

1.7   Key Research Questions

My research will be operationalised through the exploration of four key questions:

RQ1   Is there a perception of an academic/administrative divide in universities and if so, what is its nature and what are the factors underlying this?

RQ2   In what ways do administrators in higher education form identities through their work and roles within their institutions?

RQ3   To what extent do administrators in higher education inhabit hybrid roles and are these shaped by organisational factors (including line management and organisational culture)?

RQ4   In what ways are administrators supported in making the transitions to academic work (or taking on academic roles) and gaining acceptance within the academic community?

As a response to these questions, this thesis aims to provide a new insight into this area and will contribute to new knowledge which will emerge from the data. This research is a qualitative study and a sample of fifteen higher education administrators, from thirteen diverse universities, were interviewed. My own narrative has been included and my own experiences of moving from one professional role to another, that is, from administration to academia, has been clarified and will be used to explain my interest in this topic, and to be used as a comparison throughout the research.

1.8   Positioning Myself Within the Research Process

My role as a researcher into the area of professional transitions within higher education is not a neutral one. My position in relation to the topic chosen for the research project and the time and place in which the research was conducted is closely linked to my own professional practice as a senior administrator/middle manager who has moved from being an administrator to become an academic, and the focus chosen reflects my personal and professional beliefs and prejudices in attempting to unravel the complexity of staff working in hybrid roles in modern universities. My own experiences over the last twenty five years will necessarily have influenced what I perceive to be the nature of the relationships between different communities of staff working in higher education.

My position as a researcher, as an integral part of the subject or case being researched (Robson, 2002) will be explored in detail within Chapter 3. What I am attempting here is to map the participants' experiences within their professional life histories to the events which have shaped the way in which higher education institutions have had to change to be able to thrive and prosper when confronted with the challenges they have faced and will continue to face, to be able to respond to the increasing demands of students and national agendas. My own experiences and the debates on identities in higher education will be interpreted in the narrative of the research undertaken and as Erben (2000) suggests:

> For teller and listener a double effect is always at work and as one transmits a narrative to the other, one takes on the task of, simultaneously, configuring one's own life story. (p. 385)

1.9   Anticipated Outcome

A major outcome of the study will be to have a greater appreciation of the extent to which people who were recruited to a particular position in a university now have different roles and whether they have moved across the line management structure. I hope to achieve the aims I have discussed above and hope that the findings will contribute to ongoing policy discussion about how to work within bureaucratic structures to enable staff to fulfil their aspirations and ambitions. I hope to propose a new model for successful administration and to demonstrate how it is possible to move successfully into other professional domains, particularly from administration to academia and how this could benefit the organisation.

1.10   Structure and Outline of The Thesis

In this chapter, I have provided a contextual overview of the research which will investigate the perception of an 'academic/administrative divide', 'blended professionals/hybrid roles', and comparability of esteem across the sector in relationship to identity. I have provided a pen portrait of my own experiences of moving from an administrative role to become an academic to be able to make a comparison with the narratives of university staff with similar experiences to highlight the problems, either real or perceived, of staff working within university structures with differing organisational cultures. In outlining my personal journey I have also explained why this research is of such interest and importance to me and to situate myself in the study.

In Chapter 2, I will offer/provide a critical review of the literature which has been carried out to discover and evaluate the research and literature available relating to my four key research questions. I will develop the key themes revealed within my review to provide a framework for the methodological approach adopted including an outline and reasons for the techniques used. The relative strengths and limitations of these approaches will also be discussed. The key rationale for this chapter will be to consider the conceptual themes to be researched, which relate to my overall topic. These are *"the academic/administrative divide and working relationships" (RQ1); "professional identities" (RQ2); "professional roles and organisational factors" (RQ3);* and *"gaining acceptance within the academic community and cultural facilitators" (RQ4)* which link back to my overall research question which is: To develop a theoretical and empirical understanding of whether there is an academic/ administrative divide in universities in the United Kingdom, and if there is, how this operates, and how this affects the relationship between academics and administrators.

In Chapter 3, I will explain how I decided on my research methodology and I will explore the account of the evolution of the study, its design and methodology and the methods used to collect the data. As this is qualitative research I will discuss how I collected the data by the use of semi-structured interviews. To date this appears to be an un-researched topic area and an extensive search of the literature has failed to identify studies that have examined this particular phenomenon. In this chapter I will also discuss the use of narrative methodology which I considered to be the most appropriate approach for my study.

The research findings are presented in two chapters. In Chapter 4, the first of the data analyses chapters, I will provide an introduction to the rationale for the choice of the group of staff interviewed. I will then interrogate the data collected on two of the four areas related to the subject of the thesis. The first is looking at the professional roles of the group of administrators who were interviewed, including their professional backgrounds, incorporating current and past jobs in education and their professional/academic qualifications; and the issue of professional identities of the participants. This second area will consider their experiences and perceptions about the parity of esteem between different professional groups in relation to identity.

In Chapter 5, the second of the data analyses chapters I will examine and analyse the findings related to the academic/administrative divide to discover whether administrators consider that there is a divide, and if there is, its nature and the underlying factors which impact on higher education staff; and the second area will look at the impact of university structures and cultures and what effects the changing roles in higher education have had on individuals working in the education sector.

In Chapter 6, I will provide a conclusion to the study and I will analyse and evaluate the results of the qualitative data to identify the themes which are occurring. I will provide a reflective summary of the key elements of this thesis, reflect on the major findings of the study and highlight the key conclusions based on the four key research questions. I will also be highlighting the contribution the thesis makes, in theoretical, methodological and practical ways and I will reflect on how this study has highlighted my own personal professional development and how it will help to create a basis for improving systemic issues around professional relationships in universities. A number of recommendations will also be made resulting from the data findings.

1.11 Summary of Chapter One

In this chapter I have provided an overview of the study which is one of participants' perceptions of their experiences and beliefs, and a statement of the problem which includes a rationale about changes in identities and structures which have taken place over the last forty years in higher education and how these changes have impacted, and continue to impact on the staff working within the institutions. I have included my own journey, using a professional pen portrait in order to identify my position within the research. I have also discussed the anticipated outcomes of my research.

As a result of my experience of working as an administrator in both higher education and the private sector, I am convinced that the successful operation of an organisation requires competent administrators who act as the 'glue' that enables the organisation to work (Gill, 2010). I will be arguing through my research that there is even more need for experienced, highly qualified administrators to undertake the roles mentioned above and that we need to find ways of exchanging ideas and working within and across disciplines to create a commonality of purpose. However, the idea of making universities business focused may be a contentious view amongst some communities and therefore is unlikely to be a universal opinion.

The following chapter will review the literature to identify a number of conceptual themes and possible contradictions related to my four research questions.

Chapter 2 - The Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to Chapter Two

This chapter establishes the context for this study by critically analysing and evaluating current research studies, exploring gaps in current knowledge and how these gaps could potentially be addressed by a study such as this. There are three guiding questions to consider before starting a literature review: What literature is relevant? What is the relationship of the proposed study to its relevant literature? How will the proposed study deal with the literature and how will the argument in the proposal use the literature (Punch, 2000, p. 43)?

A review of the literature is presented, related to my four research questions which are stated in the Introduction on page 14 and a number of conceptual themes and potential contradictions will be considered. The overarching aim of the thesis is:

> To develop a theoretical and empirical understanding of whether there is an academic/administrative divide in universities in the United Kingdom, and if there is, how this operates, and how this affects the relationship between academics and administrators.

The four conceptual themes considered are: *"the academic/administrative divide and working relationships" (RQ1); "professional Identities" (RQ2); "professional roles and organisational factors" (RQ3);* and *"gaining acceptance within the academic community and cultural facilitators" (RQ4).* The very nature of the relationship between these conceptual themes means that they cut across the four research questions. The review was carried out by critically analysing relevant key texts and journals, and reading and summarising the research undertaken by the various authors. In this way it was possible to identify some gaps in the available literature which will be discussed at the end of this chapter. I will argue that the culture of universities and included departments, affect the way they are managed, which can impact on the aspirations and careers of the staff they employ. Elements of culture were studied as part of this research to help explain the organisational phenomena and to identify whether this has aided or hindered the changing identities. I will be looking at the way an individual's activities impact upon their professional roles and whether it is embedded by habitual actions such as socialisation at work, professional interaction and the values that members instil upon their own and others' work ethic.

2.2 The Academic/Administrative Divide and Working Relationships

It is important for the reader to understand the relationship between academics and administrators which is found in educational organisations. For the purpose of this study I have been investigating these relationships in universities and whether the divide which is often spoken about, is 'real' or 'perceived' (Conway, 2009). I will be investigating whether the participants of this study perceive there is a divide and if so, how this could be deconstructed.

Although Whitchurch (2004, 2006, 2007, 2008) does not mention anything about a divide, the notion of administrators moving into academia, domains which in the past have been organisationally segmented into either academic or administrative, implies that there may be a 'bridge' enabling this to happen. However, Gill (2009) identified that there is a definite divide between academics and administrators which he likened to 'an iron curtain' or 'apartheid system' where administrators and academics are struggling to find a common cause. Gill also reported on research undertaken by an academic registrar at a prestigious university who suggested that there are two models for the working relationship within universities. The first is a 'civil servant' model, where academics take the role of elected politicians and administrators are expected to do their bidding and stay out of the decision-making process; and secondly, the 'cleric' model, with academics equivalent to priests and administrators playing the role of 'laity', with lesser rights and privileges, for example, the number of paid holidays and contractual hours. This is important when trying to understand the sometimes fractious relationships between academics and administrators. In practice there is very little difference between these two models as both elevate the academic and diminish the administrator. Sebalj, Holbrook and Bourke (2012) highlight deeper issues around identity and recognition for university staff not employed on an academic contract, this group being described as 'the forgotten workforce' (Castleman & Allen, 1995; McLean, 1996) or 'invisible workers' (Szekeres, 2004). Gill questions whether the relationships are improving and whether there is a need for both sides to understand the pressures that each are under; whether leadership and management styles affect the relationship; and whether the academic feels that his/her role is being undermined by administrators who do not have empathy for academia.

Conway (2008), as part of a funded research project for the Association for Tertiary Education and Management in Australia, looked into what underpins people's beliefs about the divide in higher education, including clashing values, different perspectives on the purpose of universities, corporate managerialism and lack of professional status for administrators. She considers the possibility of establishing partnerships and whether these

are realistic, and whether the divide is myth, a description used by Conway, (based on people's perspectives and built and maintained through stereotypes) or real (ie, structural or systemic characteristics of universities). Conway (2008) considered that academics and administrators are:

> Two different groups of people travelling on different, though parallel roads, attempting to get to the same destination but never quite getting to the same goal. (p.74)

and that the situation is likened to:

> Two parallel streams running towards the same river mouth. There might be some moments when they merge, but on the whole they run on parallel courses. (p.74)

She also suggested that both need to recognise the complexity of university work, and that how universities are managed may need to change as a result. Burgess (2008) considers that there are challenges in looking at changes and there could be a temptation in creating a 'myth of a golden age', and suggests that in that era administrators and academics knew intuitively what their role entailed. Its duties and boundaries were understood and everyone knew their place. With an intensity of expectations being placed upon all those working in universities and the continuing professionalization of the roles of professional managers and administrators (Burgess, 2008) brought about by national policy involvements and evolution of institutional missions, the roles now undertaken by both academics and administrators are more complex. Hamer (1997) who also looks at the management of universities, recognises the blurring of roles and boundaries.

These claims resonate with those of Gill when he suggests there are often professional tensions between groups of professionals. In comparison, Hamer (1997) considered the issue of management in dealing with the divide. He considers the work of Fayol (1908) and Mintzberg (1973) and talks about the different roles that managers and administrators need to be able to fulfil. Fayol (1908) defined management as 'to manage is to forecast and plan, to organise, to command, to coordinate and to control', and suggests that most administrators would recognise something of their own jobs in Fayol's description. Hamer also suggests that as roles have changed over time and innovation and creativity are welcomed, the concept that all ideas are generated from academic staff has also changed. Titles are not always helpful and the designation 'administrator', may have once reflected the role being undertaken, but in times of uncertainty and change, clarity about roles and functions has become more important. Hamer recommends that at a time when it may not be possible to expect a career for life in universities, individuals may have to seek

employment outside the sector and that employers will need to recognise the skills individuals have. Labelling of roles undertaken in universities may constrain options outside the higher education sector. This is not a viewpoint which has been considered by other authors but I would agree that in the current economic climate, this will become even more important as universities are having to manage their business by 'doing more with less'.

Research undertaken by Higson and Miller (1996) supported the perception of a divide, when they identified that 'support staff' perceived different attitudes to work which academic colleagues had and their relative position within the work hierarchy of the organisation. Their findings also suggested that 'support staff' contracts were inflexible in comparison to academic contracts which allowed staff more individual freedom. These findings support those of Gill (2009) and Conway (2009). There is a notion of a division of labour between different groups of employees, but with more hybrid roles being developed the lines between them are continually being blurred.

Land (2004) explores what she calls 'the other side of the academy' when she talks about the lack of preparation provided for classroom teachers in colleges or universities who may have aspirations to move into academic administration in the future. She highlights the fact that in the 1960s, due to system growth in colleges, there was a growth in the numbers of faculty administrators who are now ready to end or change their careers. Land indicates that in universities the situation is similar and that there will be a number of vacancies in academic leadership positions unless the applicant pool is broadened. She suggests that it is therefore recommended that experienced staff who are working outside academia be encouraged to consider "crossing the great divide to invest in the academic administrative future of the academy" (p.14). As Gill (2009) also considers "there are now roles such as Pro Vice Chancellor (Administration) at some universities" (p.4) which suggests that more 'non-academic' staff are moving into senior leadership roles. There could be an argument that this is likely to be a controversial change in the eyes of many academic staff, who may consider that a university should only be managed by an academic leader.

Twombley (1988) discovered that faculty and other academics found career mobility by taking on additional responsibilities as a means to move up the career ladder and suggested that to help this progress, a willingness to participate in cross-functional committees is invaluable. Land (2004) also recommended that "learning about the academic side of the house is possible even if one works across the tracks" (p.15). Administrative experience, rather than a particular position, was seen as a significant factor in evaluating a career path and Land (2004) suggests that larger universities may be forced to look outside the classroom for leadership candidates, as moving to a progressively responsible and

demanding role of academic leadership may not seem as attractive as teaching for many academics.

Land (2004) then talks about how academic leaders need to have strong interpersonal skills to bridge communications between faculty and other university administrators and as Anderson (1997) implies, when these staff need to represent the 'president within the faculty' they need to use a variety of skills that administrators elsewhere in the university already possess. One example would be the team-building skills required when dealing in student services and Land (2004) has noticed that "some from this group are beginning to cross the great divide that has historically existed between academic affairs and student services" (p.16). Townsend and Bassoppo-Mayo (1997) cited in Land (2004) propose that:

> Because education has become accessible to more people than ever before, the ability to work with culturally diverse people, both faculty and students, will be a requirement for academic administrators. (p.16)

Land (2004) also suggests that in a changing climate, although currently Deans and Vice-Principals are responsible for personnel, budgets, regulations and other managerial components similar to those found in private industry, it does not follow that because this has historically been the domain of academia, this practice needs to continue. She suggests that "the leader of an institution does not have to be a subject or discipline expert but that he/she could 'bridge' the gap with teaching faculty and earn respect as their representative" (p.19). I would contend that this could be a favourable argument for those administrators in innovative institutions who wish to take on other professional roles and cross the divide, which Land identifies, is in evidence.

The authors mentioned above have undertaken research into similar fields and there is little contradiction in what they are saying. Whitchurch (2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009) has examined the changing roles and identities of academics and, what she has named, 'professional staff' and how they are moving into different educational roles. She mentions them working together in partnership, and Hamer (1997) agrees that there are blurring roles in higher education. Hamer also suggests that employers need to recognise the skills of administrators working in education, not only to ease the tensions between diverse groups of staff, but also to ensure that individuals' skills are recognised outside of the sector. This complements the ideas proposed by Twombley (1988) when he talks about career mobility, and Land (2004) who points out that there are likely to be vacancies in leadership positions in the future. All these authors suggest that in these times of rapid changes and demands, staff should be prepared to move across boundaries, to take on additional responsibilities and become involved in cross-functional committees, and that there needs to be more clarity

about roles and functions. Townsend and Bassoppo-Mayo (1997) mention the skills required to work with culturally diverse groups of people in higher education, and although this was seventeen years ago, it resonates with what is happening in education today.

However, Gill (2009) senses that the divide is so powerful that the ideas of an apartheid system or an iron curtain, exists between academics and administrators, and the views of Conway (2008) when she talks about clashing values and two different groups travelling in parallel but not together, appear to support many of the views of the other authors. However, this may not be the case for all communities of staff as very often the activities undertaken by academics and administrators are so diverse, there may not be congruence in roles and outputs. Finally Hall (2009) noted that boundaries between academia and administration have been blurring for a number of years as teaching has evolved into learner support and research extended into managing projects and partnerships. New posts have emerged that do not fit neatly into administrative/academic pigeonholes. Hall considers that the pace of change over the past five years has shown that the traditional divide between academic and administrative roles is no longer sustainable or desirable and increasingly irrelevant in modern day higher education institutions (Sebalj, Holbrook and Bourke, 2012).

In this section I have attempted to build an argument around my first research question using the review of the literature which has investigated whether there is an academic/ administrative divide in universities and if so, whether there are particular factors which cause this. The authors all agree that there is a complex set of working relationships between academics and administrators which can cause tensions amongst different communities of staff, they struggle to find a common cause, particularly in relation to the new managerialism which has proliferated senior roles in universities. Working relationships are often damaged because of the perception that academics think they have a higher status, which comes with a sense of control, than administrators in the university hierarchy. Conversely administrators perceive that they are seen as subordinate and that they are not respected for their professional skills. I will be exploring whether these are valid assumptions and whether the divide these authors refer to is perceived by individuals to be real or a myth and whether this is the main constituent to the cause of the perceived divide between academic and administrative staff. The literature review also identified that there has been very little research undertaken on working relationships between different communities of staff.

2.3 Professional Identities

There is little written about the identity of what is loosely termed 'non-academic' or 'professional services' staff in higher education. This is an important element of my research which will be explored in depth. The concept of there being different identities for communities of staff working in higher education has not been researched fully. Professional identities appear to cross many contexts or tribes and can indicate that the way in which individuals live their professional lives is consistent with their professional values and actions. Identities are determined by time, place and sociality, and lived through the discourses they employ to make sense of who they are (Britzman, 1992) and that they may be reconstructed as people as progress through their careers. The first of the identities to be considered is that which relates to the academic community.

2.3.1 Academic Identities

It was considered important for this study to include a section on academic identities in order to demonstrate the differences between the academic and administrative communities, which relate to the previous section on relationships. There is an exhaustive literature on academic identities which links to the nature of higher education communities (Dill, 1982; Becher, 1989; Becher & Trowler, 2001; Delanty, 2001; James, 2007; Clegg, 2008) highlighting that academics have an identity which connects to their discipline. There is an argument that because administrative staff are not linked to a specific discipline this is not the case for this group of staff, which is naturally of more importance to this study. Clegg (2008) looked at the issues of academic identities under threat and suggested that:

> Identity is understood not as a fixed property, but as part of the lived complexity of a person's project and their ways of being in those sites which are constituted as being part of the academic. (p.329)

In this sense, Clegg considers that:

> The space itself is multiply constituted, as for any individual, the site of the academic may include relationships with other colleagues globally, be a part of a department, and may include a range of activities, some of which may be considered academic and others not. (p.329)

Universities and academic life are becoming more complex with differentiated spaces. Clegg (2008) cites Barnett (1999, 2000, 2003, 2005) as describing these developments in

25

terms of super-complexity and the fact that there is a fracturing of the presumed unity between teaching and research. Blunkett (2000), cited in Clegg (2008), suggested that governments internationally are driven by the twin concerns of global competitiveness and the need to produce local, flexible, employable workers, a concept which will be argued through this research.

Research by Clegg (2008) has recognised that academic identity is complex and that there are not just teaching, research or management roles. Academic identities are being shaped and developed in response to the changes in university structures and external environments, and hybridity in relationship to discipline and place is common. She suggests that:

> The newer emerging identities, or 'hybrids', were mostly not shaped by a reference to nostalgia for an elitist past, but were based on different epistemological assumptions derived from other professional and practice-based loyalties. (p. 340)

Academic identity can be seen as under threat if it is related to the loss of the 'notion' of an academic as someone who participated in the totality of university activities: governance, research, and teaching (Nixon, 2004). Clegg (2008) considers that rather than being under threat, it appears that identities in academia are expanding and proliferating and that there are opportunities for valorising difference. Paying detailed attention to how changes are being experienced is an important element in theorising what is happening inside the university sector.

Harris (2005) considered the need to rethink academic identities in neo-liberal times and she challenged the notion of academic freedom, which is a concept which will be explored with the participants in my research. Harris identifies that there is a shifting of boundaries between institutions on the one hand and on the other an increasing fragmentation and differentiation within institutions which impacts on the traditional notion of academic freedom, purpose and autonomy. This is a view which is also shared by Whitchurch (2007) and Clegg (2008).

Harris also suggests that the way forward will involve finding ways of exchanging ideas and ways of working within and across disciplines and institutions which are underpinned by shared values and understandings about the moral purpose of working in academia. These views complement the ideas mentioned in the previous section when the concept of

academics and administrators working in partnership (Conway, 2008) with both understanding the complexity of universities' organisation and management, was discussed.

In higher education, the nature of its communities, how they are produced and the location and identity of academics has been subject to significant change in the last ten years (Henkel, 2000, Trowler and Knight, 2000). The fragmentation of the academic workplace and the increased differentials between individuals in terms of status and autonomy has had a profound effect on the participation of academics and their sense of professional identity (Nixon, 1996). Being an academic is no longer straightforward if consideration is given to the extent to which they have access to or can cross boundaries to other communities of practice (James, 2003). Academic identity construction involves different forms of community participation and identification and as James (2003) considers, there is more than one way to construct an academic self, which may take many forms of membership across boundaries of practice (Wenger, 1998).

Trowler and Knight (2004) argue that higher education is made up of several communities of practice in which academics are members at a number of different levels. This suggests that academics are now not only part of their disciplinary community within the university, but that they take on elements of work which distances themselves from that community. An example of this would be that in my own department, academics, whom in the past have only taught their own subject discipline, are now being asked to teach on other courses and are finding themselves being entrenched in different cultures and academic tribes, working with different types of students and staff.

Trowler and Knight (2004) suggest that there is no longer central participation in higher Education and that multiple settings provide a valuable insight into understanding the ways in which academics achieve and develop their identity. Through self-evaluation identity is continually informed, formed and reformed as individuals develop over time and interact with others and as situations are experienced and anticipated. Disciplinary cultures and forms of knowledge disciplines have recognisable identities and certain cultural attributes which create a sense of belonging to what is described as an 'academic tribe' (Trowler and Knight, 2004).

These 'tribes' define their own identities through cultural beliefs and practices specific to that tribe. Disciplinary communities can be shaped and defined by a common identity where one is bound together by shared values, expertise and standards (Kogan, 2000) the boundaries can also be blurred and weakened. This overlaps with what was being considered in the

previous section and demonstrates that for academics it still appears to be a more straight-forward process in order to belong to a community, despite there being issues of complexity, role conflict and tensions with the external and policy environment and the move towards hybridity.

Identities can be seen as a "learning trajectory that incorporates the past and the future in the very process of negotiating the present" (Wenger, 1998, p.74), and they are linked with who you are, your commitments and sets of values. Collinson (2004) comments upon how individuals bring with them a 'biographical baggage' when they enter an occupational role, and Robson, et al., (2004) argue that academics' experiences are "radically influenced by the things they bring with them to the university (such as their gendered self-perception) and by factors inherent in the institutional context" (p.12). Struggles about professional identities were compounded by higher education reforms and changes that have created an impetus towards a more structured environment requiring new professional academic identities (Henkel, 2000) as academics were asked to take on given external agendas (Barnett, 1997). My research will investigate whether this should be any different for the 'non-academic' identities.

In comparison, Anderson, et al., (2002) undertook research into how academic life has changed in the last twenty years and the impact on universities of an ageing academic workforce. They suggest that academic workloads have reached an unprecedented level, with students' expectations being much higher because of increased fees; an expectation of additional support being provided; more timely feedback on assignments; an increased pressure in relation to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and the requirement to write for publications, this putting additional pressure onto academic staff. Some developments have been welcomed, for example, greater attention to the quality of teaching, although from my own experience, many academics may be cynical that there is more concern for the results of the National Student Survey, greater access of students to university education, or the ease of modern electronic communications, but the overall picture is of frustration and disillusionment.

The following brief section looks in particular at female academics' identity. The key point of researching this area was to consider whether it is the gender which is considered rather than whether an individual is in academia or administration.

Although there was no distinction made between male or female academics in the above literature, Saunderson (2002) highlights there is often a personal impact of university work

on the lives of academic women, and she explored how institutional structures and processes impact upon academic women's identity. She noted that:

Some academic women's identities are being compromised, challenged and made 'vulnerable' through feelings of being undervalued, overburdened and often the subjects of unequal treatment, more than thirty years after the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act. (p. 376)

United Kingdom universities are often described as 'bastions of male power and privilege' (Hansford Society Report, 1990), almost ten years later the Bett report (1999) and a NATFHE survey confirmed Hansford's findings that British universities are amongst the least equal of institutions in terms of gender equality. My research considers whether this correlates with the experience of many of the female administrators in my study, particularly in relation to career progression and mobility across institutions. If, as Saunderson (2002) implies "not all academic women have vulnerable identities or that all academic men have non-vulnerable identities" (p.397), the question which remains is whether education administrators, female or male, have an identity. I will be drawing on the work of Saunderson (2002) to argue whether or not this is the case.

In this section I have investigated the conceptual theme of academic identities, which is built around my second research question. I have demonstrated that all the authors' research has complemented each other by suggesting that although there has been a fragmentation of the academic workplace (Nixon, 1996) and that identity is a shifting entity (James, 2003) because of different forms of community participation, academics still have an identity which is linked to their discipline. Academics have a mix of roles which often include teaching, research, enterprise and management, and although Blunkett (2000) suggested that universities have twin concerns of global competitiveness and the production of local, flexible and employable workers, the identities of the academic community do not appear to be affected. Identities are often reconstructed as academics move into management and intellectual hierarchies. As identities are influenced by individual values and beliefs as well as institutional culture and positioning (Harris, 2005), there is more pressure on individuals to pursue and construct academic identities in line with corporate identity, ensuring that academic activities contribute to the overall strategy to increase market share (Harris, 2005). Finally, Clegg (2008) talks about academic identity being under threat because of the emergence of new roles, and the fact that "traditional academic identities are based on collegiality and the exercise of autonomy, which were emergent from traditional elite positions" (p. 331).

2.3.2 Identities of Professional Managers and Administrators

In contrast to the above authors, Whitchurch (2007) has looked at the identities of professional managers and administrators and the possible 'partnerships' with academics. Sebalj, Holbrook and Bourke (2012) established that the title of 'manager' was primarily seen as appropriate for more senior staff with managerial level responsibilities and that the term 'administrative staff' did reflect the level of work roles undertaken. Whitchurch suggests that as higher education institutions and their workforces have expanded and diversified to meet the demands of contemporary environments, boundaries are being breached between functional areas, professional and academic activity, and internal and external constituencies. Extended projects such as student transitions, community partnership and professional practice have emerged to create a 'third space' between professional and academic domains, requiring contributions from a range of staff. In this space the concept of administrative service has become re-oriented towards one of partnership with academic colleagues and the multiple constituencies with whom institutions interact. Considerable attention has been paid to the impact of a changing policy environment on academic identities (Henkel, 2000; Becher and Trowler, 2001; Barnett, 2005), but implications for professional staff have been less clearly defined, as mentioned above. Whitchurch (2007) suggests that:

> Terms 'administration' and 'management' lack precision, but are contested in an academic environment – administration for its association with unwanted bureaucracy, and management for its association with what is perceived as an erosion of academic autonomy as institutions respond to competitive markets and government accountability requirements. (p.14)

Whitchurch also proposes that as the capacity of staff expands and diversifies to cope with ongoing demands of institutions, professional roles and identities are subject to continual revision, and that the situation is therefore more dynamic and complex than organisation charts and job descriptions would suggest. Whitchurch (2007) also suggests that the title 'administrator' is associated with unwanted bureaucracy, and the lack of understanding by academics about the roles that their non-teaching colleagues undertake.

The hierarchical nature of the university traditionally has been mystified and underpinned by elitism, social and cultural hierarchies and whereas academics have tended towards specialisation in their work, administrators have tended to be more generalists bound to their departmental allegiances (Harris, 2005). In interpreting the literature which relates to my

second research question on identities, I have demonstrated that for academics, their identities which in the past have been very strongly linked to their disciplines, are now being eroded (Saunderson, 2002). The aspect of 'new managerialism' which Saunderson suggests, is to produce economy, efficiency, effectiveness and accountability, presents both threats and opportunities to academic staff. Brooks (2001) advocates that:

> In terms of 'new managerialism' the corporatization and privatisation of universities through the process of restructuring have significant implications for academic operations and practices, and for their academic identities. (p. 28)

For administrators, the review has highlighted that there are deeper issues surrounding identity and recognition with the emergence of hybrid or multi-professional identities and the growing specialisation and professionalization of this group of staff; and the increasing blurring of boundaries between academics and administrators. The review has emphasised the need to unpack the differences between academics' and administrators' identity as this is not 'like-for-like'. This will be attempted through the empirical chapters in order to enhance what is known about the 'non-academic', 'administrative' or 'professional services' staff identities.

2.4   Professional Roles and Organisational Factors

This section will now consider how a diverse higher education sector has had a significant impact on the roles of its staff.   I will set this in context by referring to research undertaken by Berry and Beach (2006) who attempt to identify the answer to the question: How did higher educational administration become the brunt of so much negative press, and why is it perceived to have failed so miserably in the eyes of so many? They investigated what it is that teachers, principals and superintendents do not know and cannot do in their professional role that fuels an on-going debate about poorly run schools and weak leadership.   Although this research was discussing the administration of schools, I have identified that there are similarities between these two areas of the education sector, and this was therefore seen to be an important source of literature. I considered that the divide and professional relationships which have been mentioned are not helped by the perception of members of other communities.   I believe that the similarities between schools and universities, and possibly other parts of the education sector, could be an area that could warrant further research.

Berry and Beach (2006) highlighted that in the United States, Education Schools have been faulted for the quality of the people who choose to become teachers and administrators, and suggest that the professionalisation of educational administration started as far back as 1879 when William Payne accepted a professorship at the University of Michigan and in 1886 designed a curriculum devoted to the training of teachers and as part of this:

> ... he developed a course on the topic of educational administration, covering areas such as general school management; the art of grading and arranging courses of study; the conduct of institutes, etc. (p.2)

Although the chapters of a book written by Payne (1886) on 'School Supervision' reflected the time in which it was written as it was prescriptive in its approach to administration and dogmatic in its educational thinking, it was a milestone for educational administration as it showed an emerging need to train staff for administrative roles. The work of Berry and Beech (2006) illustrates the point that educational administration is often viewed in a negative way. Although they were discussing administration in schools, there is a correlation with university administration.

Whitchurch (2007, 2008, 2010) highlighted that blended professionals take on mixed portfolios of university work and this new breed of professional manager is moving into areas of university work traditionally handled by academics. Many of these staff have undergraduate degrees and many also have achieved higher level qualifications at Masters or Doctoral level and they may have a teaching or research background. Whitchurch (2007) interviewed staff who were blended professionals and found that they may hold posts such as Director of Lifelong Learning, Director of Research Partnership, Diversity Manager and Learning Partnerships' Manager, and that staff may move into Pro Vice Chancellor posts. Growth of third spaces between professional staff and academics has meant that greater professionalism would be significant in the future with a weightier emphasis on administrators and managers taking on roles that overlap with academics. Nebulous boundaries have developed between academic, administrative and managerial spheres of activity. There are changes in the nature of the roles performed by administrators and managers in higher education in the light of developments in institutional contexts and structures which often mean changes in career paths for this group of staff.

There is often a lack of understanding about the roles and identities of professional staff and an absence of a defined terminology to describe staff with different roles. There is a problem in the 'labelling' of staff (Gornall, 1999) and as such this compounds the difficulty of identity,

as mentioned previously. Whitchurch's study builds on ideas such as 'fluidity of identity', described by Delanty (2007) and Taylor (2007) as:

> Ways in which individuals are not only interpreting their given roles more actively, but are also moving laterally across functional and organisational boundaries to create new professional spaces, knowledge and relationships. (p.3)

Professional staff were defined as individuals having management roles but not an academic contract (Whitchurch, 2007). They included: general managers in faculties, schools and departments and functional areas such as student services; specialist professionals with accredited qualifications such as finance or human resources; niche specialists dealing with areas in higher education such as quality audit and research management. Whitchurch (2007) identified different categories of professional identity:

- Bounded professionals who work within structural boundaries
- Cross-boundary professionals who actively use boundaries for strategic advantage and institutional capacity building
- Unbounded professionals who disregard boundaries to focus on broadly-based projects and institutional development
- Blended professionals who span professional and academic domains. (p.7)

The bounded professionals, Whitchurch suggests, position themselves within the boundaries of a function or organisational location that they had either constructed for themselves or had imposed on them. In comparison, the cross-boundary professionals take advantage of their knowledge of territories either side of the boundaries and use this to their advantage. This group of staff are likely to have hybrid roles which require them to form relationships with different communities of staff. The unbounded professionals tend to disregard boundaries and these two groups, cross-boundary and unbounded, have extended their roles beyond their original job descriptions. However, the final category, the blended professionals that Whitchurch identifies, are the group that are being recruited to dedicated appointments which span both administrative and academic domains and McAlpine (2008) suggests that as identities multiply, different groups across the university have to work with each other with internal networks overlapping and intersecting. There are likely to be conflicts of interest between academic and administrative staff in all but the first of these categories and the issue of identity is likely to be more problematic because of the lack of understanding about how these staff fit into organisational communities (Whitchurch, 2007).

Clegg (2008) does not mention administrative identity in her research, she discussed the idea of hybrid roles in relation to academics taking on blended roles, but the issue of hybridity is also informing wider practices in higher education in relation to administrative functions. Many administrators are now taking on work which was once considered to be the responsibility of academics, for example, areas of student support, marketing, recruitment and selection of students, and there are new roles being created to respond to the increasing demands of students and national agendas. Therefore there are necessarily transitions from one area to another and some administrators may be working closer to the academic spectrum of teaching and learning, but academics continue to be the main players in mainstream teaching and research.

Whitchurch (2007) goes on to identify the characteristics of the 'third space' which has emerged, inhabited primarily by unbounded and blended professionals. The third space is exemplified by teams that are both multi-functional and multi-professional, often working on short term projects such as bids for external funding and quality initiatives as well as longer term projects, for example widening participation, employability, careers, leadership and management development. There are implications for individuals, including:

A sense of belonging to a particular project or team as opposed to a specific organisational or professional location, both in terms of their credibility in their current roles and future career paths. (Whitchurch, 2007, p.8)

In contrast to Whitchurch, Gornall (1999) suggested that there is an upstairs/downstairs in the United Kingdom University – traditionally there have only been two categories of staff - 'academics' and everyone else. The way in which this has been characterised has survived a number of revisions, for which she considers there are some more positive and inclusive than others:

academic:	non-academic staff
teaching:	non-teaching staff
lecturing:	technical, administrative, managerial staff
tutoring:	support roles.

All of these roles would be classed as bounded professionals (Whitchurch, 2007). These categories appear to reflect the division between academics and administrators which inevitably impacts on the division between status and the role, again causing friction between diverse groups of staff. This could be likened to a class or stratification model

(Knight, 1996) with 'upstairs/downstairs' being interpreted in negative terms when labelling support staff. But an alternative view could focus on functions and/or goals, whereby in the university the key function is teaching/research which is carried out by academics, with the 'others' supporting these functions. Gornall (1999) suggests that even allowing for the centrality of the learning or academic function in higher education, it is unusual that a large part of the sector is swept up and grouped together as a negative category. It is still common to hear the distinction made, either between 'academic' and 'non-academic' or 'teaching' and 'non teaching' staff. Gornall suggests that in education, people are aware of these phrases and their inadequacies, but Knight (1996) observes that the distinctions are telling reflections of the British class system, implying unequal value and differences in perceived status. Hendry (1995) agrees confirming that employees in an organisation are often not treated the same. Although these comments were made in relation to higher education distinctions, they can be generalised to class distinctions.

Gornall (1999) noted that a current term in popular use today for non-teaching staff is 'support staff', but this retains an upstairs/downstairs flavour. The term 'support staff' does not differentiate amongst staff such as those who work in Human Resources, Finance, Registry, Estates, Library, Technical Support, Student Services, for example. Each of these departments will have its own cultural distinctions. Handy (1985) suggests that formal hierarchies are best suited to a role culture where he suggests the job or job description is more important than the individual who fills it. Tasks, accountability and responsibility are clearly defined and Handy suggests that individual departments or functions can be very strong and self contained, guarding their own power.

Gornall (1999) also suggests that there are now 'new professionals', an emergent group of staff who are employed in roles clustered around changing forms of support for teaching and learning and often have non-traditional job titles, cross role posts and non-traditional contracts and conditions of service. New professionals are likely to have unbounded or blended roles and have been appointed because of their specific expertise and qualifications. There is a changing discourse about teaching and learning as opposed to subjects and research, recipients of education as 'customers' are at the centre of the picture. The new professionals do not see themselves as a group, it is not clear which workplace union they should belong to, which professional journal they might read, which line management structure they belong to. They may have developed their role as part of active 'change management' processes or as a result of new funding incentives or projects (Gornall, 1999). An example of this would be when additional government funded programmes are developed or widening participation initiatives. The work of Gornall, and her

concept of 'new professionals', is significant in this research, and will be drawn upon when the data are analysed in the empirical chapters.

Gornall's findings showed that none of these new professional posts existed before 1991, they have all been created since. In the period leading up to this, there was a decline in traditional full-time academic appointments against significant student number increases and a rise in the use of part time staffing, non-university funded academic posts, sponsored and project-based staffing. New job titles have been developed, such as; Flexible Learning Coordinator; Distance Learning Officer; Project Teaching Tutor; Project Officer; Head of Teaching and Learning Division; Teaching and Learning Coordinator; Head of Centre for Educational Development and Media; Team Leader, Academic Services. New departments were developed with a variety of contracts and pay scales produced and the previous background of staff changed from more traditional backgrounds. Some of the reasons for new posts being identified are: restructuring; establishment of new educational support groups; creation of a career structure for staff with shortage skills; funding available from Funding Councils; support for academic staff/student needs; improvement of support and learner autonomy for a heterogeneous student body. This would suggest that many of these new roles would not be traditionally either academic or administrative, and would be classed as blended, many being hybrid in nature, and the idea of a 'third space' as identified by Whitchurch (2007) is where this group would be likely to 'fit'.

Gornall (1999) concludes that "in a changing higher education world there are few certainties, including those for the teaching and learning 'new professionals" (p.48). She considers the views of O'Neill (1994) who suggests that "they are inhabitants of the 'new territory' between teaching and non-teaching roles and that they still have no real settled status in the current educational pantheon" (p. 48). It could, however, be argued whether these 'inhabitants' would be active agents of change. Gornall suggests that they are 'threshold' people who fall on or between the boundaries of categories, a 'liminal' status, which social anthropologists argue, carries implications of both marginalisation (Leach, 1976), and power (Douglas,1966; Turner, 1969). Gornall (1999) suggests that:

> New professional roles can be regarded as *marginal*, since the newer posts in higher education can often carry insecure contracts and their incumbents may be less integrated into existing professional, staffing and trade union networks; and *powerful* to the extent that it may be associated with change required by executive groups, who may circumvent normal reporting lines and afford post-holders elements of discretion and range of work that traditional roles may lack. (p.48)

The Dearing Report (1997) also suggested that 'new professional' staff reported the highest levels of job satisfaction but were also the most likely to leave the higher education sector to gain career progression. Questions which I have considered are whether 'new professionals' recognise their liminality and the hybrid nature of the role, and whether they feel both valued and/or invisible; and their aspirations. These will be analysed in the empirical chapters.

Hall (2009) identified that scholars must engage with the vital creative support teams that underpin their work and highlighted that:

> If institutions are to meet the challenges of competition and change and achieve world class status, they must embrace the fact that administration is now part of the academy and that it can become a force for innovation if handled creatively and flexibly. (p.1)

Hall suggests that one of the biggest myths in higher education is that all academics hate administration. Disciplines are becoming more complex and inter-disciplinary teaching and research are growing in importance, requiring more sophisticated, although not more complicated administration. Structures need to change and administrative processes need to be integrated so that their efficiency and effectiveness are not compromised by new structural boundaries. Hall (2009) identifies that many administrative staff are already involved in learning development, learner support, widening participation and commercialising research and he considers that universities can no longer expect academics to be the sole drivers of innovation, even in those areas that have traditionally been left to them.

This section, which relates to my third research question, has examined the professional roles and organisational factors that impact on the work that university administrators are undertaking and identifies the related literature. I agree with the views of the authors who all have the same opinion that education administration is complex and requires the skills of a diverse range of staff, that it should be viewed as a profession and that universities would not run efficiently without trained administrators. The variety of roles administrators undertake has changed and Whitchurch (2007, 2008, 2010), Hall (2009) and Gornall (1999) all concur that staff should be working together in teams or partnerships in order for universities to survive in the current climate. Whitchurch identifies the complexity of roles in modern universities and talks about the fuzzy boundaries between the spheres of activity, whereas Gornall (1999) says that there are only two categories of staff in universities,

academics and everyone else, which does not reflect the diversity of roles being undertaken. The terms 'upstairs' and 'downstairs' are also mentioned by Gornall, which links very much to the divide discussed previously, but Gornall also suggests that there is a group of staff who are classed as 'new professionals' who do not appear to belong to any particular category because their work is in supporting teaching and learning. This links to the research by Whitchurch when she talks about a 'third space' which is where staff undertaking hybrid roles feel most comfortable. The new job titles which have been developed, as discussed by Gornall, do not indicate that the post holders are on a particular contract, either academic or administrative. I am in agreement with Hall (2009) when he says that structures need to change and administrative processes need to be unified and not compromised by structural boundaries. Academics will need to embrace the important role that administration plays in supporting their work.

The final section will now consider the literature reviewed for the remaining conceptual theme which is related to how the culture of universities can impact on the relationships between academics and administrators and whether this affects administrators gaining credibility and support to move into academia or taking on academic roles.

2.5   Gaining Acceptance Within The Academic Community and Cultural Facilitators

The concept of 'organisational culture' emerged as a widely accepted, discussed and used instrument of analysis in the 1980s developed by Max Weber with demonstrations of 'strong' cultures based on shared beliefs and values and other characteristics of 'weak' central culture and leadership with strong sub-group identities. The culture of departments and organisations is formed and changed in part by leadership and in many cases senior management may try to determine a corporate culture, imposing corporate values and standards of behaviour that specifically reflect the objectives of the organisation (Handy, 1985). Handy also suggests that there are often bottom-up elements which impact on the culture where 'professional actors' and work groups have their own behavioural quirks and interactions which may affect the whole system. Schein (1992) claims that leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin, and that the dynamics of groups can help develop strategies for changing an organisation's culture. Schein also suggests that culture finds meaning in the philosophy that guides an organisation's policy; the rules that guide its everyday life; and the feelings or climate that are conveyed within the organisation, and that organisational culture is the collective behaviours of individuals as influenced by the values and policies of an organisation, manager or codes of practice. Silver (2003) considered two

questions: "Does the university have a culture?" and "Do academic staff think there is a 'culture' in their organisations?"

The literature that explored the university and college as cultural entities did offer typologies based on ethnographic or structural methodologies (Chaffee and Tierney, 1988; McNay, 1995). From the mid-1980s research and discussion internationally focused externally on the impacts of managerial and market driven policies on higher education and the way academics define and indicate themselves in a culture or subculture (Clark, 1984, 1987; Becher, 1989; Evans, 1988, 1990). It can be debated whether higher education can or cannot be classed as a unitary entity. The notion of shared values is used as a framework. Clark (1983) describes 'major social entities' as having "a symbolic side, a culture as well as a social structure, some shared accounts that help define for participants who they are, what they are doing, why they are doing it' (p.72).

Since academics have a strong sense of affiliation with their occupation, Clark's emphasis also introduces the complex nature of the 'shared' culture of the subject, alongside the values of the academic system as represented in institutions, and the culture of the academic profession internationally. This can lead to the likelihood of rival or conflicting values and allegiances. Becher (1984, 1990) suggests that reasonably prestigious departments most clearly delineate and embody the central values of the discipline. Becher (1990) proposed that an academic culture is:

A shared set of meanings, beliefs, understanding and ideas; in short, a taken-for-granted way of life, in which there is a reasonably clear difference between those on the inside and those on the outside of the community. Part of the sharing and sense of community, resides in the taken-for-granted aspects of the culture. (p.159)

Barnett (2000), however, considered that:

Large multi-faculty universities – and even relatively small institutions – are a conglomerate of knowledge factions, interests and activities. We cannot assume that the manifold activities of the 'multiversity' have anything in common. It follows the notion that there could be a single binding characteristic that all constituent parts of the university share, that there could be an essence has to be suspect. (p.48)

Silver's (2003) research identified some differences in the pursuit of institutional cultures and he found that that there were different cultures apparent in a high profile, research-oriented, old university or a former polytechnic, whether a new 'green fields' early 1960s' university or an inner-city institution resulting from a merger, a small university that had grown modestly in

recent decades or a large rapidly expanding one. This depended on many different variables, such as types of student profiles, for example, part-time mature and minority students, and related issues concerning access. The management of the academic culture (Dill,1982) assumed that academic organisations were academic communities but Dill noted that weakening of shared beliefs in an academic culture had been accompanied by a failure to manage it, part of the decline of universities could be attributed to the loss of a 'unifying system of belief'. McNay (1995) suggests that:

> There are overlapping cultures (collegial, bureaucratic, enterprising and corporate) and that universities are not mono-cultural but each includes elements of the others in a scenario of shifting balances. (p.164)

Whereas, Taylor (1999) suggests that:

> As external pressures change, the relative value of each layer changes, yet none need be actively removed ... Cultures are social achievements, not inanimate layers of sediment ... Rather than regard these cultures as competing-to-the-death, they are better understood as adaptively coexisting. (p.75)

Astin (1993) advocates the idea of a 'community of scholars' but considers that "we have the scholars but not the community", and characterises the modern university as "a 'collection' rather than a 'community' of scholars" (p. 164). For the purposes of my research which is investigating whether universities have a culture, serving to regulate transitions and integration of different communities of staff, I will be investigating whether it is possible for there to be a unification of cultures which exist in different departments, amongst diverse communities of staff, particularly as organisational culture is heavily dependent on perception and the way in which working conditions are interpreted by individual employees.

Critics of organisational culture as 'corporate culturism', (Wilmott, 1993; Parker, 2000), from the late 1980s, were not addressing the university or speaking for its inhabitants. Issues were about the instability of the academic department (Becher, 1990) and tensions within individuals and groups and problems of diverse staff allegiances and low level integration of subjects within institutions (Evans, 1988). Diverse communities of staff, both academic and administrative, have their own culture and if staff are moving across the divide between one community to another, they may not identify with the culture of that department. There are elements of culture that are unseen and not cognitively identified in everyday interaction between organisational members (Schein, 1985). I would suggest that dealing with the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, which are often under threatening conditions, could

impact on wider institutional relations. But, as Silver (2003) controversially argues, when applied to institutional settings of higher education, the concept of culture has become non-problematic and trivialised. In terms of definitions derived in recent decades from theoretical assumptions about shared norms, values and assumptions, as well as symbols, myths or rituals, he suggests that universities do not have a culture. Individual perceptions of the university are one of chaos or anarchy or of a system of subcultures in perpetual, erratic and damaging tensions, widely held notions of unwelcome change and being under pressure. There are increasing attempts to impose the new onto the obsolete but many are resistant. Such an approach to institutional identity may be viewed as "fragile attempts to disguise the collapse of older patterns, or as crude responses to external pressures and dangers" (p.167).

Silver (2003) goes on to suggest that:

> The contemporary university may be conceived as a 'culture of tolerance of diversity', a 'culture of extreme diversity' or a 'culture of fragmentation in tension' but these are unhelpful. (p.167)

Organisational culture has been used in relation to higher education to attempt the impossible task of representing its 'collections' as unitary and explicable and Silver (2003) implies that universities do not now have an organisational culture

I have discussed the argument about culture and structures in universities as part of the research and the perceptions from this group of participants will be analysed in the empirical/data analyses chapters. To pursue this argument, the work of Schein (1992) was drawn upon. Looking at his model of organisational culture which originated in the 1980s, Schein suggests that:

> The significance of culture can be observed in behavioural regularities, that is, through social interaction, in the norms that evolve within working groups; and in the dominant values espoused within an organisation. Culture finds meaning in the philosophy that guides an organisation's policy; the rules that guide its everyday life, and in the feelings or climate that are conveyed in the organisation. (p.2)

These meanings do reflect the organisation's culture, but they are not the culture itself. For Schein, culture is the deeper level – basic, shared assumptions that operate unconsciously and that are largely taken for granted by an organisation's members.

One example of this is in my own department where sub-cultures exist between the diverse groups of academic staff and the different profiles of the students. The staff involved in teacher training have a sub-culture that has been shaped by school experience, compliance with Government and Ofsted directives, and who work with postgraduate motivated trainees; in contrast, the staff working on the undergraduate courses have a sub-culture of mainstream academic courses with very often de-motivated full time students. Tensions are evident when these cultures 'collide' when staff are asked to teach across different programmes. This can then impact on the administrative staff who are supporting their academics.

Conole (2003) produced a different model for organisational cultures for distinct types of organisations and I will refer to these, which I consider summarise and encapsulate in simple terms what other authors have discussed, in the following chapters, when the culture of the different types of universities will be examined in relation to the hybridisation of roles. From my own experience, I have noticed that there is often a culture in university departments that differs from that of the overall culture of the organisation and the existence of sub-cultures may often shape the relationships between different professional groups. For most universities there are bureaucratic structures in place with a hierarchy of control but in many departments a more collegiate structure is often evident. Conole (2003, pp 4-5) suggested that in a collegiate culture, there is a dual structure of administrative and academic management which results in parallel committee structures which can act as a black hole for decision making. In collegiate organisations there tend to be unclear reporting lines and poor communication, with strong local cultures, agendas and identifiers. The academic status is perceived as higher than support or administrative functions where there are strong subject-specific allegiances with academics who often feel a stronger alliance to their subject area and external networks than the institutional mission (Conole, 2003). A bureaucratic culture is characterised by strong central management and top-down decision making, the hierarchy of control and decision making is clearly established in the administrative and management structures of the institutions. Management roles are clearly defined as career progressions, and can include heads of department and other members of senior management, who are appointed through an interview process to tenured positions. Central management has strong control over the direction of the strategic priorities for the institution. Many universities and their departments are likely to display elements of these two cultures.

As many academics are arguing that new modes of university management are at odds with scholarly aims and values, it will be important for management to recognise that the

institution as a whole is more important than its parts and that "the academic and administrative sections must work together to that end" (Cowburn, 2005, p.109).

Research undertaken by Anderson, et al., (2002) suggests that academics often find their management inconsiderate, unhelpful and [sometimes bullying], and largely disinterested in what they (the academics) are doing and coping with. My research investigates areas of management and support provided by line managers in particular and will consider how important it is for staff to feel valued. Although Anderson et.al.,'s research was undertaken in Australia twelve years ago, there are very clear similarities to the situation that British universities are finding themselves in now, and therefore I considered this was important research to underpin areas of this study.

This section has investigated literature around organisational structures and cultures. This is a concept which is modern in its origin yet already has ingrained itself as an important aspect of business and management. Organisational culture is the employee's sense of professional self, affirmed through habitual actions in the workplace and the interpretation of social interactions which contribute to the ethos of an organisation (Rollinson, 2008).

Tim Melville-Ross, the Chair of HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England), presented a key-note speech to the Association of University Administrators' Annual Conference in 2009, on 'Leadership, Governance and Management: challenges for the future of higher education'. The following is a summary of his speech which in my view will help the argument for the need for flexibility in the way organisations are managed and governed.

> The current global financial climate provides monumental challenges for anyone in a leadership position in higher eduation who will have to deal with the most difficult economic circumstances that any of us have experienced; the importance of the role of higher education in helping to deal with these; increasing demands from students for a truly 'valuable student experience'; increasing demands from society for Higher Education Institutions to find solutions to our problems, and not just economic ones; increasing competition between Higher Education Institutions and between national higher education systems; demographic change and political change.

> These factors will impact on leadership, governance and management in the sector. The overriding focus will be on building institutional capacity to manage in a faster-paced and agile environment with greater complexity. This will lead to new leadership models, broader resourcing strategies and more effective governance

oversight. There are implications for universities, within a ten to fifteen year timeframe the sector will become more dynamic and more flexible. This means more business models, more varied and flexible employment contracts, increased input from professionals, practitioners and staff at all levels. Current academic contracts, charters and statutes will require amendment if they amount to significant barriers to change in terms and conditions of employment and the move towards a more flexible and responsive workforce. New professional groups will emerge, such as learning technologists and employability officers.

In my view, this speech encapsulates what my research is trying to achieve and I anticipate that the data will endorse the views highlighted above.

In order to gain acceptance into the academic community administrators have to be credible and the literature has highlighted that this is often difficult unless they have the support of an 'academic champion'. There is very little literature around the issue of how administrators can gain credibility within the academic community. Whitchurch (2007, p.9) highlights that credibility within an institution increasingly depends on being able to build a profile in the local situation and may need to be facilitated by:

- Gaining the support of a key individual, such as a Pro Vice Chancellor
- Obtaining academic credentials such as a Master's or Doctoral degree
- Finding a 'safe space' in which to experiment with new forms of activity and relationships
- Being comfortable with organisational 'messiness' (de Rond, 2003) and projects that may be unfinished or unfinishable
- Being able to use ambiguity to advantage, eg, an individual might use the fact that they do not have a clear association with a specific organisational or professional location to build common ground with different constituencies.

There are implications for institutions, organisational restructuring is a feature of institutional life, it should be informed by consideration of the nature of boundaries, and the way individuals operate around them.

2.6   Summary of Chapter Two

The literature review discusses comprehensively some of the complexities surrounding the area of professional transitions within higher education.

The four conceptual themes have been discussed separately, but I have shown that what links them together is the fact that they are discussing elements of the relationship between academics and administrators and the concept of a divide in universities between academics and other communities of staff. I consider that it has been important to deconstruct the professional boundaries and identities which exist in universities in order to make sense of the complex set of relationships which appear to exist. I have highlighted that there are many overlapping areas in relation to the conceptual themes which stem from the main focus of my research. It is worth reiterating here that the group of administrators interviewed as part of this study are working in traditional 'non-academic' roles, who have climbed the 'career ladder' and are now holding senior positions of a hybrid nature. Administrators are not a homogenous group and there will be differences or divisions between them, with some being more professionally oriented and qualified. The differences in types of administrative roles have been discussed in this chapter and will be explored more in the empirical chapters.

I have also identified that there are other limitations in the available literature. Areas such as parity of esteem across the disciplines and research into types of contracts that staff are paid on, are not covered in this literature, there is limited literature on working relationships and administrative staff credibility, and this study will seek to address these gaps. As I made an initial decision not to interview academics, partly for logistical reasons and also because when choosing my sample, I realised that there were participants who had been academics in the past, I decided that the literature review would provide me with the data I required to be able to answer my research question. The thesis also talks about students and their increased expectations but as no students were interviewed as part of this study it is not known whether their perception is that there are problems amongst the group of staff who are supporting them through their university experience. But as Barnett and DiNapoli (2008) indicate:

> For any identity, there is a characteristic voice. The voice is the projection of the identity into the world. But a single academic, or a single student (or any other member of any sub-group in academe) may have several academic identities, and, so, have several voices. After all, an academic or a student may be positioned in multiple networks within academe. (p. 198)

This could be the subject of future research into this very complex area. The following chapter will now discuss the methodological approach developed for this study.

Chapter 3 – The Design of the Research Study

3.1 Introduction to Chapter Three

Having outlined the research problem and a review of the literature in the previous chapters, I will now discuss the research process undertaken for this study, explaining my choice of research methodology and outlining the reasons for its suitability. In the course of the investigation, I have explored a variety of research traditions, to develop an empirical understanding of whether there is an academic/administrative divide in contemporary universities in the United Kingdom, and if there is, how this operates and how it affects the relationship between academics and administrators.

3.2 The Methodological Framework

This is a qualitative study reporting the professional histories, narratives and professional biographies of a group of staff working in a variety of higher education institutions, and looking at the intersection of personal and organisational change and how this has impacted on them. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, and the verbalised and transcribed data were analysed. The content of the interviews focused on four major areas which linked to the main research question, which was primarily considering the relationships between different groups of staff in universities, particularly between academics and administrators. The four areas are *"the academic/administrative divide and working relationships (RQ1); "professional identities" (RQ2); "professional roles and organisational factors" (RQ3); and "gaining acceptance within the academic community and cultural facilitators" (RQ4).* The following sections of this chapter will now provide background information which has underpinned the research process.

3.3 The Underlying Approach to The Research

There are many issues to consider before commencing research, including the nature of educational enquiry, the model of social science in its changing forms, and the links between language and concepts of research and those of practice (Pring, 2000).

In relation to my study, I considered that it was important to find out about the participants' attitudes, beliefs and opinions on the relationships between academics and administrators through their personal experiences and professional narratives. Narrative approaches to the study of self and identity are viable tools for understanding how individuals represent the development of their identities in telling their stories (Overton, 1993). Educational personnel need to come to terms with the constraints and conditions in which they work (Goodson, 1998), and Watson (2008) in his summary of academic identities and the story of institutions, suggests that social anthropologists and moral philosophers would agree on one thing – that

personal identity is tied up in a narrative, or life course. Watson goes on to talk about story-telling/narrative in complex organisations and suggests that there needs to be a connection between the big story and all of the little stories that parts of the organisation like to tell about their students, themselves and their achievements. These authors appear to be agreeing that how people perceive the multifaceted environments in which they work impacts on their professional biographies.

The use of professional narrative as a means of obtaining entry to the stories and experiences of the individuals who will be the narrators in this study, in particular those, who like myself, have experienced changes and challenges in their professional roles, will be crucial to this research. Robson (1993) suggests that it is important to develop a detailed portrait using a descriptive approach and that "a narrative account is based on the events for which you have been involved" and he likens this to "an investigative journalist who is after the 'story', but that the difference is that the researcher has to go beyond the story" (p. 200). It is hoped that by investigating the professional trajectories of the participants, my research will provide a set of fresh insights into the identities of higher education administrators today, which it is anticipated may produce discourse/debate. In undertaking the research within university structures, careful consideration was given to ensuring that the conditions of a successful big story were met. I had to try to ensure that the participants' stories were authentic (believable), autonomous (the authors have to be in control), adaptable (with changing roles and responsibilities), analytical (based on an understanding of what is really going on) and if necessary, ambitious (Watson, 2008, p. 187).

Therefore, for this research it seemed appropriate to use the narrative approach which emphasises the interplay between interviewer and interviewee to construct life histories (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2003). Bolton (2005) suggests that "listeners' roles are just as important as writers" (p.21) and she cites Levi (1998) as saying:

> So there is an art of listening ... Every narrator is aware from experience that to every narration the listener makes a decisive contribution: a distracted or hostile audience can unnerve any teacher or lecturer; a friendly public sustains. But the individual listener also shares responsibility for that work of art that every narration is. (p. 35)

I have investigated the narrative of others through the interview process, although being aware that I was not able to put myself inside their narratives, but I have attempted to gain an insight and understanding of their experiences. Listening to the stories of others, and sharing experiences, shows that narrative telling is an important part of our lives and as Goodson (1998) comments: "Stories do social and political work. A story is never just a

story – it is a statement of belief, of morality, it speaks about value" (p. 20). The interviews I held with the participants demonstrated that through tracking their professional stories, I was able to gain an understanding of their beliefs and values about what they considered were the significant factors which impacted on their working lives. My own biography of working as both an administrator and an academic, which is mentioned in the first chapter, also informs my research and I was able to reflect on my experiences in relation to the participants' narratives.

My research has been presented using a 'naturalistic enquiry', which Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) suggest is:

> A first person life history in which the life story is largely in the words of the individual subject, supported by a brief introduction, commentary and conclusion on the part of the researcher. (p.166)

and that research is carried out in the natural setting or context of the enquiry being studied (Robson, 1993). A comparison has been made between the different participants and I have tried to represent their subjective reality in order to validate the data, which was also thematically edited. An empirical study has been undertaken to be able to use and interpret the observable data gained from the study participants (Aspin, 1995).

I consider that the answers given to the questions for my research are human constructions and "as they are inventions of the human minds and are therefore subject to human error" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p.108), I hope to argue my position and persuade the reader to accept my analysis. In 1750 Dr Samuel Johnson said: "I have often thought that there has rarely passed a life of which a judicious and faithful narrative would not be useful" (cited by Erben, 2009). This was a starting point when undertaking the interviews. The research was illuminative and I needed to consider the importance of narrative, as argued by Macintyre (1985) when he suggested that:

> The enacted drama of selfhood is empirically unpredictable. We do not literally know what will happen next and sometimes, to confirm this, the unexpected will occur. (p. 216)

Macintyre (1985) also suggests the following as a definition of narrative:

> It is because we live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives we live out, that the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others. (p.212)

It is acknowledged (Pring, 2000) that how people see the world depends upon ideas which have been inherited and that different societies and social groups conceive the world differently. This was particularly important to remember when interviewing the participants in my research in relation to professional identities and relationships between groups of staff, because of the way each perceive the importance and status of each other's roles. I realised that much of my understanding of the narratives of these participants would be subjective as the research undertaken was dealing with individuals and their perceptions. There is also a strong biographical element to my research and it was important for me to be aware of participants' intentions and motives and how they understood or interpreted the questions. It was vital that I was able to be unbiased, as during questioning my own narrative could influence what the participants were saying. It was also important for me to see things from their points of view and to think objectively about the subjective meanings being portrayed by them. As Pring (2000) suggests:

> There needs to be a redefinition of 'objective' and 'subjective' as there can be nothing objective in the sense of something which exists independently of the world of ideas which either privately or in consensus with others has been constructed. (p. 50)

Pring (2000) also proposes that there may be ambiguity in what is being said and that this could leave room for misinterpretation, which could also mean that "the social reality is changed if those misinterpretations shape the relationship" (p.103). I would argue therefore that the qualitative data which I have gained from the participants have provided me with a rich insight into their behaviour and their relationships between communities of staff, and the interaction between the individuals and organisational factors.

Through the interviews I investigated whether the participants have had to construct their identities around the structures in which they find themselves working and whether this has impacted on their morale and motivation, which may then inhibit career aspirations.

The implications for personal identity which are an on-going thread throughout this research are suggested by Burr (1995) to be:

> ... constructed out of the discourses culturally available to us, and which we draw upon in our communications with other people ... discourses of age, gender, education, sexuality, etc. (p. 51)

She then suggests that "there is a danger that we can become paralysed by the view that individual people can really do nothing to change themselves or their world" (p. 60).

Through the interviews I investigated whether identities need to be fixed, or whether they can be changed and as Burr (1995) suggests:

> Human agents are capable (given the right circumstances) of critically analysing the discourses which frame their lives, and of claiming or resisting them according to the effects they wish to bring about (p. 90).

For my research I wanted to have a flexible model in order to pursue the professional narratives of the participants and to be able to explore their stories (Charmaz, 2006). I used my own interests to bring 'self-concept, identity and duration' into the study and used these concepts of 'points of departure' to form interview questions, to look at data, to listen to participants and to think analytically about the data (Charmaz, 2006). The pen portrait I have provided was my starting point for the interview questions and from this I generated my four key research questions (see page 14).

During my interviewing, narratives were taking place, rapport was being established and the participants allowed me to see their worlds and their actions within them. I will demonstrate to the reader that my research has credibility and will provide evidence that there are strong links between the data and my argument and analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Although there has been some research undertaken in similar areas (Whitchurch, 2006, 2007, 2008), I will establish that my research is original and that it will challenge current ideas and practices about how work is distributed within universities, I will build concepts around emerging conceptual themes from the data, which will include the development of hybrid roles, how relationships could be improved, embracing ideas of partnerships, structures and identities.

3.4 Population and Sample

Empirical research involves sampling and as Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest: "You cannot study everyone everywhere doing everything" (p.27). Initially a decision had to be made about the sampling strategy to be used and consideration given to the size, representativeness, parameters of, and access to, the sample. It was important to understand the philosophical principles which underpin the various approaches to be used, and the idea that the research undertaken was looking at the professional histories of both the interviewees and myself, as the researcher.

3.4.1 The Sample Population

To put this into context, The Association of University Administrators reported than in the academic year 2009/10, there were two hundred and fifteen thousand administrators working in higher education. These figures were taken from the HESA (Higher Education

Statistical Agency) records and can be misleading because the categories used cover a wide range of staff. The categories are: Managers; Non-academic professionals; Student welfare workers, careers advisors, vocational training instructors, personnel and planning officers; Artistic, media, public relations, marketing and sports occupations; Library assistants, clerks and general administrative assistants; Secretaries, typists, receptionists and telephonists (HESA, 2010).

The target population encompasses a variety of different educational backgrounds, ages, life stages, geographical locations and employment histories. When planning the original research I decided that a questionnaire would be sent to a large population through the Association of University Administrators' network which has approximately four thousand members. Although I understood that this would only reach about two percent of administrators, as it is not mandatory for university staff to be members, I considered that this would be representative of the 'administrative' education sector I was researching, that is, the last two of the HESA categories, including those from a mix of universities, pre and post-1992, and a mix of levels of seniority, age, gender and discipline, in particular those staff who have hybrid roles which may belong to a 'third space' of being neither academic or administrative functions. It transpired that although the Association of University Administrators has members who are a mix of seniority, all but one of the respondents were staff who had climbed the career ladder and were now holding senior positions.

For the purposes of this research I decided to limit the sample to administrative staff working in universities located in England and who undertook functions which crossed the normal boundaries associated with educational roles. An attempt was made to achieve a balance across disciplines and areas of professional practice and to gain the views of a group of diverse individuals. This was carried out by contacting the Association's network to explore the diversity of roles being undertaken by administrators in universities in the United Kingdom and from the responses I received I was able to interrogate the different types of roles they held and their physical location. This was important as I had now decided that I would only be undertaking interviews and would need to consider the logistics of visiting the universities.

3.4.2 The Sample Profile

As mentioned above the group of staff chosen as the sample all hold senior positions of a hybrid nature in their universities. It also included a Deputy Vice Chancellor, in order to gain a perspective from someone (an academic) who had achieved a very senior administrative position. There was a good range of ages, life stages and generations in the sample, ages ranged from the youngest of thirty five to the eldest of over sixty years of age and were from

a cross section of universities around England. I have used pseudonyms in order to protect the participants' identities.

Table 1   **Age Profile of the 15 Participants**

Age	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-65
Participants	5	5	3	2

Although this was initially to be a random sample, I then followed the principle of purposeful sampling, as I selected fifteen individuals from thirty two of the sixty seven respondents who were not only undertaking hybrid roles and who worked in universities that I considered were in driving distance (maximum of four hours driving time) from Portsmouth, but who also indicated that they considered that there may be some problems with relationships between them and other groups of staff. I had previously undertaken a presentation of the very early stages of my research at an annual Association of University Administrators' conference, and some of the respondents had also attended this presentation and had requested to be part of my research. The questions on the original email invited respondents to talk about their experiences, and making career trajectories and would have informed the types of answers provided, from which I was able to choose the sample. All respondents mentioned that in their view they had experienced, or knew of others who had experienced, problems with relationships between groups of staff, and that there was, from the information they provided on their initial responses, a divide in universities. The responses from the other thirty five respondents either did not mention the roles they undertook and/or they were in universities which logistically I would not have been able to visit.

Participants came from thirteen small, mid-sized and large universities, which were a mixture of pre-92 (2), post-92 (8), and Russell group (4), and one self-governing college linked to a Russell Group university. In general there was one participant from each university, but in two cases, two individuals were interviewed. I decided on a mix of universities in order to be able to compare the different experiences of the staff working within them and to investigate whether there were any organisational/cultural factors that impacted on them that may have been different across institutions. I considered that in this way I would collect rich data from a diverse group of staff from a range of universities, with different line management structures, cultures and values, rather than only using one or two universities which may not have yielded as much useful data.

Table 2 **Profile of Institutions/Participants**

Type of University	Participant
Russell Group	Joanna, Louise, Chris, Joy
Pre-1992	Emma, Carol
Post-1992	John, Mary, Sarah, Anna, Susan, Elaine, Lucy, Jane
Self-Governing College	Mark

Table 3 **Geographical Location of the 15 Participants**

Portsmouth	2
Southampton	1
Bristol	1
Worcester	2
West and East Midlands	7

In terms of ethnic backgrounds the sample is predominately 'White British'. There were twelve white females, one Indian female, and two white males chosen for the sample and this also reflected the ethnicity of the respondents who were not interviewed.

Table 4 **Ethnicity and Gender Profile of the 15 Participants**

White British females	12
Indian female	1
White British males	2

The gender imbalance reflects, in my view, the fact that in higher education, as in many other educational sectors, the majority of administrators are female (AUA, 2012). Again, this was also representative of the respondents who were not interviewed.

It will be seen that inadvertently, all but one of those who were interviewed held high level positions in their universities and it could be argued that the data collected may have been

different had the sample been with a group of lower level administrative staff. These positions are discussed below but include Managers who are at different levels of the university hierarchies, Academic Registrars, Directors/Heads of Departments and Lecturers. I noted that some of the respondents I was unable to interview for logistical reasons, did appear to hold lower level positions, although as will be discussed in this research, because of the variety of titles across the sector, without further exploration, it is not always straightforward to identify the level, which may be the subject of future research. These included a Faculty Administrator, an Undergraduate Administrator, a Secretariat Officer, a Project Officer, a Health and Safety Technician, a Course Administrator and a Graduation Officer. This will be discussed and analysed in the final chapter. None of the participants identified any disabilities.

3.4.2.1 Summary of Participants' Professional Histories

The following section provides the reader with a brief summary of each of the participants' professional histories. It is anticipated that this summary will help the reader to see why this sample profile of fifteen participants was chosen. Three of the participants are currently on academic contracts (Mary, Carol and Anna), the remainder are on administrative/academic-related contracts.

John is a Business Development Manager in a new University and has spent most of his professional life in education and he has worked in community work, schools, adult education and a Local Authority. Since working at the university his role is to secure external funding for full cost contracts for his Faculty. His experience and expertise in working as an academic before coming to the university gives him the credibility to be accepted by academics when he is working with them on the work involved in securing and managing contracts.

Mary is a Deputy Vice Chancellor at a small new University in the West of England. She has always worked in education but for eight years she was a teacher in a Further Education College teaching undergraduate students. She also has undertaken research in curriculum development. The college in which she was employed then merged with a Russell Group University and her role was then mainly administrative. She was paid on an academic related contract which was lower than the equivalent post in a new university and in order to pursue her academic career Mary had to move to a smaller, new university, where she is now employed.

Sarah is an Academic Support Unit Manager in a new University and has had a varied background but always in administration, with the focus being on general administration,

training or finance. She was a manager in a Building Society for a number of years and then she worked for fifteen years in the local County Council. She has worked in her current university for seven years which has been her only job in education. Sarah is a manager of a team of people who support the academic staff but the department has a large number of external projects for which funding has to be secured. She therefore ensures that she sits on a large number of committees in order to be aware of what is happening in the wider university. This is since a major restructuring took place when line management responsibilities changed.

Anna is now a Lecturer in a new University but after gaining her qualifications took on a position in the local County Council as a teacher, teaching environmental issues to school groups, university groups and adult education, She continued teaching, working on guided walk sessions, information sessions and natural history sessions. Following this experience Anna decided to gain a teaching qualification, which she did, and worked in a school for two years but did not enjoy it. She then took a job in administration in a well known stationery firm as a Training and Development Manager, but she decided that she wanted a job in education, although not in teaching. She was then lucky enough to secure a job in a College which was trying for University status and once this was gained she became the Office Manager. This University was looking to develop its research profile and because Anna had an interest in research, she was asked to take on the administrative role for the Unit. She was then asked to take on the role of Project Officer and Researcher which, on paper, enabled her to move to a more academic position, but not to be an academic. She had already decided that she did not want to be an academic, as one of the reasons that she moved into administration was to reduce the stress levels she was facing as a teacher. However, Anna did then agree to take on some part-time teaching in the Geography department, and she also taught research methods in the Business School. Eventually a full-time academic position came up in the Business School, which after much deliberation, she decided to take.

Susan is a Teaching Support and Quality Manager at a new University. She considers that she had a traditional academic background until the mid-1990s when after gaining her PhD she took on research appointments in Texas and New Zealand, when returning to the UK in 1989 she took on a post in the Civil Service for a short period, she continued with her research career, taking on a third research project until 1992 when she gained a lectureship at her current university. At this time, her husband who was also an academic, wanted her to move to a different part of the country when he was offered a position as a lecturer, and as she had a young family, she took on a part-time Geography research position in the university where he was employed, and she also worked as an Open University lecturer.

The research project then became a spin-off company in 1998 and Susan then transferred into an administrative role as a Company Secretary. Susan also undertook project management and one of the projects was the regional Widening Participation and Access project. In 2002 after four years of running this project, she then moved into an administrative role in an academic department, working with academics, managing the Teaching Support Office, undertaking general administration and quality assurance.

Joanna is now the Head of Biological Services in a Russell Group university. She originally decided to train as an accountant but did not enjoy this type of work and decided to train to teach English for Academic Purposes in Belgium when her husband who was an academic, moved abroad. When they decided to return home, she moved to a Further Education College to teach TESOL and Basic Skills and was planning on developing her teaching skills, but then gained a job in the Library at another university in the North of England. A job then came up in the Overseas Office of the Business School, which appealed to Joanna as she spoke Dutch and French, and it was a good opportunity to use her languages. While her manager was on maternity leave, Joanna was acting up, and then a similar job came up in a different department which she secured. Whilst undertaking this role, her husband moved to another Russell Group university and she applied for, and was accepted for, a job as Assistant Programme Manager of their undergraduate programmes. Again, she was asked to act up in this position and then became the Programme Manager. Because of other personal circumstances Joanna had to move back to the North of England and gained a job as Head of Administration in the School of Law in her current university, which had a very different culture to that which she had been used to. Once established in this position she was then 'head-hunted' for a Business Manager position in the Biological Services department. She accepted this position and then an incoming Vice-Chancellor wanted to restructure into a Faculty structure from schools and departments. A decision was then made that the Biological Services would not 'sit' in a central service and was moved into a faculty when Joanna was promoted by default into the role of Head of Department.

Elaine is the Faculty Quality Manager at a new University, she has always worked in administration but feels that she has worked on the periphery as she has never undertaken student or programme administration. Once she had graduated from university, Elaine looked for jobs in her subject area which was Art but because of a recession it was difficult to find one and therefore she undertook typing qualifications and gained a job as a clerk in a sales office. This was not an area that she originally wanted but she said that gaining keyboard skills was the *'best thing she had done'*. Sixteen years ago she started her first job in education which was at a Further Education College where she was employed as a Placement Officer, finding short placements for groups of students. She then applied for a

job as an Assistant Registrar in Quality and Standards and she has worked in this area for ten years in two different universities. It is interesting that Elaine said that she had no real aspirations when she left university and she 'fell' into administration but now she is very happy being in a professional position as an administrator.

Louise is the Head of Skills Training and Development Team at a Russell Group university and has always worked in education. She has been in her current role for the past 3 years. She started her career as a Maths teacher in a comprehensive school, taught abroad for one year and when she returned to the United Kingdom she again taught Maths, but once she had her children, she decided that she did not want to continue as a school teacher. However, she was asked to do some lecturing and once her Master's was finished gained a three year contract as a lecturer. Following this, she was given a part-time contract to deliver disability advice and then following a restructuring exercise she was given the position of heading up the Support Services department. Louise therefore transferred from being a lecturer to become an administrator running this Unit, which she did for five years and she gradually became more divorced from the teaching and more involved in policy making and the work that comes with the Disability Services. A post was then advertised for an Assistant Director for the Centre for Continuing Education and although it was an administrative position it was managing an academic programme and delivering study skills. Louse said that it was interesting as she was an administrator who managed the programme that she taught on and even acted as Chair for an examination board. The university restructured and a merger took place where the Centre she worked in was disbanded as all funding for adult learning was being removed. Louise then applied for the post that she is in now and she manages a humanities team, designing and delivering transferable skills development for postgraduate and early career students, but on an administrative contract.

Emma is an Assistant Academic Registrar at an old, pre-1992 university and has moved between academic, academic-related and administrative roles. She worked in research areas but did not enjoy the constant round of bidding for contracts and funding and eventually moved from being an academic into an academic-related role in computing, bridging the gap between computing experts and the users. Following a couple of moves within the sector, Emma then moved into a more generic University Information Technology service dealing with management of administrative records, Data Protection and Freedom of Information, alongside university governance. At the same time she was writing and presenting papers at conferences and Emma considered that the more administration she dealt with, the further away she became from her academic background.

Lucy is the Director of Student Affairs at a new University, she did her teacher training to become a school teacher and then moved into academia and was a Lecturer in Politics. At this time the university wanted to diversify into different areas and she was appointed as a Deputy Head of Education in 1992. Many changes took place during this period, the College of Teacher Training merged with the then Polytechnic and the Head of Education took on the role of Head of Student Services and when this Head retired, Lucy was appointed into this role. She then applied for the role of Academic Registrar as she felt that if she remained in this role she would not be part of the mainstream work of the university. During a restructure two campuses merged and Student Services and Registry were combined, staff were made redundant and Lucy became the Head of this merged department, the role in which she is in now. This post is an administrative position on a senior management contract, but Academic Heads are on academic contracts.

Jane is a Student Records Systems Advisor at a new University and she has always worked in education, firstly in a department which related to her Master's degree (Finance), and since then she has worked in various temporary positions in Registry until seven years ago she was appointed to a permanent position as a Faculty Advisor, dealing with finance, examinations and student records. She continued to take on different areas of work and was seconded to a role as systems' analyst which involved testing, producing reports, managing small projects and training. Jane now has a split role, spending half of her time within an academic department and the remainder in a central department.

Chris has worked in education since 2003 but has a split role – her primary role as a Senior Research Assistant and since 2005, a secondary position as a part-time hourly paid Lecturer in History. Both these positions are in the same Russell Group University. She has worked in Timetabling, the Quality Management Unit of Registry, and in the Faculty Research Office.

Joy is the Director of Professional Services and has worked in the same Russell Group University since 1974 and all her full time positions have been in administration but she has also done teaching both in this University (part time and unpaid) and for the Open University (part-time). (See also Joy's story in Chapter 5).

Mark is the School and Community Liaison Officer in a Self-Governing College which is linked to a Russell Group University. He has always worked in education since originally gaining a graduate administrative job in the Russell Group University where he completed his degree, dealing with undergraduate recruitment and running confirmation and degree congregations. Since taking on the role of School and Community Liaison Officer, he is on an academic-related contract and delivers workshops in schools, colleges and prisons to encourage participants to take up Speech and Drama classes. He also undertakes research

into how people progress from A Level Drama and BTEC Drama or if they do not how they use their drama studies in their careers. Mark undertakes a great deal of administration when organising sessions in schools and dealing with Widening Participation, but he also writes papers. He has had opportunities to move into different roles but he says he is *'wedded'* to his subject of Drama, in a very similar way to an academic whose identity is with his/her discipline.

Carol has been working in administration since leaving university in 2000. She is now a Research Associate in the Learning Development Unit at an old University. Originally she worked in a local City Council dealing with payroll and then went to work in a College of Music dealing with examinations and assessment administration. Carol then worked in two Russell Group Universities as a Course Administrator but with her aspirations of moving into a support and welfare role she became a Student Liaison Officer, but although there was very little administration involved, she was still seen as an administrator. At this time Carol was given the opportunity to work on a number of research projects and she then applied for a secondment opportunity as a Researcher for six months and was able to do this part time whilst still undertaking the Student Liaison role. It was during this time that the Research Associate position was advertised, as an academic post, which required a mixture of practical knowledge and experience of students and student issues.

3.4.3   Sampling Strategies and Their Implications

I originally decided that a questionnaire would be sent to the Association of University Administrators' Network (see 3.4.1) but that, in order to make the research manageable from a logistical perspective, a sample of fifteen staff from thirteen diverse universities would be interviewed.

There are obviously advantages and disadvantages of interviews. The interview is a flexible and adaptable way of finding things out, with face to face interviews often providing non-verbal clues giving messages of clarification. The main disadvantages are that interviews are time consuming, highly subjective, can be subject to bias and the analysing of responses can present problems. Notes or transcriptions need to be written up and it is suggested by Robson (1993) that "a one hour tape takes ten hours to transcribe fully" (p. 230). In the case of the interviews undertaken for this research, which was using conversational interviewing (Lee, 1999), transcription did not take as long as this, however, this was still a very lengthy process. As Lee (1999) suggests "the recording of conversational interviews are rarely analysed directly" (p.87) but as I transcribed these myself during the weekends following the interviews, I feel that the transcriptions produced reliable and valid data, which may not have

been the case if the interviews had been transcribed by a third party, and as Lee (1999) adds "unreliable or invalid transcription renders a conversational interview useless" (p.88).

Once the decision had been made to undertake semi-structured interviews, I held one pilot interview with a member of staff from my own university and as a result of this some minor changes were made to the interview questions and the schedule. The data collected from the pilot interview have also been included in the data analysis.

I needed to consider the logistics of the data collection. The research objectives were translated into the questions which were to make up the main body of the schedule and this needed to reflect what I was trying to find out, which was whether there is an academic/administrative divide in higher education. The list of questions can be found in Appendix 1, and are summarised and analysed in the Data Analyses chapters.

I required flexibility in the discussions and when considering the type of interviewing I required, I considered the idea of 'fitness for purpose' as I wished to obtain unique, non-standardised, personalised information about how individuals view the world. I elected for qualitative, open-ended, unstructured interviews, but with the benefit of having pre-determined questions as an aide-memoire. Because of the narrative nature of my research, semi-structured interviews were therefore deemed to be the most appropriate method to be used.

I prepared the interview schedule, using Cohen, Manion and Morrison's (2003, p. 276) model, which included:

- The topic to be discussed – this was the overall research aim which was to investigate whether there is an academic/administrative divide in contemporary UK universities and if there is, how it operates and how if affects the relationship between academics and administrators.

- The specific questions – the overall topic was split into the four key research questions which have been identified previously.

- The issues within each of the four key questions as highlighted in Appendix C.

- A series of prompts and probes for each issue and question. These were not required as the participants were keen to answer the questions as they were presented.

I produced a matrix of questions (Appendix 2) linked to each of the four key research questions in order to provide in-depth individual data and to gain a range of responses which would then be coded to reflect the participants' experiences. This was to ensure that

although the wording and sequence did not need to be followed with each participant, I wanted to make certain that I was able to collect similar data from each individual.

I contacted the participants by email to organise the interviews. A summary and background to the research were sent to the participants, with a list of interview questions, prior to the interviews taking place to enable them to manage some forward planning. The interviews took place over a period of three months from February 2011 to April 2011, normally on one or two days per week. Each interview was allocated one and a half hours and was held in the participants' universities, either in his/her office or in a meeting room, at a time agreed by him/her. In every case, participants were assured confidentiality, and, because of the sensitive nature of some areas of the discourse, I conducted the interviews in a private setting where the participant was confident that he/she would not be overheard. I allowed for contingencies, such as cancellation or postponement but these were not needed as all interviews took place at the agreed time and location. When universities were located in the same area, two or three interviews were carried out in a day. All interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder, and at the same time general notes were taken.

Each interview had its own focus according to the experiences of the participants. These were conversational interviews, where the interviewer's framework becomes critical to success (Lee, 1999) and where it was important for me to capture high quality responses to my questions. Linking this to Lee's suggestions about how high quality interviews can be held, I do feel that the data provided were reflected by affirmative answers which were then able to be recorded using a combination of methods:- audio tape, field notes and memory.

I began with the life stories of the participants to attempt to understand their interpretations of the world around them, in particular their roles within their institutions and where they fitted into the wider picture. For example, I wanted to understand whether their experiences of their careers in higher education drew any parallels to my own or whether mine were uncommon. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2003) suggest that:

> The more one wishes to acquire unique, non-standardised, personalised information about how individuals view the world, the more one veers towards qualitative, open-ended, unstructured interviewing. (p.270)

This form of narrative/conversational interviewing was seen to be appropriate because of the interaction between myself and the participant, and demonstrated something that Plummer (1983) considers as the importance of empathy and 'non-possessive warmth' on the part of the interviewer. These are skills that I aimed for throughout the interviews, although I was aware of the social dynamics which can exist between the interviewer and the participant

and that there is likely to be evidence of a power dynamic (Miller, 2000). I did not feel that this existed and considered that we were equals during the interviews.

Once all interviews and transcriptions had been completed, the process of coding/ categorising of the data took place. In the following section I discuss how I set about doing the initial analyses.

3.5 The Data Analysis

"The purpose of qualitative inquiry is to produce findings" (Patton, 1990, p. 371). This, as Patton suggests, is a challenge in trying to make sense of large amounts of data. In order to try to reduce the volume of information and identify the themes, this was done in two stages. The initial stage was to prepare mini case studies for each participant in order to produce a case analysis (Patton, 1990). This was considered an appropriate method as it was important for me to understand the participants' individual narratives. Once this was completed I was then able to undertake a cross-case analysis (Patton, 1990) in order to group together the answers to the questions. As the interviews were being transcribed I was already noting recurring themes which were overlapping with the analysis and as Patton (1990, p. 378) suggests in this way "this improves both the quality of data collected and the quality of the analysis" but he errs on the side of caution to ensure that the initial interpretations do not distort any additional data collection. "Content analysis is the process of identifying, coding, and categorising the primary patterns in the data" (Patton, 1990, p. 380). The data were integrated into the four main themes (Charmaz, 2006). I began by reading through the interview transcripts, summarising the data according to emerging themes, highlighting them in different colours, and consolidating the information collected. I then organised the relevant data according to these themes and categorised individual items of data by the strength of support they lent the concept. This involved me using the matrix of interview questions where the actual questions linked to the four research questions. I examined the interview transcripts for links between the themes as well as specific process descriptions and as the various relationships between concepts emerged I was able to consolidate these into the themes discussed in the following chapters. For example, in relation to my data, one theme which emerged was about the lack of identity for administrative staff. I wanted to be able to be flexible in my approach and to be able to compare data with data and to identify the gaps.

Once the data had been categorised the process of interpretation started, looking into possible causes, consequences and relationships (Patton, 1990). I was aware that at this time the raw data were simply a list of descriptions and quotes which needed to be interpreted, supported by literature, and as Bateson (1978) cited in Patton (1990) explains:

... the interpretive explanation of qualitative analysis does not yield knowledge in the same sense as quantitative explanation. The emphasis is on illumination, understanding and extrapolation rather than causal determination, prediction and generalisation. (p.424)

In the empirical chapters I tried to organise the description so that it was manageable, providing the reader with a balanced analytical and interpretative account.

3.6   Ethical Considerations

Ethical implications and possible psychological consequences for the participants of my research were considered carefully before starting the research. This was achieved through four key ways: Informed consent; confidentiality; anonymity; and the freedom to withdraw (Robson, 1994).

As this study is based on data from and about people it was important to gain permission at an early stage. I made a formal, written approach to the universities involved in the study outlining my research plans and I informed all participants of the objectives of the research. As Punch (2000) says "some ethical issues are present in almost all projects, for example, anonymity and confidentiality of data, the use of results" (p.75). I anticipated the particular ethical issues involved in the proposed research and indicated in the proposal how they would be dealt with.

The main ethical issues faced were discussed with the participants and they were all aware of the problem of trying to maintain anonymity fully. In order to minimise this risk, participants' identities were protected as much as possible and they were alerted ahead of time to inform them that it may be impossible to preserve total confidentiality. As the participants came from a range of institutions and in general did not know each other, this assisted in maintaining confidentiality. I did ask participants how they wished to be recorded, for example, using a pseudonym, but there were no preferences indicated and therefore I decided that I would use pseudonyms. I informed participants that I would share any findings with them before they are published in order to gain clearance from them. This will be carried out before the thesis is published.

All information gained has been treated anonymously and confidentially and the implications of the Data Protection Act (1988) were considered carefully. All data gained from interviews were stored in a locked filing cabinet in my office. All information has also been stored electronically on a password-protected computer. I informed the participants that no reference would be made to the interviews in research presentations, reports and articles,

and this thesis, unless completely anonymised to minimise the possibility of identification. Participants signed a consent form signifying their acceptance and understanding of this process. Procedures have been set in place to ensure there is a balance between the participants' right to privacy and access to public knowledge. The Ethics documentation is included in Appendix 3. This includes copies of the Ethics Review Checklist, Consent Form, Participant Information Sheet, Risk Assessment Form, and the Research Committee's Approval Form.

3.7   Summary of Chapter Three

In this chapter I have outlined the principles on which the research was based. I have described the forms of research methodology and I carefully considered the issues of authenticity and rigour of analysis. I will investigate what is emerging from the data, relating this to the literature and interpreting this from my own experience and knowledge.

The organisation of the research enabled me to feel in control of the whole interview process. I feel that I have entered the studied phenomenon with enthusiasm and have opened myself to the research experience and followed where it took me, and I agree with Charmaz (2006) who considers that "your journey through [grounded theory] may transform you" (p.185). I consider that having undertaken this research I would agree with this statement, although I did not use grounded theory as a methodological approach, many of my initial assumptions and my impressions based on the data collection have changed and I have also learned how to employ the ability of mind to speculate on, and to link and assemble ideas related to the research and to its empirical sources.

I hope that my analysis will be useful for readers who will be able to use the results in their everyday lives. I am also predicting that the analysis will stimulate further research into related areas of study. It is anticipated that the findings from this research will highlight the benefits for the sector as a whole as universities face having to use their staff more flexibly, particularly in the current economic climate, to support university aims.

Chapter 4 – Generating the Study's Findings from the Data Analysis (Part One)

4.1   Introduction to Chapter Four

This is the first of two chapters presenting the findings of the qualitative research which was carried out using semi-structured interviews in order to report on the professional histories and narratives of fifteen participants, to investigate their perceptions of the academic/ administrative divide in higher education institutions. The rationale for dividing the content of these chapters is to make it clearer for the reader, the first of the two relates to individuals, their professional backgrounds and their roles within universities, and the second examines the mechanisms by which universities function in relation to the perception of administrators' relationships with academics, their place in the organisation and the divides between various groups. In this chapter the emerging themes have been analysed which link to the four research questions in order to develop a theoretical and empirical understanding of whether there is an academic/administrative divide in universities in the United Kingdom and if there is, how this operates. It will look at the ways in which participants' experiences are mediated by organisational structures and how it affects the perceptions of relationships between academics and administrators. Each section contains a commentary, quotes from the participants and a summary highlighting the major ideas which have emerged from the data.

It was important to understand the participants' professional backgrounds, including their current and past jobs in education, and whether they held academic qualifications. Whitchurch (2007, 2008, 2010) suggests that as administrators take on mixed portfolios of university work, embracing work which was traditionally handled by academics, academic qualifications are important in order to help with credibility in their (academics) eyes. This also starts to address the way participants feel about the notion of an academic/administrative divide.

4.2   Administrators' Professional Backgrounds and Trajectories

4.2.1   Analysis of the Data to Address Research Question 1: Is there an academic/ administrative divide in universities and if so, what is its nature and what are the factors underlying this?

In order to clarify the nature of the sample, a profile of the participants is provided. From the fifteen staff who were interviewed, fourteen had a first degree, twelve had Masters' qualifications; seven had a teaching qualification; four had a Doctorate; and one had a

number of academic qualifications and had gained the status of a Professor. Further information has also been provided in Chapter 3 when the sample profile was discussed fully.

The results correlate with the work undertaken by Whitchurch (2007) who found that new professionals are moving into domains of the academic, and that they have normally gained Master or Doctorate degrees. They also have a diverse range of professional posts and can occasionally move into Pro Vice Chancellor positions (Whitchurch, 2007). The following section identifies the individuals and their corresponding qualifications and will outline the roles of each of the fifteen participants to provide a thorough understanding of the professional backgrounds of this group of people. Actual current job titles are highlighted to demonstrate the diversity of roles and titles.

John (Business Development Manager) has spent most of his life working in education, working as a Principal in a College and then for a Local Authority. He then chose to move out of this area into a university undertaking a role in securing knowledge transfer and full cost contracts. He has never aspired to be an academic but works very closely with academics and is on an administrative contract. Similarly, Mary (Deputy Vice Chancellor) had an undergraduate degree in Geography and worked for eight years in a teaching role in a College, and then worked part time as a researcher. When this college merged with a Russell Group university she had various jobs in academia working up to a position of Associate Dean. However, although she was paid on an academic contract, she did not have the academic qualifications needed for a more senior position in this type of university, which was an old university with a high research profile, and had to move to a smaller 'new' university to achieve this. She said:

> *I have not aspired to be an 'academic' in the true sense of the word, my career did*
> *not fit the model of an academic career, but then I decided to do a PhD and was able*
> *to get promoted to Director of Education. I wanted to be a Professor of Education and*
> *that has been achieved but only by moving to a new university. I am now Deputy*
> *Vice Chancellor.*

Sarah (Academic Support Unit Manager) has always been in administration in a variety of organisations and for the last seven years has been employed on an administrative contract, in a new university. She has a number of management qualifications and a Master's degree and is studying for a PhD. She noted the following:

I have never aspired to be an academic, I am interested in development and have done training and would not rule out doing some teaching, but this is not where my aspirations lie. I consider myself to be a professional manager in administration and all career moves and training have been in administration. My aspiration is to be the best manager and administrator I can. By doing my PhD I would be able to contribute to academic work.

This would echo the notion of the perception by academics that professional status can only being gained by administrators who take on aspects of the academic role (Whitchurch, 2007). The data show that the blending of academic and administrative roles is increasing and as Whitchurch suggests in Barnett and DiNapoli (2008), "the polarisation of work between academic activity and a separate supporting infrastructure is becoming outmoded" (p. 69).

Sarah then said that many years ago she started to train as a nurse and people used to say *'don't you want to be a doctor, as if a nurse is a failed doctor'.* She said *'It's the same in administration, it's sad that one has to be better than the other'.* Gornall (1999) reiterates this when she talks about the 'upstairs' and 'downstairs' with two categories of staff – 'academic', which is portrayed as a positive, and 'everyone else' which is negative. Labelling the roles does not always help this and gives administrators the view that they are not perceived to be as good as academics. This starts to cause tensions between the two groups of staff which can then form the basis of a divide.

Anna (Lecturer) has had a varied background, having achieved an undergraduate and a Master's degree in Geography, and for a few years taught environmental issues to school groups and adult education in the City Council. This was followed by a PGCE in Geography in order to become a school teacher, but she decided this was not the career for her, and as she said that *'I always said I never wanted to go into education as all my family were teachers – I should have followed my instincts'.* She then undertook a variety of roles in administration but decided to apply for a lecturer's role because:

When I am teaching I am learning the whole time and that's what I like, but I still use my informal administrative roles to my advantage as an academic.

It could be argued that administrators should also be learning whilst undertaking their administrative role, a concept supported by the work of Payne as far back as 1886 when he suggested that there was a need to train staff for administrative roles. There could also be

the potential for complementary overlaps between teaching and learning and it is interesting that Anna considered that she was only learning when she was teaching.

Similarly, Susan (Teaching Support and Quality Manager) had a traditional academic background as she had an undergraduate degree in Botany from Cambridge and a PhD from Liverpool and undertook a number of research appointments, and it was during this time that during a post-doctoral research appointment, the research became a spin-off company where she took on administrative roles, on an administrative contract, working with academics who were 'teaching' academics, and who were not senior managers. It was interesting to note that she moved into administration because she felt it was too hard to maintain teaching and research with a family, not because she chose administration as a profession. This is an on-going theme amongst the participants whose professional journeys highlighted a number of challenges in relation to work-life balance and the tensions faced by them.

Joanna (Head of Biological Services) started as an accountant, but once she had achieved her undergraduate degree she decided to change careers and considered herself at that time as *an academic but more of a practitioner working in Further Education'*. She also has a PGCert in Professional Management, and a Masters in Management Studies. Following a move back to the United Kingdom she applied for jobs in administration, eventually becoming the Head of a Research department, paid on an administrative contract, and she now sees herself as:

> *A professional doing research rather than a research professional and although I do not want to do research full time, I like to do it to underpin the professionalism of what I am doing.*

Joanna also faced similar professional dilemmas as she grappled with which elements of her vast experience she wanted to develop, and to move into, as a career choice.

Elaine (Faculty Quality Manager) considers, like many administrators, that she *'fell'* into administration and had not chosen to do it. She says that her aspiration was to find a job in the area of her degree which was in Arts, but as there were limited jobs available, she therefore undertook a Masters in Management Studies, the AUA Postgraduate Certificate and an MA designed for teachers but which was flexible to accommodate others. She says:

I aspired to hold a professional position, but not as an academic. I can understand an academic argument but I would not want the teaching and marking elements ... we have similar skills but use them in a different way.

Elaine faced similar challenges to Susan as she considered herself as an equal to academics but did not wish to have the responsibility of teaching and marking.

Louise (Head of Skills Training and Development Team) who now undertakes an administrative role, also started her career in education as a teacher of Maths in a comprehensive school, followed by teaching English as a Foreign Language abroad. She has three Masters' degrees and a teaching certificate. Finding herself in a similar situation to Susan, she decided that she did not want to carry on teaching in a school while she had a young family, so did a Masters in Information Technology and started teaching this to undergraduate students in the university. She suggested that:

I was a schoolteacher and then a lecturer and I fell into administration – in this university I would have to teach and do research to be a lecturer ... the more you move up the ladder as an academic the more you become divorced from teaching and become more of a manager of people and paper. I am a hybrid enabling student learning through developing academic staff – I am really sitting on the fence and it's a difficult place to be.

This is a similar situation to that of Elaine, and reiterates the fact that many people do not always choose to work in an administrative role, but that at certain times of their lives it is seen as an easier option to that of their chosen career. This view would be argued by most administrators as not being the case, because of the complexities of their roles, however, the 'nine to five' option for administrators could be seen as an incentive. It is interesting to see how common this theme is, having a career in administration is not always a first career choice, but because of personal situations and perceptions of how stressful academia can be, many personal goals are not fulfilled.

Emma (Assistant Academic Registrar) started her career as an academic, then moved to an academic related position and is now in administration. She has a degree in Combined Social Sciences/Sociology and a PhD in Sociology. She says:

I worked in research but could not cope with the constant bidding for funding for only 3 year contracts. I was teaching IT and was an academic who got a job in the

Computer Centre. There were quite a few of us who had come from the academic world and moved into computing. I am often being told if I write papers I am too academic to be an administrator. I miss writing academic papers ... I want to do the research and publish, but I can't do this easily as an administrator.

Again for Emma, the professional challenge is to somehow lower her aspirations to write academic papers because she is an administrator, and as this would not be expected or required.

In the same way as many of the participants mentioned above, Lucy (Director of Student Affairs), who is paid on an administrative contract, also started as a secondary school teacher, after gaining an undergraduate degree and a Masters degree in Politics, and following several teaching roles she then became the Deputy Head of Education in the university in which she was currently employed. She faced her own professional challenges as she could not deal with the continuous stress of inspections and moved into administration to become the Head of Student Services. Lucy has a number of professional qualifications including Counselling and Coaching, along with a Postgraduate Diploma in Education Management.

For Jane (Student Records Systems Advisor), who has an undergraduate degree in Microbiology and a Master's in Finance and Decision Analysis, her aspirations are not to be a teaching academic but to move into a different area of administration. Although she is at a lower level in the hierarchy of administration than the other participants, she has presented papers on international issues and wants to move into a role in the International Office, but after several unsuccessful interviews, this appears to being blocked by senior managers in the university. This resonates with Anderson, et al., (2002) when they suggested that management can be seen as inconsiderate, unhelpful and sometimes bullying. Although their research was looking at academics, in this administrator's case, she strongly considered that this was what was happening in her own organisation.

Chris (Senior Research Assistant/Lecturer), in comparison, has always worked in administration and *'sees this as a means to pay the bills',* but her aspirations are to teach. She is highly qualified, as are all of the participants, having achieved an undergraduate and Master's degree and a PhD in a topic which is not related to her day job. With this she is able to undertake a lecturing role for the same university but in a different department. As she says:

I have always aspired to be a full time lecturer and in one interview for an admin post my academic aspirations were thrown back in my face and cited in the feedback as 'evidence of lack of professionalism and commitment'. I have since been explicitly advised by HR to play down academic life/role when applying for admin jobs.

Joy (Director of Professional Services) was the only participant who had stayed in the same university for the whole of her working career, which was for thirty seven years. Although she had been an administrator for the primary 'paid' element of her employment, because of her desire to teach, and the fact that in an overtly teaching led institution, with her background this would not be possible, she kept the two roles separate. She has an undergraduate degree in History and a Masters in Education and because of her interest in gender and education she was able to teach, in an informal unpaid way, for the same university. She was, however, never accepted as an academic. The comments she made about this included:

All Higher Education Institutions have a social hierarchy relating back to their key vision, so you either fit or manage yourself somewhere else. Lots of women stay and moan a lot but it has ways of not changing. I could never have made it into teaching in this university because of my background.

Saunderson (2002) talks about the fact that British universities are amongst the least equal of institutions in terms of gender and equality, and although her research was aimed at female academics, the same issues can arise with administrators as in the case of Joy. She was unable to move into teaching because she was made to feel 'vulnerable' and did not 'fit' the requirements of an 'academic', because although she had the appropriate skills, she had not been appointed on an academic contract and did not undertake research in this particular Russell Group university. This is comparable to the situation of Mary, who also worked in a Russell Group university and faced similar challenges in being able to pursue her career aspirations.

Mark (School and Community Liaison Officer), who is paid on an administrative contract, working closely with schools and academics, has professional qualifications relating to his area of interest of Art and Drama, and an undergraduate degree in English and Drama. His aspirations are to become a teacher. He said that he feels closer to academic colleagues but that *'the timing has never been right to start a PGCE ... I get excited about working with schools and will do teaching one day'.* He is also currently undertaking a Master's in Policy Management.

Finally Carol (Research Associate), who is now an academic researcher, started undertaking research as part of her Master's degree and always wanted to move away from pure administration. She has started a PhD and said:

Yes I wanted to become a researcher and possibly a lecturer. I have succeeded in the former and may have an opportunity for the latter. I did this by taking and creating opportunities to gain skills and work on other projects beyond the basic remit of my role, but without the support and opportunities given to me by my previous boss I would not have got to this point.

The data have shown that there is such a diverse and complex administrative structure in universities that the concept of 'administration' is not clear cut. The variety of roles which the participants are undertaking is evidence that there are many jobs being developed to support the teaching and learning of the students, which have, in turn led to the hybridisation of many roles. From my own experience and the data provided by the participants, supported by Hall (2009), the number of administrators working in universities has been expanding, and although the data have shown that many of the participants did not choose administration as a career, there are roles and responsibilities in administration which could be considered as career choices, for example, learning development, student support services and commercial research (Hall, 2009). The data have highlighted the wide range of roles and responsibilities for administrators in the education sector and show that experienced education administrators are able to organise and manage the administration, support systems and activities that facilitate the effective running of an educational institution.

Administrators work in areas such as admissions, quality assurance, data management, examinations, finance, careers and human resources, and with the diverse range of different job titles around the sector, it reiterates how complex an area this can be. This is also evidenced by the data collected from these participants. The data have shown that there is a blurring of professional boundaries and demonstrates that hybrid roles are emerging, and in thinking about the 'third space' where this group of staff could 'fit' requires staff to embrace change and to challenge their own assumptions about their place in the university hierarchy.

Hall (2010) highlighted that boundaries between academia and administration have been blurring for a number of years and that the successful operation of an educational institution requires competent administrators. He also indicated that many senior administrators begin

their careers as teachers and prepare for advancement into education administration by completing a Master's or Doctoral degree. The experiences of the participants in the narratives above substantiate Hall's findings. There is still a difference between administrators' significance to Higher Education Institutions and their taking on of academic roles, and again would require staff to work *together,* rather than work *with*, through the 'third space' activities.

From the small sample interviewed, only four people aspired to be academics, two of whom were researchers; two wished to move into different areas of professional roles but were prohibited from doing so. In Joy's case, she was an administrator, stayed in her administrative post but accepted the status quo and was only able to undertake paid teaching employment (her real aspiration) outside of this particular institution.

The participants have had varied backgrounds which have either helped or hindered their progression to the roles they now undertake. It can be seen that for some, the type of university they were working in meant that they had to move into a different part of the sector in order to achieve their aspirations, but for others, the move into their current organisation has provided the outlet they needed. Because of the large number of participants who have Masters' or PhD qualifications, it could be assumed that these people were able to reach their full potential, but this was not always the case. There is very little institutional variation in this and therefore it is more difficult to establish the impact this has had on professional trajectories of this group of participants in relation to the type of university they are working in. To undertake certain areas of work appears to be dependent on the type of contract that staff have initially been employed on. All but one of the participants said that it is almost impossible to move from an administrative contract to an academic or academic-related contract. In Elaine's view, she did not think the academic's job was better but thought that she had similar skills but used them in a different way.

This was a recurring theme running throughout the research and relates to a perception that many academics think that administrators are below them in the university hierarchy. It is interesting to note the views of Louise whose perception was that *'the more you move up the ladder as an academic the more you become divorced from teaching and become a manager of people and paper'.* It could therefore be argued that if the skill sets required of the two groups of people are so different, why is it assumed that academics can do administration?

The next section examines whether participants consider that there is an academic/administrative divide in universities.

The data collected demonstrated that overwhelmingly university administrators consider that there is a recognised divide or difference between diverse groups of staff. The divide is highlighted by the use of language and can build up tensions because of the perception of each group towards the other. I would emphasise here that the notion of a divide is as perceptual and symbolic as it is real and from the data there often appears to be misunderstanding and often misrecognition of the different roles and responsibilities of each group. Labelling of staff, using titles such as 'support staff', 'academic', 'administrative', 'secretarial', 'non-academic', 'academic-related', does not help to ease the tensions and Conway (2009) suggests that there is damage done to working relationships by the use of specific terms, particularly the expression 'non-academic', which can establish a clear symbolic division of labour. She considers that this is now outmoded, irrelevant and negative and does little to reflect the complexity of the work required to manage universities in the twenty first century. The word 'support' also immediately makes administrators believe that they are subservient to academics. There is a strong view by the participants that administrators need to be respected for their professional skills and recognition that they are a core part of universities' functioning.

Joanna said that *'you need to be able to identify the relationships between academics and administrators to see what works well, this will then lessen the divide'.* Certainly it was noticeable in relation to 'working from home', academics expecting administrators to be around when they happened to be on site; tasks being left until the last minute by academics and administrators being expected to work late to finalise these tasks. One participant (Louise) who was undertaking a blended role was able to span professional and academic domains and as she said:

> *I see myself as a 'bridge' between academic and administrative domains and think of myself as a boundary spanner, those people who cross from one community to another and back again.*

There are four categories of staff – bounded, cross-boundary (who actively use boundaries for strategic advantage and institutional capacity building), blended and unbounded (Whitchurch, 2007) and these cover the types of roles the participants undertook, but further discussion on whether these impact on the relationships within universities will take place in the final chapter. Those participants, however, who had bounded roles where they were

74

required to work within structural boundaries, were the ones who had become frustrated in not being able to aspire in areas in which they felt they could achieve. Five of the participants fitted into this category (Mary, Susan, Jane, Joy and Carol). Two different examples of this are Mary and Jane. In Mary's case it was because she was not considered to have the level of academic qualifications required for a Russell Group university; but for Jane, it appeared to be management who were blocking her aspirations to move into a different administrative role. There is another group of staff who could be classed as 'unbounded' professionals who disregard boundaries to focus on projects and institutional developments (Whitchurch, 2007). John fitted into this category and has built up a reputation of being successful in this area of work, in which he has to work in both the academic and administrative arenas, but he is still classed as a member of 'support staff', which he felt was not helpful in gaining credibility.

It is important here to mention again that the group of administrators involved in this research are generally senior members of staff, the majority of whom have very responsible, higher level/senior positions in their universities. The different groups have been discussed in Chapter 1 and above but it could be argued that if this research was being carried out with a group of more junior administrators, the results could have been very different. However, from previous research (Hamer, 1997; Land, 2004; Conway, 2008; Gill, 2009; Hall, 2009), and the data analysis of my study, there is a perception that there is a recognised divide, there are differences between groups of staff but that these can differ across departments. The divide is highlighted by different levels of loyalty to the university because administrators do not have the same allegiance to subject areas as academic staff (Whitchurch, 2007).

The participants in this research had not specifically talked about how the divide could be deconstructed, but the following sample of comments taken from the participants' responses:

> *'calling us support staff'; 'a lot depends on the culture in universities'; 'the divide is highlighted by the use of language and approach'; there are jobs that are seen as administrators' tasks, it is downwards from academics, not the other way round'; 'academics need to recognise the skills of administrators and to understand that their work is just as beneficial and useful'; 'if people are allowed to follow their interests, the divide does not exist'; 'mass education is forcing people into corners which increases the divide, but it can depend on your line manager and where he/she sits'; 'pay and status do not help the divide, terms and conditions of employment, amount*

of holidays and flexibility in working arrangements'; 'there is a status structure in universities'; 'lack of mutual respect'.

show that the divide is strongly perceived, not only between academics and administrators but also between other groups of university staff and I will be attempting to suggest ways in which these barriers could be broken down.

There is a belief by the participants in my study that academics have more status than administrators. John, who works at a former polytechnic, commented that he felt that there was a divide but that it was quite subtle and only at certain levels of the institution, for example, at the lower levels of the hierarchy and he suggested that:

> *It is hard rising to higher levels as an administrator, and the divide is most noticeable at departmental level, where there is a notion of 'support staff', which by definition creates a definition of divide.*

However, Joanna suggested that there were a number of divides between different groups of staff but that it depends on who you talk to and that:

> *There are some who see it as two separate roles and each may have a contribution to make, but there are a few who think we are all in it together.*

However, a comment made by Elaine who works in a Russell Group university suggests that there is a divide but she questioned whether this is a divide or simply a perceived difference in skills. She says that:

> *The drive to be an academic is that there is a discipline and research which is up to date in currency, but academics need to recognise the skills of administrators and therefore the nature of the divide is that somehow the skills-base of administrators is not recognised as being as good as academics, and therefore not so beneficial and useful.*

There is an argument here that divisions are being reinforced by two-way misperceptions and understandings. Another comment in relation to the issue of administrators being respected for their professional skills comes from Carol, an academic researcher who was an administrator. She has very strong views about the divide as she believes that

administrative staff are seen as less important, less intelligent, less capable and in general incredibly undervalued and she goes on to say:

As a member of admin staff I was patronised, not taken seriously and not given respect for either my abilities or opinion. Regardless of my role and duties, background, talent or aspiration, I was often treated as a 'photocopy girl' with academics expecting me to carry out menial tasks that they hadn't been organised enough to do, or felt were beneath them.

A final quote from Jane, who works in a new university, reiterates what others have reported:

There is definitely a divide and over the past fifty years or so academics have always thought that they run the universities and that they are above everyone else. Academics need to recognise administrators' skills and the training they will have had to do the job they are paid to do. They (academics) have not moved on and they live in a little bubble.

These comments are also echoed by other participants who identify that these tensions across different groups exist in creating a divide. Conway (2008) and Gill (2009) both agree that tensions stem from a misunderstanding of the roles of different groups of staff and Conway suggests that it relates to clashing values and lack of status for administrators and the administrators' lack of empathy for academia. In the case of Joanna, this was not the case in all the universities she had worked in, except the more traditional civic university where:

There is an academic and admin divide and a higher/lower divide, and clearer tribes and boundaries between different groups of staff.

It could therefore be assumed that in more traditional universities this is more likely to have happened, but I will be arguing that there are other variables which need to be considered, such as the backgrounds and professional values of the people involved, before making this assumption. Conway (2008) suggests that there are different perspectives on the purpose of universities and that there is a lack of professional status for administrators, and this appears to support the views of these participants.

The participants were also of the opinion that academics have more autonomy, monitoring and freedom and do not feel that they should be scrutinised over what they are doing, and

where or when. One comment from Joanna who said that *'administrators are employed and academics turn up when they want to'* demonstrates the tensions in relative status and autonomy being experienced. These tensions are not helped by the fact that as universities have grown, administrative roles have become more specialised, leading to insular attitudes amongst administrators who cannot see the whole picture and who like to put everything into neat compartments (Conway, 2009). However, with more roles becoming hybrid or blended in nature many staff may need to have a foot in both communities.

This issue of academics' autonomy, freedom and the amount of monitoring was a recurring theme through the research. As Sarah, who is employed in a new university, observed:

> *Although there is a conscious effort to bridge the divide there are tensions because administrators feel that academics have a lot more freedom and that 'working from home' is not an option for them. The perception is that administrators have to work 9-5, academics do not think they should be questioned about what they are doing and where/when. It's to do with academic freedom, if you ask you are insulting their integrity. The differences appear to be either it's a 'Place of work' or a 'Job of work' – it does not help the divide.*

Anna, who is also working in a new university, agreed with this and said that she hears other administrators talking about:

> *Academics working from home but they (administrators) are expected to be at their desks at the academics' beck and call.*

And for Chris, who works in a new university and who has a dual role as an administrator as her primary job and a lecturer as a secondary role, but in the same university, suggests that:

> *It is the amount of monitoring which can cause a divide and the fact that academics are not monitored in the same way, something about the status of a specialist. Terms and conditions, amount of holidays and flexibility in working arrangements, and pay scales also help to divide the two.*

The resentment linked to the amount of monitoring undertaken on administrators, causes a notion of a divide. Academics are not monitored in the same way, which, in the view of these administrators says something about the status of a specialist. Many believe that their working terms and conditions, amount of holidays and flexibility in working arrangements,

perceptions of relative autonomy and the fact that academics are less 'micro' managed, also help to divide the two groups of staff. Academics would argue that they are monitored in other ways, in their teaching by evaluations and research by the Research Excellence Framework (REF), and they (academics) have to adhere to targets and performance outputs which are imposed on them with significant consequences, but as no administrators mentioned these constituents it can be assumed that they are unaware of these burdens on academic staff. Land (2004) suggests that even though administrators may "lack the classic liberal arts background and teaching experience, they bring a variety of other necessary skills which serve students in a multitude of ways" (p.19). Again this relates back to the fact that there may be a need for greater mutual understanding. I am suggesting that it is partly because of the lack of understanding by administrators of the 'academic' role. There is often a stereotyping of academics' relative freedom and autonomy but a lack of understanding of the academic workload, multiple demands, stress, and burnout because of evening and weekend working. However, it is still a common perception that academics are not always where they say they are, which elevates the tensions between the two groups.

Another theme emerging from the data is that of the divide being likened to 'an iron curtain' or 'apartheid system'. An anonymous member of the Times Higher Education reader panel (Gill, 2009) supports this by saying:

> Despite the focus on equal opportunities, UK higher education is one of the last bastions of a class system where difference is instantly erected into hierarchy ... administration is increasingly informed by academic thinking – administrators need to be respected for their professional skills and also as creators in the modern university. (p.2)

This is also supported by Hamer (1997) who suggested that roles have changed over time and innovation and creativity are welcomed, the concept that all ideas are generated from academic staff has also changed. He also suggests that 'labelling' of roles is also not helping to ease the divide.

Lucy, who had been a lecturer and then changed roles to become a very senior administrator, she said that her status dropped overnight and that when she moved into her current role academics thought that:

Administrators only stuff envelopes and answer the phone. I was at the height of my educational career and I wanted to swap over. Even the VC asked if I was really sure about changing contracts. Suddenly my status has really changed.

This is supported by the views of Gill (2009) who suggests that academics take on the role of 'elected politicians' (civil servant model) or the equivalent of 'priests' (cleric model) and as an academic registrar at a Russell Group university also reported: "I feel I have picked the bargain-basement career" (Gill, 2009).

As Elaine, who works in a Russell Group university suggests:

It goes back a long time – it is entrenched that academics run universities, it's more worrying that new universities have adopted the old universities' traditions, it's very sad. Academics think all we do is play with a computer all day, it's very casual and we still use the term non-academic. It's a form of apartheid, because academics would not be classed as non-administrative staff, we don't say people are non-white, it's all to do with self esteem.

The data illustrate that it is not always a division between academics and administrators, but also between other groups of university staff, for example, between senior management (who are not academics) and academics. Often there are unclear tribes and boundaries between groups of staff, but generally it was felt that there are very few people who think that all communities are working together. The data also showed up that there is very little difference between the various types of universities. It was expected that the divide would be more prominent in the older, more traditional universities, and although some participants working in this type of university did notice a distinct 'them and us' relationship, it emerges that it is no more noticeable than someone working in a non-traditional new university. What is noticeable is that the tensions appear to arise from the way universities were perceived to have been run in the past, that is, by academics, and the fact that new universities have adopted traditions associated with old universities. Academics are now taking on more administration and the participants in this study consider that they (academics) need to recognise the skills of administrators and not think that they are above administrators in the university hierarchy. There appears to be a status structure in universities that is driven by the relationship between research and teaching and there is a social hierarchy which attaches the status to people who are attracted to these roles.

There is a common theme that runs through this part of the research which shows that there is a great deal of resentment on the part of administrators who feel that they are treated as 'lower class citizens' by the academics. They feel that they are treated differently because of their lack of autonomy and freedom, and the amount of perceived monitoring they are subjected to. It could be argued that administrators are partly constructing this through their perceptions that are not always grounded in reality as they may misinterpret or mis-construe attitudes of others. These participants generally feel that academics need to recognise the skills of administrators, and the nature of the divide is that somehow the skills' base of administrators is not recognised as being as high-quality as academics and therefore not so beneficial and useful to the aims and objectives of the university. From the comments made above by the participants of this study, they would agree that they (administrators) complement the work of the academics and although in the past academics have always thought they run the universities and that they are above everyone else, this is changing and it is important that academics need to recognise administrators' skills and the training they have undertaken. The division impacts on the status of individuals and when there are not clear tribes and boundaries tensions build up and cause fractious relationships.

In practice this appears to be related to the labels administrative staff are given, for example, 'support' staff or 'non-academic' staff and the perception that administrators are only there to undertake menial tasks which academics do not want to do. The hybrid nature of many of these roles is impacting on the status of individuals and this may be another reason for the 'third space' to be developed.

Another theme is the role of 'Academic Champions'. Participants agreed that if they had a supportive line manager who has either a hybrid role or is an academic it is easier to move across the divide without having to *'battle it out'*. They identify the need to have an academic champion which can help with credibility and recognition in the organisation. In Joy's case, she did not have a champion (either academic or administrative) and said that:

> *Because I had a mixed role, my face did not fit and I applied for two senior jobs under one line manager but did not get promoted until a new manager was in post. It was personalised and I feel I was held back.*

Jane said that *'if people are allowed to follow their interests the divide does not exist'*. This was certainly my own view and having an academic champion, who was not my line manager, has meant that I have been able to take on areas of work that really interested me, and have helped to achieve the organisation's objectives. However, it may be that from a

broader management perspective this could have been perceived as a risk as it may have been harder to manage. For some participants the academic champion may also be their line manager and this is likely to be easier if the support is coming from this member of staff, rather than one who is in a different community, as there may be fewer barriers to negotiate before the divide is crossed. From the data it can be seen that if the relationship between a member of staff and their line manager is good then there is more likely to be discourse about career progression, about the aspirations of individuals and how this can be facilitated. This may not necessarily be taking on elements of academic work, but other professional roles.

The data have identified that there is a need for a third space which Whitchurch (2007) suggests is as a result of the blurring boundaries between 'academic' and 'professional' domains. The staff who tend to be part of this third space are normally unbounded or blended professionals, and for many of the participants who undertake the non-traditional administrative roles or the perimeter academic roles, such as pastoral support, forging links with educational providers, working on outreach or community/regional partnerships, and where staff work in multi-functional and multi-professional teams, the 'third' space is likely to be where staff feel they belong, but many of the participants suggested that this can be a very lonely place to be. Hall (2010) concurs with Whitchurch (2007) when he suggests that boundaries between academia and administration have been blurring for a number of years, as teaching has evolved into learner support and research has extended into managing projects and partnerships. As mentioned above the new posts which have emerged do not fit neatly into academic or administrative pigeonholes and the traditional divide between academic and administrative roles is no longer sustainable or desirable (Hall, 2010).

Louise thought that this was a space where she may have felt more comfortable when she says:

> People like me (hybrids) sit on the fence – I like the idea of a third space. I teach, I am doing student development, I chair an exam board, I run events but I am not an 'academic'. It's a difficult place to be. I am a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) but I am on an admin contract. If there was a third space I may feel as if I fit somewhere.

This is a strong theme running throughout this thesis and if partnerships could be developed through third space activity the staff who fit into such a space would need to be able to challenge their own assumptions and embrace change. It would require staff to work

together collaboratively, on an equal basis, as this could be where roles merge and people are working 'together', rather than working 'with'. The vision of a 'third space' is that it would be a place which would be non-threatening, where staff undertaking hybrid roles could form their own professional identity.

As previously mentioned, historically, academics have always thought that the university and all its elements revolve around them (Land, 2004) and this has created the divide in question, as more administrators are moving into academic roles, but the questions which still remain are: Why is there a divide in the first place? What sustains this divide and how do you break it down and cross it if there is one? Conway (2008) also suggests that the divide may be 'myth' which has been based on people's perceptions and built and maintained through stereotypes, or 'real' due to structural or systematic characteristics of universities. From this research there is evidence that it is also partly constructed by administrators themselves and the lack of mutual understanding of the pressures faced by both academics and administrators.

For the majority of participants in this research, in order to achieve their aspirations, they had to take and create opportunities to gain skills and work on projects beyond the basic remit of their roles and they needed the support and opportunities provided by a line manager or another senior person to be able to do this.

4.2.2 Analysis of the Data to Address Research Question 2 - In what ways do administrators in higher education form identities through their work and roles within their institutions?

Having provided a profile of the participants in this research, the concept of professional identities of communities of staff working in higher education was investigated, and the experiences of the participants in relation to identity, parity of esteem and credibility, which are seen as important areas of the research, will be discussed. The key dimensions of professional identities and how they manifest themselves across the divides and the notion of hybridisation of roles will be addressed.

Administration is still often not seen as a profession, despite the best efforts of professional bodies, such as the Association of University Administrators, which is trying to raise the profile of administration. People do not generally choose to go into administration (Berry and Beach, 2006) as they do in America, and for many administrators this relates to perceptions of their own worth and confidence which links to the concept of identity. As Anna noted:

It's a hybrid identity for administrators – clearly defined roles have an identity, but as the roles change and become more hybrid, this makes it unclear.

Participants have identified that the more hybrid the role becomes, the less clear the identity is. For those participants who have a dual role, that is, teaching and administration, their identity is linked to the teaching and their discipline, for the remainder, their allegiance is with the university rather than an academic subject area.

John suggested:

Administrators, such as accountants and lawyers would have an identity linked to their professional body, but for other administrators who may have a lower status and who have a diverse role it makes it more difficult. An example would be that in both the National Health Service and universities, administrators undertake different work but it (administration) should still be seen as a profession.

He also suggested that:

The title 'secretary' is seen as a lower level than an 'administrator' but it used to be prestigious, for example, legal secretaries are seen as being held in very high esteem. Individuals need to see this as an active not passive role, take initiatives and opportunities, developing a level of autonomy, which is crucial to job satisfaction.

Sarah agreed there was a core of an academic culture in the way academics interact but that:

Administrators don't feel that they have an identity, in America they see administration as a profession, but here administrators do not choose to go into administration as a career.

Harris (2005) talks about:

Finding ways of exchanging ideas and working within and across disciplines and institutions, which are underpinned by shared values and understandings about the moral purpose of working in academia. (p.428)

And Whitchurch (2007) supports this by saying:

> There is a lack of understanding about the roles and identities of 'professional' staff, boundaries are being breached and cross-boundary and unbounded professionals could operate on the borders of academic space. (p.7)

It could be argued that there is a collective identity for professional administrators, which has diversified because of the merging of roles and responsibilities, implying that there are issues of non-conformity of identities which need to be explored. Administrators are constructing their own professional selves, demonstrating agency as well as "acknowledging the impact of social and structural constraints" (Woodward, 2002, p.30), but it could also be argued that they are actively trying to establish a professional identity in challenging contexts.

Again, overwhelmingly, the participants involved in my research agreed that there was no real identity for administrative staff because there is no affiliation to a discipline, as in the case of academic staff, where there is a core of an academic culture. A general comment made by several administrators is that they feel different because they are excluded from the world of academia. This often causes problems for administrative staff and links to parity of esteem and gaining credibility, although Joanna agreed with this statement, she also identified that in her experience:

> *More junior members of administrative staff consider that loyalty to the institution is more important than loyalty to the discipline, but that more senior members of staff, for example, Human Resource Professionals and Accountants do have loyalties to their discipline and that there is a movement of loyalty to their profession.*

This is supported by Whitchurch (2007) who suggests that there are implications for professionals when the roles and identities are not clear and when professionals are in the 'third space' undertaking hybrid roles. Elaine commented that:

> *Administrators do not feel they have ownership of an identity, I am a professional but feel little allegiance to anywhere I have worked, but people who stay here for a long time have an allegiance to the organisation.*

An interesting point was made by Louise who felt that *'having an academic career is closer to one's own identity and that this cannot be sustained once you become an administrator'.*

She has a different viewpoint from her manager who is into heavy boundaries between academics and administrators but Louise felt she was acting as a *'bridge'* and could understand both points of view. However, the general consensus was that the whole identity issue for administrators is the lack of clarity across the sector over job titles, which means that in her view *'there is no identity for administrators'.*

Whitchurch (2007) suggests that building on the work of Delanty (2007) and Taylor (2007) there should be "fluidity of identity" and this view would support many participants' situations where they are operating on the borders of academic space and creating new professional spaces, knowledge and relationships (Whitchurch, 2007). For many of the participants who have hybrid roles and a 'foot in both camps' they have to manage dual identities.

Chris, who has two distinct identities suggests that:

As a lecturer there is the disciplinary community which conveys a sense of being valued. I have a split personality .... I do not use the title 'Dr' in my administrative role unless it suits me. I have had instances where I have gained noticeably more respect from academics when I add 'Dr' to my email signature, despite the fact that it is a completely different subject area.

This is an interesting point which is also implied by other participants and causes dilemmas for both the individual and other communities of staff. It is the lack of understanding about roles and responsibilities, and how the pressures of staff trying to cope with the demands placed on them by institutions impact on their working lives. As Louise noted:

People like me (hybrids) sit on the fence and one of the images I picked up was that in communities of practice you need 'boundary spanners', those people who cross from one community to another and back again – I like the idea of a boundary spanner and a third space. I teach, I am doing student development, I work with students running workshops, I chair an exam board, I run events and teach but I am not an 'academic'. It's a very difficult place to be - I am really sitting on the fence.

Another theme emerging from this section about professional identities is that of administrators having credibility with academic staff, although this does not only relate to administrators but also for some academics. For one very senior member of staff it was necessary for her to move out of a Russell Group university to gain credibility and respect

she felt she deserved. Chris agreed with this as she has had to manage dual identities, she said that:

> All my full time positions have been in administration but I learned to keep them separate. I have re-assigned my loyalty, I have had to encounter lots of systems of low status because of lack of identity. Esteem, credibility and autonomy are important and individuals need to take on roles of responsibility to earn credibility. You build a reputation of being successful in what you do and therefore credibility comes with this.

However, Joanna thought that there appeared to be a strange 'mismatch' and identified that in her experience:

> Junior members of academic staff saw me as a 'boss secretary' with the job of 'filling envelopes and sticking on stamps' whereas, senior academics felt that my contribution was just as credible as their own; my problem was gaining credibility with other 'professionals' not academics.

She also said that:

> They want to keep the secret of being an academic and it's a drip-drip of undermining your knowledge, the more you are sure of your facts and gain in confidence, the more you get the credibility.

Whitchurch (2007) suggests that "credibility depends on being able to build a profile in the local situation and gaining the support of a key individual, such as a Pro Vice Chancellor" (p.9). This also links back to previous comments about how having an academic champion will often help and encourage individuals whose aspirations are to move into different spheres of activity This was an interesting point which was raised by many administrators and comments from participants such as: 'having confidence in speaking up, having self esteem and being prepared to be wrong' (Elaine); 'gaining credibility can take time (Joy)'; and 'it can take time to find out how people think – gaining credibility needs time but it can be lost before it is gained (Louise)'; demonstrate that for many participants, they considered that for administrators, credibility has to not only be earned but fought for, but for academics it is assumed. The 'third space' identified by Whitchurch (2007) where unbounded and blended professionals are located together could help to address this imbalance as there may be more understanding of each others' roles.

Many academic staff think that administrators are just there to *'make the tea, stuff envelopes and pick up the pieces when academics do not do what they are supposed to do'* (Joanna), this does not help the relationships present in universities, although the picture is more nuanced than this. For many administrators, gaining in confidence to be assertive and earning credibility appears to be a constant battle. Because of the hybrid nature of many of the jobs undertaken, acceptance as a professional takes time and consequently identities need to be created. Many administrators feel that they are submerged in anonymity until such times as academics need to access the skills and knowledge of a particular area of their expertise.

One of the questions asked of participants was in relation to professional decision-making and whether they had the authority to make decisions which may have previously been the domain of academics. This is seen as important because empowerment and decision-making can help to build an individual's identity. There was a mixed picture arising from the data which highlighted that it often linked closely to credibility and included comments such as *'you can build a reputation of being successful in what you do and credibility comes with this. Because of this I am trusted to make decisions'* (John). Lucy noted that:

> *I make a lot of decisions which overlap with academic decisions, but this is more to do with the type of university. I find out the detail and propose this to the Head who makes the final decision, but it is normally based on my expertise – I have built up that trust.*

Susan agreed with this statement and suggested that:

> *My judgement is trusted and although the Director has to sign off various papers he does not read them because he knows I will have done what he wanted.*

Joanna makes decisions about allocations of funding which is normally seen as an academic decision and she suggested that:

> *I massage the solutions, but it is not an acknowledged power, I have a strong role in influencing and they look to me to give an holistic overview.*

From the data it appears that administrators are rarely able to make decisions autonomously but one that was noted was in the area of Admissions. Several participants were involved in

decision-making in relation to recruitment of students. Although this was seen as a role that *'sits across the divide'* administrators are able to make decisions to offer places against clear criteria, but this is always in conjunction with academics. From those interviewed, only one person appeared to be able to make decisions without an academic's authority, Mark said that, in relation to his own role *'I have to decide when to go into schools, I interview and make decisions',* however, he also mentioned that because he is in an administration department, his academic manager wants to know why he is not at his desk all of the time. This links to perceptions by academics of what administrators should be doing.

Research undertaken on professional identities (Stets and Burke, 2000; Saunderson, 2002; Waugh, 2002; James, 2003; Harris, 2005; Whitchurch, 2007; Clegg, 2008) has underpinned this area of the study and has shown that universities and the professional lives of the people working within them are very complex. The issue of identity within those communities, is an on-going theme of this research. The qualitative data collected from the narratives have highlighted that each individual has a personal identity which includes personal biography and collective influences. As Stets and Burke (2000) suggest:

> Social identity arises in relation to personal identity when the individual categorizes, classifies or associates in relation to a social grouping and takes on a role and its performance within the group. (p.114)

However, from personal experience, and the data collected from these participants, diverse identities can lead to such a hybridisation of roles that staff can be working in isolation. Gaining credibility links closely to professional identities because people feel affirmed, recognised and empowered, which can be seen from the data is important to individuals. There has been much written about academic tribes and their loyalty to the discipline (Barnett and Di Napoli, 2008) but the attitude of many academics when they say that someone is *'only an administrator'* tarnishes any good working relationships. The data show that the participants all considered themselves to make a contribution to the university, in the same way as an academic does, and that they are not an *'only anything'.* One interesting point raised was that for many senior administrative staff who are members of professional bodies, for example, Human Resource professionals, Accountants and Marketing specialists, there is an identity and loyalty to their discipline, but for generalist administrators, this does not appear to be the case.

It is also important to note that because of the different titles/labels used on job descriptions, often there is no real understanding of the roles these participants are actually undertaking,

and for many they have dual identities, which often they have to learn to keep separate. One example is the title 'Academic Registrar', which is one of the few titles which is common across the education sector, and for which there is a distinct identity linked to the role, however, staff employed in these roles are now taking on a number of different areas of responsibility and gradually titles are changing, for example, 'Director of Student Affairs', which in some universities includes registry functions. This is likely to dilute the identity that this group of staff may have had in the past. As Lucy noted:

With different titles there is no real identity. It became difficult for me when I moved from Academic Registrar, which is a term people understand, to Director of Student Affairs, which is an American title, which is a combination of registry and student service functions. It is hard to know what we are supposed to be doing.

Jane considered there was an issue with job titles because what is stated on her job description does not reflect the role she carries out. She said that *'They (management) will not give me the title of Project Manager, which is what I am doing, because they would have to pay me more'.* This is an interesting point which was implied by many other participants and links into the issue of job evaluation schemes.

For the purpose of this research, identities and hybridisation are closely associated together and from the narratives of the participants it can be seen that there are certain staff who go about creating their own roles which are not necessarily part of a plan or design which can, in turn, cause a collection of hybrid roles. In the view of management this may not be effective. Joy had an interesting viewpoint that confirms this statement:

There is a designed hybrid role which works across the university and is responsible to the Dean .... and before you know it you have a collection of hybrid roles which are ineffective. We need to compare hybrids that are designed against the needs of the university, against the made up roles.

The concept of a 'designed' hybrid role is a very interesting point of view which conflicts with the views of other participants who talk about an individual's aspirations and creativity in fulfilling emergent hybrid roles.

Even when administrators move into an academic role there is a feeling of *'imposter syndrome'* and although it takes time to be accepted into the 'academic culture' it was generally felt that being an academic buys instant credibility with an assumed knowledge

and capability. Carol considered that this links to the perceptions of people both inside and outside of the university about the two different groups of staff and noted:

As an academic people take me seriously and do not question where I am coming from. This was not the case when I was an administrator. I was then seen as capable but not credible.

Although gender was not an area which was researched, and there was no distinction made between male or female administrators, it is interesting to note that the two male administrators did not appear to have problems with credibility, whereas the female administrators did find gaining credibility was more problematic. Saunderson (2002) who undertook research into academic women's identity, found that "identities were being compromised, challenged and made vulnerable through feelings of being undervalued and overburdened" (p.376). There is no suggestion that there is inequality between male and female administrators, but that there is between academics (male or female) and administrators, and that gaining credibility is much harder as a female administrator.

Again, it must be recognised that for this high level group of administrators the issue of lack of a professional identity, is seen as a problem, which appears to be linked to credibility within the organisation. It would have been expected that staff undertaking higher level jobs would not have a problem with credibility with other communities of staff, but from those interviewed, when they feel that their skills are not being recognised by academic staff, to gain credibility is often an uphill struggle. Waugh (2002) discusses how administrative quality at a university can be measured based on academic staff perceptions in relation to university administration. It is interesting to note that there is not a similar measurement undertaken for academic quality, and the participants in this research could argue that, although interesting, this would not necessarily help the relationships between the groups of staff, a view that I would concur with. There appears to be an esteem issue and administrators feel that academics want a hierarchy of administration which is entrenched in the fact that academics should run universities (Land, 2003), this is often just accepted but it is considered that it is more worrying that new universities have adopted many of the old universities' traditions. The whole area of professional identities, parity of esteem and lack of credibility does not help the relationships between different communities of staff which participants have raised as an issue.

Nixon (2004) explored academic identities being under threat if related to areas such as governance, research and teaching, but says that the newer emerging identities are based

upon other loyalties and are in response to changing university structures. It can be seen that there is a common theme throughout the research. The issue of credibility is seen as important to administrators, but there appears to be very little research undertaken into this area. Harris (2005) suggests that the way forward is to find ways of working within and across disciplines in order for the different communities to understand each other's domains. Wenger (1998) links this to "who you are, your commitments and sets of values" (p.74). This was in relation to academics, but it can be argued that this should not be any different for communities of administrators.

4.3   Summary of Chapter Four

The experiences of staff working in universities in hybrid roles show that there can be a number of problems for both the individual and the organisation and this links closely to the issue of identity. This chapter has looked at the professional roles and aspirations of the participants and the challenges faced by people undertaking 'hybrid' or 'blended' roles, particularly in relation to identity. These have attempted to address the first two of my research questions.

There are five main themes which have been identified from the data collected and these are highlighted below and will be explored in the final chapter:

1. *Administrative/Academic Divide: Participants' professional journeys, personal challenges and tensions they have faced in relation to career choices and aspirations and the emergence of a divide, or a difference between academic and administrative staff, is linked to the perceived status of administrators by academics and their position in the university hierarchy. The issue is also about the possible misperceptions of academics and that they (administrators) sometimes strongly frame the divide which also reinforces it.*

2. *Working Relationships: There are perceived problems with relationships between groups of staff demonstrating that participants felt that It is important to have a good relationship with an academic member of staff if an individual's aspirations are to move across the divide into another professional role. Linked to this is the issue of administrators' perceptions that academics have more freedom and autonomy, better working terms and conditions, holidays and flexibility and that they are not monitored in the same way.*

3. *The Third Space: The notion of a 'third space', which may be either physical or conceptual, and which would be perceived as non-threatening where staff undertaking hybrid roles could work both together and with different communities.*

4. *Identity: Administrators do not feel that they have an identity in the same way as academics as they are not linked to a discipline and this is becoming more pronounced as more staff are taking on hybrid/blended roles.*

5. *Credibility/Reputation: There are perceptions that credibility and reputation for administrators have to be earned but for an academic it is assumed.*

Chapter 5 will now consider the data collected from participants in relation to the other two research questions which are exploring hybrid roles and how these are shaped by organisational factors, including line management and organisational culture; and whether administrators are supported in making the transitions to academic work or taking on academic roles and gaining acceptance within the academic community.

Chapter 5 – Generating the Study's Findings from the Data Analysis (Part Two)

5.1 Introduction to Chapter Five

In this, the second data collection chapter, I will examine and analyse the final two areas of my research which are looking into the mechanisms by which universities function. The two related research questions are highlighted below:

5.1.1 Analysis of the Data to Address Research Question 3 - To what extent do administrators in higher education inhabit hybrid roles and are these shaped by organisational factors (including line management and organisational culture)?

5.1.2 Analysis of the Data to Address Research Question 4 - In what ways are administrators supported in making the transitions to academic work (or taking on academic roles) and gaining acceptance within the academic community?

In university schools and departments, administrative staff are taking on a variety of roles which were originally considered 'academic' but in many universities, as can be seen from the data, the inflexibility of some line managers, in part because of the background, values and personalities of individuals, but mainly because of the structures in which they work, prohibits very capable staff from being able to take on other areas of interest. The data highlight that in relation to institutional cohesion there may possibly be a conflict of interest in what management and individuals want for an organisation. The data also show that many staff are more motivated to work for an organisation by undertaking fulfilling, interesting roles. As Susan suggested:

> *The University is changing its structure and I will be losing the hybrid nature of my role and this is what makes the job interesting, providing the motivation I need.*

Participants were asked whether they considered that the type of university structure and the associated culture helped or hindered them in their careers. From comments raised in the preceding chapter it is clear that for many, the type of university they found themselves working in had in fact affected their own personal and professional aspirations.

Overwhelmingly, participants did not think that the Higher Education Role Analysis (HERA) exercise undertaken a few years ago, which was set up to provide a single pay spine and to

deal with equity helped the relationship between academics and administrators and in many cases made this relationship worse. Mary suggested it was *'more of a barrier because it stops staff being imaginative and using their flair as it's all about systems, structures and processes'.* Sarah commented that *'HERA was a disastrous job evaluation process and as long as you are teaching you are valued more highly'.* This is because even though the common pay spine was seen as a positive move, lecturers start at a particular grade and move up the scale but administrators have a ceiling which is normally lower than for an academic. Anna mentioned that:

> *HERA affected individuals rather than relationships between them, and for administrators who are on the same pay scale as academics, there were bad feelings on behalf of the academics because they thought they should not be.*

Organisational factors are often too deeply embedded because of the relationships between groups of staff. The HERA exercise reinforced the divide between academics and administrators because of the differing recognition and reward structures, and Elaine reflected that:

> *There is a maximum for administrative staff and a starting point for academics and I think the HERA forms were biased to academic, and completing the forms depended on whether you were articulate.*

This quote implies that HERA, as with many job evaluation schemes, is only as good as the person who is completing the forms. As John mentioned 'The *HERA values were heavily influenced towards the management of staff, but they did not consider an individual's other responsibilities'.* If administrative staff had a supportive manager who was completing the forms, they were more likely to achieve a re-grading, and Sarah said that in her university *'to ensure that the VC's secretaries received a higher grade they were re-named Executive Assistants',* but this still impacted on relationships because of the different starting points for academics and administrators on the single pay spine. As Sarah said *'HERA values teaching more highly than anything I can do in my role'.*

The HERA process measures the relative size of a job in terms of demands and responsibilities, but it cannot, however, measure the individual contribution made in terms of quality of research, impact and teaching innovation. Participants have identified that these are not considered by universities as important for administrative staff, which supports their views that the values of universities are biased towards the academic community.

A recurring theme which has been raised was in relation to universities using the talents and skills of their staff. Sarah said that her university was *'open to fitting people into jobs using their skills, irrespective of whether they are academic or administrative'.* Whereas Joanna suggested that *'it is a mixed picture and I have had twenty years of barriers put in the way – we have the skills but we are not allowed to use them',* and Jane noted that her university did not consider an individual's skills because she said: *'I have the knowledge and skills to work in the International Office, but I am discriminated against'.*

The data have shown that even when administrators have the skills required for a particular role, such as, in Joanna's situation, the setting up of a commercialised company within a university structure, they are not considered capable because they are not academics, unless they have the support of a senior academic. As Joanna experienced *'I was told to talk to an academic who had set up a company before as he had informal networks we could draw upon'.* As more universities are looking at knowledge transfer and becoming more business focused, they need to consider that administrators are normally the people with the skills and expertise required. If these skills are not being recognised because of the culture individuals are working in, staff can become de-motivated and demoralised which can impact on the relationships between the different communities. In Jane's case it was more pronounced because even though she was from a country (India) from where students were recruited, and she knew the culture and spoke the language, she was not allowed to go because she was not an academic. This demonstrates that her skills were being negated simply because she was not an academic.

One main theme which is discussed is about the way universities have changed and have had to become more centralised and directed, with more directives from Vice Chancellors and other senior staff encouraging more bureaucracy. The data from this study show that in all universities there are distinct line management structures for which it is difficult to cross from one to another, and this is supported by the work of Silver (2003). Clark (1983) suggests that "since academics have this strong sense of solidarity with their occupation it can lead to rival views and allegiances" (p.72). The data highlight that these rival views are seen to transfer to the leaders or managers of the two structures: academic and administrative, with both disciplines inhabiting their own knowledge territory. Barnett (1990) questioned whether "members of the different disciplines considered themselves to be part of the institutional communities or whether they were more likely to have an affinity with others in the same discipline in other institutions" (p.97). This is an interesting point which could relate to the groups of professionals mentioned previously, for example, accountants,

but this was not something that any of the participants discussed. However, for many participants, who would be classed as general administrators, they felt they were on the periphery of their community because they were not professionally affiliated. As mentioned previously, academics whose allegiance is with their discipline, do not appear to experience problems, but administrators can feel threatened about their identity, particularly if they are line managed by someone who is also not part of a professional body.

Throughout the research, participants were highlighting the importance of being line-managed by the 'right' person. In participants' views, the 'right' person was the manager whom they considered understood their role, and who they considered to be supportive and appreciated what they were trying to achieve. For example, in Anna's university one group of administrative staff was managed by an academic whom she considered did not know how to manage people, whereas for John, he was managed by an academic who understood his role. In all the universities visited, there were distinct line management structures, normally these were academics being managed by an academic leader and administrative staff being managed by an administrator. Conole (2003) concurs with this when she says that in a collegiate culture there is a dual structure of administrative and academic management which can result in parallel committee structures, which can in turn act as a black hole for decision making. She also suggests that academic status is perceived as higher than support or administrative functions, and as demonstrated, this is a general theme throughout this research.

There are several different models across these universities but in general this model was followed. In smaller, new universities, there appears to be more decentralisation with more opportunities for individuals to take on new areas of work, a matrix rather than a hierarchical structure exists, and there is more opportunity for fitting people into jobs using their skills, irrespective of whether they are academic or administrative. This was certainly the case for Mary and Sarah who worked in a new small university. Mary suggested that:

> *As students are at the core in this university there is a culture to ensure that staff are working together for the benefit of students and many administrators are taking on the role of personal tutor, coach or mentor.*

This is supported by research undertaken by Silver (2003) who found that there are different cultures in high profile, research-oriented universities and that much of this is linked to the student profile. Although it is interesting to note that this university is one of the new universities, but it still has the philosophy of putting the student first. Sarah also noted that

there are *'grey'* areas where there are a number of academics working in departments but who are not teaching, but as administrators, *'precedents are set, if you demonstrate you have the right skills and background you can do the job'.* This is unlikely to happen in a large, older university where there are cultural barriers which can block career progression if staff did not fit the perceived 'mould'. This was the case for Chris and Joy who were both administrators who wanted to teach, but the structures in their universities stopped them from doing this alongside their administrative roles. As Chris suggested *'It is people like me sewing various interests together, driven by the individual. It's really sad because the university is cutting out a lot of potential'.* This resonates with Conole (2003) when she suggests that in institutions with flexible structures which are geared to respond and adapt to external factors and influences, these are often characterised by a matrix structure and have an innovative culture. These are characteristic of many new universities.

Line management is seen as important and for most participants of this research the above model existed, but in the case of John, he has a very supportive academic line manager, who has seen what he is capable of and he has not been prohibited from doing something that may be seen as an 'academic' role. In John's case, his job of securing bids for contracts did not sit within a traditional structure and was not seen as an administrative role, as the responsibility for this work was within the academic structure, ie the Dean of the Faculty (an academic). For another administrator, Elaine, who was undertaking a hybrid role and being managed by an academic, there were problems of a lack of understanding of what her role was, but her department was not managed in the same way as in the main university where it was the more normal situation where administrators were managed by administrators. In her view this was felt to be the correct situation because they (administrators) understand the work of this group of staff. This was seen as a problem in other universities and as Joy indicated: *'If you let academics manage administrators you get people doing jobs at the wrong levels because they (academics) do not understand the work of administrators'.* Joy said that she needs a line manager to understand the complexities of her role, for example, budgets or space management, areas they (academics) are unlikely to have any understanding about.

It was interesting to note that although Sarah is an administrator being managed by an administrator, this manager was not in her own department, but based in a central service, Registry. She suggests that this is a good model because *'this gives an added line of support for professional staff and the structure enables managers to be included in strategic university decisions'.* This was a unique situation for this particular university and was not a conventional approach taken.

Research undertaken by McNay (1995) and supported by Conole (2003) examined models for organisational cultures for different types of organisations, suggested that there is a collegiate model where there is a dual structure of academic management resulting in parallel committee structures. This corroborates the above comments on line management structures and culture. However, in considering the divide which was discussed in the previous chapter, I would argue that this may be seen to be an issue of management competence, rather than who an individual is managed by. There needs to be good communication between managers and their staff in order for trust to be built up and skills to be utilised effectively.

The general consensus of the participants is that where organisations have changed and have become more centralised, directed and bureaucratic (McNay, 1995), and staff have to fit into generic roles, there is a culture inhibiting hybridisation. The economic situation impacts on this, in good economic periods, managers are less directing and departments have more autonomy in managing their own staffing structures and budgets and therefore there is more likelihood of hybrid roles being developed.

Anna, an administrator, identified a 'blame' culture in the department in which she was working, which Carmazzi (n.d) suggests can cultivate distrust and fear, people blame each other to avoid being reprimanded or put down, this results in no new ideas or personal initiative because people do not want to risk being wrong. In Anna's case, it was not helped by the fact that administrators in this particular department were managed by an academic who did not know how to manage people. This affected Anna's role and progression because she was not taken seriously, she was undertaking the work that academics should have been doing, an example being preparation for validation events, but they were receiving the credit for it. Another example is that Anna undertook the role of Project Officer and Researcher and was asked to run a Saturday workshop for researchers, but because she was classed as an administrator the Dean did not allow this, despite her being qualified to do so. She therefore decided to leave this department in order to pursue her career aspirations to become an academic.

For Susan, who identified that her university is now moving away from encouraging role hybridisation and new job descriptions are being written which will take away the opportunities for hybrid roles, she suggested that:

The structure is changing and this will mean that I will lose certain elements and I therefore see this as a move away from hybrid roles. This university has been using the talents and skills of their staff, but it looks as if they are moving away from this. They are trying to professionalise the management but it will polarise the roles between academics and administrators.

If this is linked to Conole's (2003) model, this university appears to be moving from a collegiate to a bureaucratic model which could reduce the opportunity for staff to take on hybrid roles which may, in turn, impact on their aspirations and opportunities to enhance their roles.

Many of the participants said that they thought that structures do get in the way, and that *'you need people who can work across structures – the boundary spanner'* (Louise), that *'a major problem is that universities do not always allow people to flourish'* (Jane) and that often it is the type of manager which is the issue because they often had a role in reinforcing the divides and confirming differences in status. Most universities have a bureaucratic structure, which is characterised by strong central management and top-down decision making. The data suggest it is the universities, often those which are Russell Group members, with a hierarchical chain of command, where the participants struggled the most with hybrid roles.

Although there are problems across the sector relating to structures, one administrator, Joy, has managed a radical restructure and said:

Across the sector, without there being a grand plan, roles have changed and I have realised that there are roles that are bounded and roles that are hybrid. The bounded roles are functionally based, the one 'managed' hybrid role should be working across functional areas, helicoptering across all the businesses. The bounded role goes deep into the discipline and the hybrids have the overview. University structures have to be planned, you can't make it up as you go. It's radical but it's all about quality and that's what drives admin models.

She also noted that over the last few years, administrators have been managed by academics and in her view, this is what has caused the problems this particular university has faced, resulting in a major review of the administrative structure. She suggests that:

If you let academics manage administrators you get a variety of jobs so we have to rationalise it all now. Academics are terrible about telling administrators how to do their jobs. If you professionalise a workforce many of them have to go, you have to change working practices to build esteem.

Joy's views have challenged me to question personal deliberations about hybrid roles. The idea of a 'managed' hybrid makes complete sense from an organisational point of view, but from an individual's perspective, this may conflict with their own aspirations. If senior administrative and academic managers were working together on creating new jobs which were required to meet objectives in the strategic plan, roles could be designed taking into account an individual's aspirations, skills and knowledge and the needs of the school or department.

Depending on factors such as an individual's personality and aspirations, and whether they have aspired to cross the divide and move into a different professional role, the structures and cultural barriers have often blocked career progression, prohibiting people from moving on unless they fitted in to a particular type of university. This was certainly the case for Mary where the institutional context impacted on her career progression. There are clear structures of 'job families' or 'tribes' and unwritten and unspoken rules within sub-cultures. Silver (2003) believes that in terms of definitions derived in recent decades from theoretical assumptions about shared norms, values and assumptions, universities do not have a mono-culture. He suggests that "individual perceptions are one of chaos or anarchy, or of a system of sub-cultures in perpetual, erratic and damaging tensions" (p.167). Many of the participants of this research would agree with these comments, and as Anna said '*In this faculty there was a blame culture, although this was not apparent in the main university',* and Susan noted that '*Over the years you add to your job the roles you are good at and that interest you and managers then trust you to take on additional tasks'*. This does not happen when structures do not allow for hybridisation of roles. For many participants hybridisation was not openly encouraged but on a pragmatic basis it was encouraged for expediency because people 'on the ground' can see the strength in working in hybrid roles. For all participants, the hybrid roles were not planned but developed on an ad hoc basis. This links to the issue of flexibility which will become more important in times of change and the higher education sector will need to become more dynamic and flexible with more varied and flexible employment contracts (Melville-Ross, 2009). It could be argued that as departments are becoming more centralised and less devolved, when individuals are experiencing the 'chaos' mentioned by Silver, the lack of shared norms, values and assumptions (Silver,

2003) between communities of staff augment the tensions being experienced, and as John suggests *'it's about being ahead of the game'.*

There is a recurring theme which links the issue of role hybridisation to flexibility and the fact that universities need to use the skills of the staff they employ, which should not be dependent on the type of contract they are employed on.

Elaine is facing an interesting scenario whereby she was appointed as an administrator by the then Dean of Faculty, an academic, who is now the Pro-Vice Chancellor, to undertake the role she is currently undertaking, which included chairing the Quality Group meetings. The Pro-Vice Chancellor has now decided that this post should be an academic one and has said that it is not a personal issue but that as the university is not doing well in the National Student Survey (NSS) it has been decided that the Group needs academic leadership. Elaine says:

> *It's disappointing that they are not looking at the skills, knowledge and experience of the people we have. I am the right person to do the job but I am employed on the wrong contract.*

Conversely, it could be argued that because of the complexity of university work, this is a position that needed the status of an academic leader, because of the possible repercussions of not doing well in the NSS which would affect the university's position in national league tables.

It is interesting that again, as for other participants, she is managed by an academic but the remainder of the administrative staff are managed by an administrative manager. Elaine's previous line manager thought she should be doing thirty five days research a year, which is not required on an administrative contract. She provides an interesting perspective when she says that:

> *My role is a good example of me being prohibited in taking on other roles because they are now seen as academic. There is a sense of isolation in the faculty and across the university. You don't fit in a particular box. My previous line manager hindered my career, our styles did not click and this was damaging. Personalities come into it alongside structures. Professionally it's undermining and it pushes you back down the 'snakes and ladders' of self esteem.*

Hofstede (1980) demonstrated that there are national and regional cultural groupings that affect the behaviour of organizations, but Astin (1993) suggests that it is an impossible task to represent higher education's 'collections' as unitary and explicable. Taylor (1999) suggests that "cultures are social achievements which should be better understood as adaptively coexisting" (p.75). This resonates with the views of Hofstede who said that one of the groupings is that of 'Individualism' versus 'Collectivism' where individualism is contrasted with collectivism and refers to the extent to which people are expected to stand up for themselves, or alternatively act predominantly as a member of the group or organization. From the data it would seem that individualised cultures are less beneficial for those staff wishing to make academic transitions.

This is a common theme throughout this research, where administrative staff may be writing papers and presenting at conferences, but as they would need to gain approval of their line manager if this person is very structured and rigid, this could prohibit them from achieving their aspirations. It would, however, be expected of an academic member of staff, and as this is part of their contract, they would be encouraged to present papers. Again the theme of low trust and confidence between managers, possible lack of communication and low discretionary cultures appear to be inhibiting factors for administrative staff.

As the literature highlights, structures and cultures in higher education are very complex areas which have been discussed by a large number of researchers. Barnett (2000), has a view which is supported by Silver (2003), and sums up the views of the participants of this research by saying:

> Large multi-faculty universities – and even relatively small institutions – are a conglomerate of knowledge factions, interests and activities. We cannot assume that the manifold activities of the 'multiversity' have anything in common. (p.48)

This section has investigated the impact that university structures and associated cultures have on the work of administrators and whether these prohibit staff being able to realise their aspirations. In analysing the narratives of the participants in this study, there is a mix of views and there did not appear to be any significance as to which type of university staff were employed in. This does not resonate with the views of Silver (2003) who found that there were different cultures in high profile, research-oriented old universities and former polytechnics (new universities). Dill (1982) thought that in trying to manage the academic culture assumed that academic organisations were academic communities. A question that this research raises is whether this is the same for administrators' communities.

Finally, Melville-Ross (2010) highlights the need for a more dynamic and flexible sector which will mean more business models, more varied and flexible employment contracts and increased leadership, governance and management input from professionals, practitioners and staff at all levels. He also suggests that:

> Current academic contracts, charters and statutes will require amendment if they amount to a significant barrier to change in terms and conditions of employment and the move to a more flexible and responsive workforce. (p.4)

This data have shown that in order to utilise the skills of the staff they employ, irrespective of which contract they are employed on, universities need to be more flexible and receptive towards individuals.

Dearing (1997) reported that one of the purposes of higher education is to inspire and enable individuals to develop their capabilities to the highest potential levels throughout life and that a strong university system is essential to a country's economic success. To be able to achieve these aims the data suggest that the relationships between communities of staff working in higher education are not always as effective as they could be, which in turn may not help individuals work together to meet the objectives of the organisation. An important question is then, how can this be improved?

To conclude this chapter, to further highlight lived experiences of these issues, the professional history of one of the participants which demonstrates and supports the findings of my data has been focused on. This participant has been chosen, as in my view, she represents a career narrative that encompasses the issues and tensions raised by the majority of the participants in my research. This is a participant who has been in a similar position and of a similar age to myself and who has worked in one university for the whole of her career, however, unlike me, she did not challenge the structural boundaries. The following is a précis of her narrative. For this purpose I have provided a pseudonym (Joy) and I have linked the elements of her story to my four research questions and the narrative is self explanatory in relation to the tensions experienced between academics and administrators and the divide between the two groups.

5.2   Joy's Professional History

Background: Joy has worked in a Russell Group university for thirty seven years and all her full time positions have been in administration, but as her aspirations have always been to teach, she has also undertaken academic work in her university (unpaid) teaching feminist approaches to research, alongside an additional part-time contract for the Open University, teaching gender and education. Joy has a first degree in History and a Masters in Education. Joy said that she stopped teaching in 2000 because she gained more senior roles in her 'day job' and she suggested that the more senior you become, the more you become involved in strategic management and change, limiting the amount of time available for the intellectual effort required for teaching. Joy is now the Director of Professional Services with three hundred staff and does not have the time to keep up to date for teaching and to undertake the management role.

Joy's background demonstrates that she has a *bounded* role as an Administrative Manager as she is located firmly within organisational and functional boundaries (Whitchurch, 2008) but as she also undertakes teaching she could be considered to have a *blended* role as her experience demonstrates that she has straddled both academic and administrative domains (Whitchurch, 2008). This is an interesting phenomena, which is unusual because the blended role is not being recognised by the university in her contract of employment and for Joy, trying to balance the different types of roles has caused tensions which she has had to learn to manage.

The next parts of Joy's story link to my research questions, however, the themes often necessarily overlap with each other. For clarity, everything written in italics in the next section, are Joy's authentic extracts but they have been re-written using the third person.

Joy considered that there was definitely a divide in universities (RQ1). Joy understands that in the Russell Group university, in which she is employed if you wish to be an academic you have to be hired against research criteria as this is what drives the roles. Joy has therefore managed two identities and two diverse roles, she has learned to keep them separate and has not tried to move across the divide, which she says is very real, and although it is not ideal, it avoids the cultural, political and genuine differences in role descriptions. The subsequent discussions also demonstrate where this divide is strongest. However, as has already been discussed, it could be argued that the divide could be being constructed by participants themselves and although they strongly consider it is real, it may just be related

to different attitudes and perceived relative positions within the work organisation (Higson and Miller (1997).

James (2003) suggests that lived and told stories emphasise diversity of identities. Because of the divide that exists between academic and administrative staff, Joy has had to manage the two identities, one as an academic and one as an administrator, as she is part of two communities of practice (administration and academia).

In terms of professional identity (RQ2) Joy made a large number of academic friends though her teaching role and because of this she was able to gain the respect of other academics, the rewards being intrinsic. As an administrator Joy considered that she had more credibility with academics because she also taught and academics thought that she understood more about academia. Because of this, any decisions she made were not challenged. In fact, Joy suggested that if she had wanted more recognition, the barrier would have been with the administrative, rather than the academic manager.

Joy said that it is important to professionalise the administrative workforce by investing in administrators who have higher-level thinking skills in order to carry out the jobs they have to undertake in the current climate, for example, understanding high level IT systems and analysing the student experience.

Disciplinary communities can be shaped and defined by a common identity where one is bound together by shared values, expertise and standards (Kogan, 2000) and because of the credibility and respect that Joy gained with academic colleagues she was able to form a liaison with their identity, without really feeling that she had one of her own as an administrator.

Because of the divide that exists between academic and administrative staff, Joy has had to manage the two identities as she is part of two communities of practice. Identity is continually informed, formed and reformed as individuals develop over time and interact with others and as situations are experienced and anticipated (James, 2003). I would agree with James and consider that my position was similar to that of Joy's before I moved into academia.

Joy considered that there is a real status structure in universities which is driven by the relationship between research and teaching and there is a social hierarchy which attaches to people who are attracted to the roles (RQ3). The social status relates to issues about

epistemology with universities' function being to build knowledge which confers a status on the different activities and the status of these activities goes with the status of the role, and administrators in a social hierarchy are seen to be at the bottom of the heap.

Joy is managing a major restructuring of the administrative services in her university due to financial cuts. She has identified that without there being a grand plan roles have been changed and there is a distributed model in place where administrators are sitting with their academic disciplines and there are roles that are bounded and roles that are hybrid. Joy said that because people go about creating roles 'on the hoof' and it's not part of a plan or design, this is why the university has a collection of ineffective hybrid roles, she now has to compare hybrids that are designed against the needs of the university and the 'made-up' roles. Since the restructuring Joy only has designed or managed hybrid roles to ensure that the university is not one that is driven by a 'Cottage Industry'. Joy advocates that administrators should manage administrators because this is often what happens if you let academics manage administrators as they (academics) do not understand what administrators should be doing and often want them to act as a 'personal assistant' simply undertaking tasks that they give them.

In relation to RQ4, Joy believes that hierarchies in universities are very deep rooted and that on the surface it seems to be democratic, but in reality it's not and that anyone challenging boundaries becomes suspect. Joy had an interesting viewpoint and considered whether women challenge boundaries in order to assert themselves, as they expect to have to do this and it is deeply challenging. She considers that women often position themselves in their heads as outsiders, then they have the temerity to challenge the status quo where they are then seen as a threat.

Joy feels that she was held back by her line manager because he thought that staff should be mobile and gain jobs around the country and this did not suit Joy as she had a family. This is supported by the views of Twombley (1988). *She applied for two senior positions while he was in post, but as her 'face did not fit' and as she did not receive the support from him, she was unsuccessful. When the new line manager was appointed, Joy was able to gain a senior post. However, because of the hybrid nature of her role, she was not able to pursue the teaching element because she was not working in the right 'work stream', that is, academia, and did not challenge this so remained on her administrative contract, which financially is lower than an academic contract, despite the HERA exercise. However, Joy has one administrator who works in the Social Work department undertaking placements and she has grown the role and is teaching placement supervisors how to place students*

and because this is a real hybrid role a case is being made to move to an Education Research post as a Teaching Fellow, but not a 'full-blown' academic. This member of staff had requested to move from one work stream to another and to change her contract but this was blocked and now Joy is supporting her to make the move. This could be a sign of the times, even in this Russell Group university, although possibly only for isolated cases.

5.3   Summary of Chapter Five

Joy's story has summarised the thoughts and feelings of this group of participants and through her narrative I hope to have shown how, particularly for senior administrators, the divide is a very real problem.

There are two main themes which have been identified from the data collected and these are highlighted below and will be explored in the final chapter:

1. *Participants' perception of their status within the organisational hierarchy which is linked by a number of factors including the effects of the HERA exercise; contracts of employment; and gaining acceptance in the academic community.*

2. *The importance of organisational factors, including line management, and the acknowledgement by academics of the skills and knowledge of administrators and the need to use staff more flexibly. Administrators' skills are not being utilised effectively and there are issues of management competency and poor communication.*

The issues raised in these two chapters, which have emerged through the qualitative data collection, will now be discussed in depth in the following chapter which will attempt to draw these themes and sub-themes together. The four conceptual themes mentioned throughout the research and the recurring themes highlighted in this chapter will be examined and suggested recommendations will be made to senior management on the results of the research.

Chapter 6 – Summary of the Research Study and Concluding Comments of the Thesis

6.1   Introduction to Chapter Six

The purpose of this research was to investigate whether there is an academic/administrative divide in universities in the United Kingdom, and if there is, how it operates, how it is perceived by professionals and how it affects the relationship between different groups of university staff, exploring whether it is possible to move from one professional role to another. It is likely that divides probably exist in any organisation where different professional groups interact and where these groups are managed (Conway, 2009), and the participants of this research agree unequivocally that there is a 'them' and 'us' aspect to the administrator/academic relationship.   Some researchers suggest that boundaries between academia and administration have been blurring for a number of years as teaching has evolved into learner support and research has extended into managing projects and partnerships (Whitchurch, 2007; Conway, 2009, Hall, 2010)) therefore impacting on the divide, but this is not the view of the participants in this research.

The previous chapters have highlighted that there is an increasing complexity of university management, particularly in relation to line management of administrators, which has resulted from the massification of higher education, diversification of roles, accountability and the changing expectations of the student as the consumer/ customer.   People are organised in different ways in universities and they may want different things *from* it and *for* it, and as Watson (2000) suggests:

> An organisation exists to get something done and requires management while an institution is less concrete and is largely held together by people .... an institution is composed of the diverse fantasies and projections of those associated with it. These ideas are not consciously negotiated or agreed upon, but they exist. (p. 97)

Watson goes on to say that universities are professionally argumentative communities with most people authorised to have an opinion about everything, but this study has demonstrated that the administrators who were part of this research may not agree that they are entitled to an 'authoritative voice'. I am not suggesting that in organisations, all staff will always agree and be compatible with each other, there will always be both professional and

personal disagreements within communities, but from the data and my own views, administrators need to feel that they are respected for their opinions.

Although in many departments there may be flat (matrix) structures, universities are normally considered to be hierarchical, with senior management at the top of the hierarchy. Watson (2008) offers the following as a 'normal' university structure, with senior management and academics at the top of the hierarchy and everyone else below them:

Senior management

'Academic' (teaching) staff (or 'faculty')

'Professional' support staff

Contract researchers

Clerical staff

Manual 'workers'

For many of the participants in this research, the notion of the hierarchy does not help the tensions between different communities of staff, as immediately they see themselves as 'beneath' the academics, rather than working alongside them.

The aim of my research was:

> To develop an empirical understanding of whether there is an academic/ administrative divide in contemporary universities in the United Kingdom, and if there is, how this operates, and how it affects the relationship between academics and administrators.

A summary of the key elements of this research is provided, a reflection on the major findings are highlighted along with the key conclusions based on the research questions. As in most educational research there are no clear answers to the questions being raised and through this research a number of additional questions have also arisen and the following questions will require further study and research exploration.

- If there is a divide is it 'real' or 'perceived'?
- If it is real, what action do we need to take to address and deconstruct the divide?
- If it is real, what sustains the divide and what are the associated factors?
- If is perceived, how do we dispel it, or do we ignore it?

- What assumptions need to change and which group can help the most?
- How can diverse communities of staff who are not academics feel affiliated to a particular group and have a sense of identity?
- Can partnerships be created within different communities of staff working in higher education?
- Can hybrid roles really work for both the individual and the institution?
- Can administrators gain credibility within the academic community?
- Should universities consider a radical change in structure with new models for administration?

There were other areas resulting from this research which raised questions which will be unable to be answered at this time, but could be the subject of future research projects. They are: Why do so many administrators train as teachers and then 'fall' into administration? and Why is there a small percentage of men in administrative roles, and when they are, why are they normally in senior positions? It is again worth mentioning that for this research I have looked at a very small sample (fifteen) of the two hundred and fifteen thousand higher education administrators working in universities in the United Kingdom. My data could have evidenced very different results if a larger sample had been used.

6.2   Methodological Limitations

Locke et al., (1993) suggest that "limitations refer to limiting conditions or 'restrictive weaknesses', which may be unavoidably present in the study's design" (p.18). In the case of this study there may be limitations in the amount of data which were collected. There is very little current literature available on the subject of an academic/administrative divide and although the data have been analysed, further research may be needed to identify how many people may have been affected by this phenomena.

6.3   Summary of findings

Most participants used negative words to describe their personal relationship with academics. There was however a concern from some participants, that many administrators do not respect or appreciate the stresses faced by academics, and conversely that academics do not understand the thinking or methods employed by administrators. Administrators felt that academics question their expertise and skills but they (administrators) never question theirs. Words used include: *'undervalued'*, *'not appreciated'*, *'disrespectful'*, *'not respected'*. In the views of many participants, the divide between

academics and administrators is perpetuated by *'dinosaurs'* (the academics) on the one side and *'new professionals'* (the administrators) on the other. The vast majority saw the divide as *'counter-productive* and *morale sapping',* and that most academics did not see them as colleagues sharing a workload. It was interesting to find out that it is not only the academics that do not see administration as a profession, but that also, some administrators also do not consider themselves as professionals.

This research has shown that many administrators lacked understanding about the role of the academic and the nature of academic freedom, there were tensions between freedom and responsibility, but the participants did not always appear to understand that there are often political/economic drivers directing academic behaviour, for example, research performance and quality assurance. The participants thought that academic work is seen by academics as having a higher value, and the perspective of academics is paramount. The assumption by the majority of participants is that academics are collegiate, and that generally administrative staff are seen as subservient. There appears to be different sets of rules for each group and as the size of administration continues to increase there are contrasting ideologies. The terminology relating to occupational roles and titles needs to be changed to describe more accurately the work that administrators undertake and there may be a need for this group of staff to work across both academic and corporate departments, as change will need to be experiential, but the leadership of the university needs to create an environment that suits both groups to ensure shared values and understandings about the moral purpose of working in academia (Harris, 2005).

What then are the emerging questions? Does the academic/administrative divide exist? What are the characteristics of positive professional relationships? What is the impact on 'new' professionals with blended/hybrid roles? What is emerging in the 'third space'? Does the institutional type matter? There needs to be one workforce; one focus; one set of values; complementary skills; interdependence; all university work is of equal value which means equal conditions; decisions need to be made collaboratively; leaders should create co-creation of work; and we need to develop new terminology.

These ideas may be aspirational but from the views of the participants they are very real and of great importance to them. These will be considered individually in the next section which will look at ways in which these questions may be considered.

6.4   Emerging Findings, Questions and Debates

6.4.1   Does the Academic/Administrative Divide Exist?

This first question relates directly to the main research question, but also brings in elements of the other three. From the data collected from this research it can be seen that the overall answer to this question is 'Yes', the perception of this group of administrators is that ther divide does exist and is real. So the question to be considered is how this can be deconstructed and barriers broken down. As mentioned previously, unless there is a change of attitude between groups of staff the future of working relationships in universities will be under threat. When the divide is felt or experienced it is counter-productive in terms of effective management and how a person perceives their role and their professional identity, which might influence how they see their relationship in the workplace, for example, as a partner in the student experience, ignored or invisible. Academics have been under the spotlight in this research as having a responsibility in the divide but it appears that even if both sides lack interest in their counterparts' efforts, they should be able to respect the expertise and contribution of each other, even if their own opinions are different. Bridges need to be built to rectify this situation and the evidence provided from the data findings suggest that it is not necessarily the structures that cause the divide, but often it is the individuals themselves who are inhabiting communities or tribes in universities, who are impacting on this. Every individual has a personal responsibility to help to deconstruct the divide, but how this message is communicated is likely to be a challenge for us all.

Two areas have been identified previously that could be addressed to help to start to dismantle the divide. These are the use of language and the titles that administrators are given; and terms and conditions of employment.

Firstly, as mentioned in previous chapters, just from the data collected and from the responses from those respondents who were not interviewed, there are a whole raft of different titles (Appendix 4) used which are not consistent across the sector, and the perception is that they are all classed as 'support staff' because they are 'non-teaching' staff. From the data many administrative staff who are called 'support staff' feel that there is very little parity of esteem, which also links to gaining credibility in the university. This could again link to the notion that people do not often choose to go into administration as a career choice. These are areas in which individuals may be able to influence, but again there is no consistency across the sector and until the culture of universities changes and there is an

understanding that all staff should be respected for their individual skills and knowledge, and for groups to work in partnership to achieve the aims of the institution, this will not improve.

In all service organisations, people are crucial and service quality depends on people quality and this has been highlighted through the data. Through the narratives of the participants interviewed it has been demonstrated that this group are highly qualified staff who are contributing equally to their institution's aims and there needs to be a radical re-think about boundaries, constituencies and titles. My own university has started naming staff working in the central services' departments 'professional services staff' rather than 'support staff', but this has not yet been cascaded down to departments or schools. This is one recommendation which should be considered by the Director of Human Resources, but even if this was agreed, it is unlikely that academic staff will change their perception of this group of staff, as in their minds they will still be 'support staff'. Then there are the 'new professionals' who have the non-traditional job titles, cross role positions and non-traditional contracts and conditions of employment. There needs to be a culture change which will need to be led from the 'top' of the university, this will not happen instantly but it is important that universities start to think about how they will develop their workforce for the future challenges of competition and change, and for them to achieve world-wide class status. Academics must engage with the support teams who underpin their work and universities will also need to think about staff development policies, incentives and training schemes for their existing staff to ensure that there is a modern and flexible administrative framework, where academics are not expected to be the sole drivers of innovation. Academics need to recognise professionalism and shared values of administrators, and the administrators need to understand the nature of academic work and how their own roles are changing and becoming more dynamic.

Associated with parity of esteem and credibility is the issue of contracts and pay scales. The data show that people are employed on a variety of contracts in universities, but unless they move out of their current university into a different type of role, it is very rare for people to transfer to a different contract of employment. This is another barrier when trying to break down the divide, particularly as organisational factors are often too deeply embedded because of the relationships between groups of staff.

Even when staff did not aspire to become academics, but simply wanted to move across the divide into a different professional role, remaining on the same contract, barriers were put in place to prevent this from happening. In this case, as in some others, the issue of line management was a contributing factor. It can be argued that the social and political

implications here may have stopped some participants from aspiring to their real ambition of teaching. It would have been interesting to find out how many other administrators, who were not part of this research, this may have affected. What was also surprising was that eleven people had trained to be teachers and had moved into administrative roles for numerous reasons. This was not data that had been anticipated and it was expected that more people would have aspirations to move into other professional roles. Maybe the status quo is the easier option for many administrators, particularly if they had decided that the divide was too strong and it would have been pointless to pursue.

6.4.2   What are the Characteristics of Positive Professional Relationships?

Investigating the characteristics of professional relationships has been fascinating to consider. The journeys that participants have described in their narratives have clearly shown that for most people the professional relationships between academics and administrators are full of problems. Issues relating to the identities of staff have been raised as a dilemma for relationships. There are clear identities for academics, linked to their discipline, but not for administrators. However, for those administrators who belong to a professional association, they may feel a sense of identity. But as this research has shown, this only affects a minority of university staff, as for the majority they are in a variety of blended roles which are not affiliated to any particular professional body. As mentioned previously, the Association of University Administrators is the professional body for administrators and managers in higher education, but only a small percentage of university staff belong to this Association as it is not mandatory to be a member. For example, from a staffing complement of several hundred administrative staff, only twenty five belong to my local branch of the Association. It is also not affiliated to a particular category of staff although there are other associations which are discipline specific, such as Registry, Marketing, Accountancy and Human Resources.

However, from the comments raised from some participants, many of the lower-level administrators in their organisations do not have their own identity but build and identify with a particular academic and his/her discipline. If this is the case, administrators can put an invisible block on their own career progression, because their job links too closely to that of one particular academic. It could be argued that administrators may need to reassign their loyalties in order to progress.

So if lack of identity is seen as something which is affecting professional relationships the question remains as to what can be done to establish an identity for administrative staff. It

has already been identified by Nixon (2004) that identities which are related to governance, research and teaching may be under threat, but the newer identities are in response to changing university structures. I would argue that the administrative identities are included in this dilemma due to the changing nature of the roles undertaken in modern universities. It has been determined that an academic's identity is linked to his/her discipline but this is not the case for administrators, as generally they have an allegiance to the university but not to a discipline. This also relates to the notion of 'support staff' and the fact that this is perceived as anyone who is not an academic. This research has also highlighted that for those staff undertaking hybrid roles this becomes even more complicated and for some they have had to manage dual identities.

So how can professional relationships be improved? This research has investigated the characteristics of the different groups of staff who are required to work together in partnership. Barnett and DiNapoli (2008) suggest that: "Partnership working involves both a sharing of common territories ....where professional (managers) might bring together the contributions of others, and also make an independent contribution" (p.80). In one participant's case (John), he was able to work with his academic manager as a partner in the complex role he was undertaking and he also worked in partnership with groups of staff around his faculty on various contracts and projects. But, it should be noted that his manager was an academic and not an administrator. It would seem that there should be a straightforward model of communities of staff working together in partnership, but from the findings of this research this is not the case.

Only a small percentage of academics (three) were interviewed as part of this research and these were people who had been in administrative roles prior to taking on teaching and research opportunities. However, through secondary research and the views of the participants, there is no argument about the fact that there appears to be a tension between the personal identities of academics and the institutional context. As mentioned previously, the divide links to the way people perceive their roles and when institutions are constantly changing and subsequently roles are being changed and subjected to new orders of governance there is an increased emphasis on identity. New institutional frameworks contain many social spaces in which identities are being shaped (Barnett and DiNapoli, 2008) which should allow different communities of staff to work together as partners.

But, I keep returning to the issues of identities, or non-identities of administrative staff. The data show that the group of staff interviewed did not feel that relationships could be improved until academic staff recognised that they (administrators) need to feel part of the

university with their own identity. Much of what is known about identities is derived from interactions with others through roles which are guided by complementary and competing motives and goals and as Stets and Harrod (2005) suggest:

> Within a social grouping or structure, one's status or position 'infuses interactions with meaning, producing perceptions that facilitate or impede the development and maintenance of positive regard for the self', and accentuates role characterisations. (p.155)

If we are therefore suggesting that the links to professional relationships are reliant on the themes mentioned above, for example, identity, self-esteem, and belonging, there needs to be a culture shift to make this happen and this culture needs to be more sympathetic and facilitative. Senior managers and administrators should see that if relationships do not change, the institution may not survive and there may also be a concern that academics may just see a future of more administrators.

6.4.3   What is the Impact on New Professionals with Blended/Hybrid Roles?

The data have shown that new professionals do not see themselves as a group, they are not clear where they belong, which workplace union they should belong to and which professional journals they should read, and their roles have often developed as part of active change management processes. There is a blurring of boundaries within and outside universities and this can be demonstrated by many of the participants who undertake hybrid roles, the holders of which would be classed as new professionals. The data have established that the majority of hybrid roles have been developed on an ad hoc basis by staff adding to their roles elements which interest them, normally these are not planned but have happened by default as administrators take on mixed portfolios of university work and move into areas traditionally handled by academics. Another area which causes concern for this group of staff is which line management structure they should belong to, and I will be suggesting that, as the university is an academic/administrative workplace an integrated line management structure could be considered. This thesis has highlighted that due to a changing higher education environment, there may be issues of management competence causing tensions between the different communities of staff and this may be improved if revised management structures are considered.

I am concerned that there may be a transient nature to many of these hybrid roles due to the ever changing nature of universities, there may be a need for the creation of new roles and

the discontinuation of current roles. From my own experience, my role was created as there was an emerging need for a new type of role, someone who was not part of the teaching team, to organise placements for trainee teachers from within the current complement of staff as no new funding was available to support a new appointment. As my department grew, taking on a number of new contracts, the role changed and became more hybrid in nature, eventually becoming the role it is today. Due to government cuts and the economic downturn, the role will now be changing because of loss of contracts and a reduction in numbers of trainee teachers. This will be a risk for the university and for myself if I was not an established member of staff with a broad portfolio of work and skills. I am also at the pinnacle of my career, for others this may not be the case and as can be seen from the data it may be a risk to individuals' roles but not to the university:

From the data it can also be seen that the way diverse universities structure themselves is very different and this can impact on whether hybrid or blended roles are encouraged, but in the majority of cases role hybridisation happens because of the individual's hopes and aspirations, but it will only happen with a supportive line manager.

6.4.4 What is Emerging in the 'Third Space'?

The previous discussions have highlighted that blended professionals who are taking on mixed portfolios of university work and who are now moving into areas of work traditionally handled by academics, have high level academic qualifications, such as Masters or Doctoral degrees and may have teaching or research backgrounds. The posts that these staff normally occupy, have been developed because of the changes in the type of student support required in modern universities and include tasks such as developing new modes of learning and developing student support and pastoral care. Previous research has shown that these staff are moving laterally across functional and organisational boundaries to create the new professional spaces, knowledge and relationships (Delanty, 2007; Taylor, 2007). My research has demonstrated that it is also apparent that this space could be where individuals who do not consider that they 'fit' in either academic or administrative domains, could feel comfortable.

For staff who are not interested in taking on elements of academic work, this could cause a dilemma. The roles that would fit into the third space are those that do not fall into either the academic or the administrative communities but which bridge the two. The roles that have been undertaken by the participants of this research generally overlap into the domains which were those of academics and not the other way round. Words such as *'bridge'*,

'boundary spanner' and 'imposter' and statements such as 'it's a lonely place to be', 'I don't feel I have an identity', and 'I am really sitting on the fence' provide the reader with some insight into how people working in this third space feel. The question to be asked then is whether this third space can be seen by hybrid professionals as a community worth being part of.

Additional comments made by participants, which support the idea of a 'third space' include: 'I make a lot of decisions which may overlap with academic decisions', 'It is a hybrid identity for administrators', 'Clearly defined roles have an identity but as the roles change and become more hybrid, this makes it unclear', 'I don't really know who I am', 'There is not a complete fit for hybrid roles', ' I am a boundary spanner, I cross from one community to another and back again. I teach, I do student development, run workshops, chair an exam board but I am not an academic', 'I feel submerged in anonymity', 'My line manager is into heavy boundaries and does not think there should be any crossover', 'I am a bridge and can understand academics' and administrators' points of view, 'There is a 'fuzzy' borderline', 'Designed hybrid roles versus collection of ineffective hybrid roles', 'People do not understand why I am not at my desk because they think that's where administrators should be'. These comments also resonate with my own experiences of being in a hybrid role where lack of identity means that you do not 'fit' in any particular space.

I have mentioned the problems of lack of identity, but another issue is related to the type of contract that staff are employed on, which, in many cases does not reflect the role that is being undertaken. If titles were consistent around the sector, it may be possible for certain categories of staff, dependent on job titles, to be employed on an 'academic-related' contract, which is apparent in many universities, but not all, and for this group of staff to form their own identity in this third space. These roles are increasing and will continue to do so to ensure that universities operate successfully and the staff working in them to develop new opportunities to engage in activities and develop the professional attributes, skills and sector knowledge that will be needed where boundaries become more blurred and shifting. I will now look at whether the data have shown whether the type of higher education institution an individual is working in has any impact on relationships, hybrid/blended roles and the divide.

6.4.5   Does the Institutional Type Matter?

From this research, it was expected that the type of institutions that the participants worked in would have reflected how the relationships between different communities of staff were perceived. It can be seen from the data that this did not appear to be a factor but that it was

to do with the individual, their hopes and aspirations, their relationship with their line manager and whether this person was an academic or an administrator. As different structures and cultures exist in all universities and also in individual departments/schools, there are liable to be frictions between the various communities of staff being employed. I have already identified the types of institutions visited and although they are very different in size, structure and profile, there did not appear to be any correlation with the type of university and the individual's concerns which have emerged through the research.

What is most important is the values we want to underpin university work in the future, which is not dependent on the type of university in which different groups of staff are working. Structures need to change with unified administrative processes so that their efficiency and effectiveness are not compromised by new structural boundaries. I am now suggesting that there should be one integrated line management structure in universities. I will explain why I think this is important and will support this by the data collected from the participants in this research. I will also be showing how I think this will work.

This research has shown that there are different line management structures in universities but the usual model is that administrators are normally line managed by an administrative manager and academics by an academic manager. This generally works well with line managers having a greater understanding of the types of roles individuals perform. However, the data have demonstrated that this is not always the case, and for many participants, issues of management competence and communication, either helped or hindered what they were trying to achieve. But as there are many different line management structures they should be able to work in partnership with possible service level agreements produced, clarifying role expectations for both sides, in my view this could be a beneficial way of working in partnership. This could help to ease the divide between academics and administrators and could also help with the other divides between different communities of staff in universities which have been mentioned previously.

6.5 Recommendations Evolving from the Study

The outputs from this thesis are practical rather than theoretical and the following recommendations are therefore being considered in relation to my own university, but I hope that the findings from this research may also be deliberated by other universities.

6.5.1 School/Department structure/line management: The structure in my university at the moment is that there are five faculties and within each faculty there are a number of

schools/departments. As an example I will concentrate on my own school which has an Academic Head of School who line manages the academic staff, and who is line managed by the Dean of the Faculty; and a School Manager who manages the administrative staff and who is managed by the Faculty Manager. In this faculty the Faculty Manager is the only administrative member of administrative staff who is managed by an academic, except for one of the participants in this research who is also managed by the Dean. Problems arise in this school when the Head of School is unable to influence the work of the School Manager's team. My recommendation is that the Head of School should line manage the School Manager which would then enable joint decisions to be made on the different communities of staff, when these decisions may impact on the other team. This would mirror the model applied in faculties which appears to work well. I am not suggesting that academics manage all administrative staff but at the higher level of the hierarchy this could help to ease the tensions between groups of staff.

This is supported by the data which suggest that this is more important in times of economic downturn when universities will need to use the skills and talents of their staff irrespective of whether they are academic or administrative. There are many roles in my own university which would be considered as hybrid in nature and span the divide and by having an integrated structure these roles could be managed in order for these to be part of the strategic direction of the university. As one participant (Louise) said:

> *I have been managed by both academics and administrators in my career and I think that the right person is a 'non-academic, but for a School Manager it is better for this person to be managed by the Head of School because she can take problems to him which they can resolve together.*

In my view, an integrated line management structure would help to address many of the issues identified by the participants of this research, although this may not be considered favourably by a large number of university staff.

6.5.2 Designed hybrid roles: If the above recommendation was taken on board it would be easier for management to be able to design roles to 'fit' the aims of the school/department alongside meeting the aspirations of individuals. As the data have shown, if administrative staff want to take on additional elements to their roles, they have normally needed an academic champion to be able to do so. If the academic Head and the School Manager were working together on creating new jobs which were required to meet objectives in the strategic plan, the roles could be designed, taking into consideration an

individual's aspirations, skills and knowledge and the needs of the school/department. This cannot happen at present because of the different line management structures.

6.5.3 Forming Identities: I am recommending that the titles administrators are given need to be systemic across the education sector. The data have demonstrated that there is such a multiplicity of titles being used across the sector that it may be difficult for administrators to form an identity. The data have also shown that this is very important to this community of staff, who also identified that the label of 'support staff', which is common around the sector, should not be used. The idea of 'service level agreements' being produced to clarify role expectations for both sides is something that I would welcome because I believe that without the understanding of the roles of each of the communities, there will always be a barrier and the divide will continue to exist.

6.5.4 Forming Partnerships: Having undertaken this research I consider that the way forward is for partnerships to be formed between academic and administrative staff. In my particular department, when I was undertaking the role of School Manager, this worked at this level because of the good working relationship I had with the Head of School. The fact that I was not line managed by him did not cause a problem and I consider that this was due to personalities and the trust and credibility that I had built up with him. There was a good working partnership created and we were able to work together on solving problems within the school. This situation has now changed because of changes in staffing, but I think that if it is perceived that senior staff are working in partnership this would cascade down to other staff. The data have shown that there are some successful partnerships in the sector but these tend to be in central services rather than in schools/departments. For example, one participant (Joanna) said that:

> *In this university my credibility was at its strongest because there was a culture of team working between academics and academic related staff in my department. I felt my contribution was just as credible, sometimes academics would take the lead on a problem or sometimes we would.*

As Barnett and DiNapoli (2008) suggest:

> In partnership working, professional staff not only become more visible, but also more accountable … this means that they not only take or share responsibility but are exposed directly to the effects of success or failure and the impact this may have on their career or professional life chances. (p.79)

This could work in helping to deconstruct the divide which this research has shown is srongly perceived as real. In my school I would suggest that the administrative staff working with particular teams of academics should work more closely together. There is a planned move to a new building which could make this an easier task but the recommendation is that these teams are physically located together to enable academics to understand that administrators have independent legitimate contributions to make and for the administrators to understand the academic role and the pressures they (academics) can face. As one participant (Joanna) suggested:

> *It comes down to relationships and building up that trust – they may not like or want to hear what you are saying, but even if it is uncomfortable, they will listen because I have earned that respect.*

This could also ease the tensions between the communities of staff over the 'working from home' issues. If administrators understand why this is needed the tensions may ease. The polarisation of agendas between academic staff and professional managers (Halsey, 1992) has been expanding but with groups crossing into each other's territories this needs to change.

6.5.5 Changing Contracts of Employment: This is likely to be the area which may not be able to be changed. I have shown through this research that the type of contract that a member of staff is initially employed on is normally the one they remain on, despite any changes made to their role and/or job description. Contracts are legal documents which are either oral or written, but in the case of universities these are always written documents, which specify the terms and conditions under which a person consents to perform certain duties as directed and controlled by an employer, in return for an agreed wage or salary. This contract then 'fits' a member of staff into a group, either academic (which may include researchers) or administrative, at the start of their careers. From personal experience and from discussions with participants it is very difficult to change contracts to fit the job which may have developed through the changes which have been identified through this research. My argument is that this should not be the case and if jobs change dramatically there should be a process in the university system which enables people to move onto different contracts which may have different pay scales and terms and conditions, including holiday entitlement. As has been noted, the HERA exercise was seen as a bureaucratic exercise which achieved very little, but to help the tensions experienced between groups of staff, there should be flexibility within this, or another job evaluation scheme, to differentiate within jobs. There is a

case, as my study illustrates, that there should be another contract which fits with the 'third space' mentioned above. Further research would need to be carried out as to whether this would work but it could help with the identity issues which have been a recurring theme through this research.

6.6   Reflection

When I commenced this study as a new, inexperienced researcher, I had very clear views about what I thought would be the conclusions I would come to. From my own experiences I had assumed that there would be a number of people who had been in a similar situation as myself, who had either aspired to become an academic or to take on different professional roles and who had been prohibited from doing so because of the structures of the higher education sector. From those whom I interviewed this was not the case, but what has come resulted from this research is that the picture is much more complex that I had first imagined.

The data have shown that there is a strong perception that there is a real divide in universities and that for relationships to improve this will need to be deconstructed. I have made some recommendations in the previous section as to how I think this may be possible. I was pleasantly surprised about how professionally qualified this group of administrators are but very disappointed in how they feel they are perceived by the academic community and how their talents and skills are not being utilised to their best advantage in their particular university. The issue of identity for communities of staff, which links to parity of esteem and credibility, were also areas which I had not considered would be a particular problem. But, it can be seen that this is not the case and these are factors which are seen as universal across this group of staff, particularly when staff are working in hybrid roles and having to move across boundaries.

There is of course always the chance that there is bias in the responses that the individuals were willing to discuss with me. At the beginning of the interviews, participants generally discussed their professional life stories which reflected a positive assessment of themselves at work but during the interviews, which lasted for about one and a half hours, once they felt more relaxed with me, the discourse moved into more open narratives. These provided rich data which reflected some very personal views about the organisation and their colleagues within it, which have enabled me to draw upon in support of this thesis. The views gained were from a small group of senior administrators over a short period of time, and if further research was to be undertaken, a wider, more focused sample would be considered,

possibly located in fewer universities, in order to gain the views of a different group of less senior staff.

6.7   Conclusion

The findings of my research have shown that the academic/administrative divide is an important construct to study and I found that this is more complex than many researchers have previously argued. A hypothesis has emerged that clearly shows that there is a strong perception of a distinct divide between the different communities of staff which impacts on their working relationships.

The data identified that because of the hybrid nature of many of the jobs, the university structures and cultures can prohibit individuals from being creative in achieving their aspirations, but from an organisational point of view, it could be argued that this may be a much broader managerial issue. This is an interesting point that is raised by a number of the participants and supported by literature on structural boundaries and this again highlights, in my view, the need for flexibility in the way the skills of the staff employed are being utilised.

As has been mentioned during this research, the successful operation of an educational institution requires competent administrators. Higher Education administrators direct and coordinate the provision of student services and those who hold leadership positions with significant responsibility may find that co-ordinating with faculties, parents, students, community members, business leaders, and state and local policy makers can be fast paced and stimulating, but also stressful.

Finally, in all work situations, different groups of staff have to work together for the good of the organisation. This is no different in higher education but as this research has identified, relationships between the diverse communities of staff need to change. How members of these communities engage with each other will impact on the way universities are run in the future. There needs to be a fundamental change of mind-set of the sub-communities in universities to help to deconstruct the divide which this research has demonstrated is perceived as real. How individuals develop their self-concept based on relationships with others which links to their identities as individuals and communities has underpinned the study, but there are many unanswered questions. Barnett and DiNapoli (2008) suggest that one question for academic leadership to consider is whether:

Different identities can find some kind of bridge or set of bridges between them or whether the role of academic leadership is that of translating between mutually non-comprehending communities. (p.204)

They then consider whether academic leadership could identify new language and a new conception of the university, with which the different identities can identify, and they then sum up by saying what I feel is at the heart of my research:

Higher education institutions can determine the space they will accord different identities; in turn individuals have space imaginatively to interpret their positions, to express their voice and to widen and change their identities. (p.204)

I consider that it is possible to claim that in a working partnership of mutual trust, ethical practices and shared professional values that all stakeholders in the provision of educational services, principally administrators and academics, can gain from breaking down the barriers of the divide that currently exists between them. If this is ever to be a reality, universities will need to be able to retain their good staff and develop them to continue to be capable administrators, but to allow them the flexibility and creativity to continue with or take on many of the hybrid roles which have been discussed in this thesis without the constraints of university structures.

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132

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APPENDIX 1   **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Question 1 – Can you tell me a little about your professional background, including current and past jobs in education, development opportunities, and any professional qualifications you may hold?

Question 2 – Do you think there is an academic/administrative divide in universities? If so, what is its nature and how real are the factors underlying this?

Question 3 – Have you aspired to an academic or other professional position – did you succeed or fail? Please tell me about what happened.

Question 4 – Do you think that there are any differences in the parity of esteem of different professionals across the sector in relationship to identity? If so, what do you think these are?

Question 5 – Have you ever experienced problems in gaining credibility with academics or other professionals? If so, please explain.

Question 6 – Do you have to make professional decisions in your role which may be classed as an academic responsibility? If so, how much autonomy do you have in the decision-making process?

Question 7 – Do you think there is an organisational culture in your institution/department regarding role hybridisation? Is this something that would be encouraged by senior management? Can you give me any examples?

Question 8 – Do you think that universities use the talents and skills (and how well are they used) of their staff irrespective of whether they are academic or administrative? Do you have any examples of where this does/does not happen?

Question 9 – Have you had experience of either yourself or others being in a professional transitional situation (either academic or administrative) and being prohibited from undertaking other work because of this? If so can you describe what happened?

Question 10 – Do you think that organisational factors such as line/senior management and pay structures have impacted on the relationship between academics and administrators?

Question 11 – How have the results of HERA affected this relationship?

Question 12 – Are you managed by an academic or a non-academic member of staff? Do you think this is the right person to manage you, when thinking about your working relationships?

Question 13 – Have you ever experienced problems in your department because one line/senior manager cannot influence the work of another manager's team? If so, can you give me an example?

Question 14 – Has your line/senior manager helped or hindered your career progression? Please explain why you think this is the case.

Question 15 – When are you able to discuss possible changes of role opportunities with your line/senior manager? Would this be formally at an annual performance review or are you able to discuss this informally when opportunities arise?

Question 16 – If an opportunity came up for a change of role which meant changing contracts from one line management structure to another (ie, from administration to academic or vice-versa) would you receive the support required from your line manager to pursue this?

Additional comments – Is there any other aspect of this research which you would like to comment upon?

Appendix 2

CROSSING THE DIVIDE – PROFESSIONAL TRANSITIONS WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION
MATRIX FOR RESEARCH/INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

OBJECTIVE

To develop a theoretical and empirical understanding of whether there is an academic/administrative divide in universities in the United Kingdom, and if there is, how this operates and how this affects the relationship between academics and administrators.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
1. Is there an academic/administrative divide in universities and if so, what is its nature and what are the factors underlying this?	1. Can you tell me a little about your professional background, including current and past jobs in education, development opportunities and any professional qualifications you may hold? 2. Do you think there Is there an academic/administrative divide in universities? If so, what is its nature and how real are the factors underlying this? 3. Have you aspired to an academic or other professional position – did you succeed or fail? Please tell me about what happened.
2. In what ways do administrators in higher education form identities through their work and roles within their institutions?	4. Do you think that there are any differences in the parity of esteem of different professionals across the sector in relationship to identity? If so, what do you think these are? 5. Have you ever experienced problems in gaining credibility with academics or other professionals? If so, please explain.

	6. Do you have to make professional decisions in your role which may be classed as an academic responsibility? If so, how much autonomy do you have in the decision-making process?
3. To what extent do administrators in higher education inhabit hybrid roles and are these shaped by organisational factors (including line management and organisational culture)?	7. Do you think there is an organisational culture in your institution/department regarding role hybridisation? Is this something that would be encouraged by senior management? Can you give me any examples?
	8. Do you think that universities use the talents and skills (and how well are they used) of their staff irrespective of whether they are academic or administrative? Do you have any examples of where this does/does not happen?
	9. Have you had experience of either yourself or others being in a professional transitional situation (either academic or administrative) and being prohibited from undertaking other work because of this? If so can you describe what happened?
	10. Do you think that organisational factors such as line/senior management and pay structures have impacted on the relationship between academics and administrators?
	11. How have the results of HERA affected this relationship?
	12. Are you managed by an academic or non-academic member of staff? Do you think this is the right person to manage you, when thinking about your working

relationships?

13. Have you ever experienced problems in your department because one line/senior manager cannot influence the work of another line manager's team?

14. Has your line/senior manager helped or hindered your career progression? Please explain why you think this is the case.

15. When are you able to discuss possible changes of role opportunities with your line/senior manager? Would this be formally at an annual performance review or are you able to discuss this informally when opportunities arise?

16. If an opportunity came up for a change of role which meant changing contracts from one line management structure to another (ie, from administration to academic or vice-versa) would you receive the support required from your line manager to pursue this?

4. In what ways are administrators supported in making the transitions to academic work (or taking on academic roles) and gaining acceptance within the academic community?

Additional Comments

Is there any other aspect of this research which you would like to comment upon?

UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton
School of Education

Consent form

Title of Research: Crossing the Divide – Professional Transitions within Higher Education

Name of Researcher: Ms Ann Patey

I have read and understood the information sheet about the project and agree with the following statements:

I have been given the opportunity to ask any additional questions that I have had about the research project and what I am expected to do and these questions have been answered by the researcher who is interviewing me.

I understand that I will participate in an interview about 'blended professionals/hybrid roles', the perception of an 'academic/administrative divide' and comparability of esteem across the higher education sector in relationship to identity.

I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and that if I wish to withdraw from the study or stop the interview, I may do so at any time and that I do not need to give any reasons or explanations for doing so.

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.

I understand that in any reference to my interview made in research presentations, reports and articles, EdD Thesis etc, personal, organisational and place names will be changed (anonymised) so that I, and any other individuals mentioned, cannot be identified.

I have read and understood the above information and agree to participate in this research project that is being conducted by Ms Ann Patey, an EdD student at the School of Education, University of Southampton.

Name of Participant (print name) ....

Signature of Participant ....

Name of Researcher (print name) ANN PATEY

Signature of Researcher ....

Date ....

If you have any questions or queries, please contact the researcher, Ms Ann Patey, at ann.patey@port.ac.uk

School of Education, University of Southampton, Highfield Campus, Southampton SO17 1BJ
Tel: +44(0)23 8059 3475 Fax: +44(0 23 8059 3556 www.education.soton.ac.uk

Participant Information Sheet

Study Title:
Crossing the Divide – Professional Transitions within Higher Education

Researcher:
Ann Patey

Ethics number: 7605

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

I work in a University in the South of England now as an academic undertaking a hybrid role of Partnership Manager/Course Leader/Senior Lecturer, but whom, for the first 18 years of a 22 years' career in the same university, was employed on an administrative contract, working in a variety of administrative and management roles.

I am undertaking this research as part of my Doctorate in Education.

The aim of the study will be to explore administrators' experiences of working in higher education and to investigate whether it is possible to move from one professional role to another.

Within this overall aim the study will have the following specific objectives:

> *To investigate whether there are any administrators who have aspired to an academic or another professional position and have either succeeded or failed and to explore the experiences of these members of staff.*
> *To explore structures and cultures in higher education organisations in relation to role hybridisation, role ambiguity and role conflict.*

The research aim will be operationalised through the exploration of the following questions:

Is there an academic/administrative divide in universities? If so, what is its nature and how real are the factors underlying this?

> What are the experiences and perceptions of people working in higher education about the parity of esteem of different professionals across the sector in relationship to identity?
> To what extent have the changes in university structures changed the organisational culture in different departments in relation to role hybridisation?
> What are the social, political and financial implications for blended professionals undertaking hybrid roles? This will include organisational factors such as line management and pay structures.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to be part of the research because of the initial interest you have shown in this area of work, the fact that you have undertaken hybrid roles and have shown that the aims and objectives of this research are of significant importance to you.

What will happen to me if I take part?

I will be asking you to take part in a taped semi-structured interview. This will provide the data required for the research questions highlighted above which will then inform my thesis. I will be asking you about your thoughts on how you think the changes in university structures have changed the organisational culture in different departments in relation to role hybridisation; the perceived academic/administrative divide, including parity of esteem of different professionals; and line management, pay structures etc.

I would visit you in your university and would expect that the interview would take approximately 1.5 hours. It is not expected that there would need to be a follow-up visit, but if further clarification is required, this could be done by telephone.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

The benefits are seen to be for the sector as a whole, as universities face having to use their staff more flexibly, particularly in the current economic climate, to support university aims. If university line management structures prohibit this because employees are considered as either academic or non-academic staff, and are paid on an associated contract, this will not happen. There will hopefully be a benefit to you if your aspirations are taking you outside of the box in which you find yourself.

Are there any risks involved?

There will be no risks involved.

Will my participation be confidential?

Participation will be confidential in line with both the Data Protection Act and university policies. I will gain your permission to use the data in reports, books or articles, and all information will be stored electronically on a password-protected computer, and hard copies will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Anonymity will be maintained throughout the study.

Version 1 - July 2010

What happens if I change my mind?

If you change your mind about being part of the research you will be able to withdraw at any time during the research. You do not need to give a reason (unless you wish to) and there will be no consequence to you.

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, I can provide an independent contact who is not involved in the research. but may be the chair of the ethics committee, the research governance office, a school manager, or any other authoritative body.

Where can I get more information?

You can get further information from myself as the researcher, by email at ann.patey@port.ac.uk or by telephone on 02392 845340.

RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

To be completed in accordance with the attached guidelines

Activity:

Participants will be contacted by an initial email to gauge interest. A sample of 10 will be chosen to be interviewed and the remaining respondents (60) from the initial email will be contacted to thank them for their interest and be told that they may be contacted if further data is required.

Locations:

Interviews will take place at the participants' universities around England, in accommodation agreed by the participants. The participants are university employees, many of whom the researcher may have met informally at AUA events

Potential risks:

1. The only physical risk noted is that of the researcher driving to the locations.
2. If any participants decide to withdraw from the study, I would contact others who have shown an interest in participating in the research.
3. Not receiving the level of response expected from interviews.
4. *Anonymity Statement*: All information gained will be treated anonymously and confidentially and the implications of the Data Protection Act (1988) will be considered carefully. All data gained from interviews will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office and a second copy kept in a safe in another part of the School. All information will also be stored electronically on a password-protected computer. The data will be made available to the individual participants on request. Any reference made to the interviews in research presentations, reports and articles, the EdD Thesis, etc, will have personal, organisational and place names changed (anonymised) to ensure that the participants or other individuals cannot be identified. Participants will sign a consent form to confirm these details. Procedures will be set in place to ensure there is a balance between the participants' right to privacy and access to public knowledge. Participants will have the opportunity to withdraw from the research study if they feel that their privacy is being invaded. No reasons for withdrawal need to be provided (unless this is the wish of the participant) and there would be no consequence to the participant.

Who might be exposed/affected?

1. The Researcher (re physical risks).
2. Participants who wished to withdraw from the study.

How will these risks be minimised?

1. Difficult to minimise risks.
2. If any participants decide to withdraw from the study, I would contact others who have shown an interest in participating in the research.
3. If the level of response was low I would interview others who have shown an interest in participating in the research.

Risk evaluation:	Low
Can the risk be further reduced?	No
Further controls required:	N/A
Date by which further controls will be implemented:	N/A
Are the controls satisfactory:	N/A

Date for reassessment: N/A

Completed by: Ann Patey   13 October 2010
                            Name   Signature   date

Supervisor/manager:
If applicable
                            Name   Signature   date

Reviewed by:
                            Name   signature   date

Tips for completing a Risk Assessment

There is no such thing as "No Risk" – even in a simple questionnaire study risk should be assessed. Any risk to confidentiality/anonymity should be considered, as should data protection/security.

Risk cannot be eliminated but it can be minimised if properly managed, so take time to explain exactly how you address the risks you identify

Risk assessment should be limited to the research activity and not include activity that is not related to the research (for instance observation in a classroom should consider the additional risk caused by the observer presence and not the routine activity being observed)

Potential harm may be psychological as well as physical (for instance an interview may involve sensitive questions that may upset respondents)

Intrusive procedures (e.g. surface electrodes, unpleasant images) and invasive procedures (e.g. taking bloods) are higher risk by definition.

Clinical procedures (e.g. taking bloods, brain imaging) should take place in a clinical space and performed by a trained clinician unless there is a specific arrangement in place with the University Insurance Office

Risks involved in clinical procedures should be fully identified – even taking blood entails a risk of fainting, bruising, etc.

Consider risk to the researcher as well as to the participant. Lone working (e.g. interviewing in homes) may need to be managed to ensure safety.

Student Research Project: Ethics Review Checklist - Form CH2-Student

This checklist should be completed by the researcher (with the advice of the research supervisor/tutor) for every research project which involves human participants. Before completing this form, please refer to the Ethical Guidelines in the School's Research Student Handbook and the British Educational Research Association guidelines (http://www.bera.ac.uk/guidelines.html).

Project Title: Crossing the Divide - Professional Transitions within Higher Education

Researcher(s): Ann Patey - Student ID number: ███████

Supervisors:

Dr Felix Maringe Email: fm2@soton.ac.uk

Dr Brenda Johnston Email: bhmj@soton.ac.uk

Part One	YES	NO
1. Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent? (e.g. children with special difficulties)		X
2. Will the study require the co-operation of an advocate for initial access to the groups or individuals? (e.g. children with disabilities; adults with a dementia)		X
3. Could the research induce psychological stress or anxiety, cause harm or have negative consequences for the participants (beyond the risks encountered in their normal life and activities)?		X
4. Will deception of participants be necessary during the study? (e.g. covert observation of people)?		X
5. Will the study involve discussion of topics which the participants would find sensitive (e.g. sexual activity, drug use)?		X
6. Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing or physical testing? (e.g. long periods at VDU, use of sport equipment such as a treadmill) and will a health questionnaire be needed?		X
7. Will the research involve medical procedures? (e.g. are drugs, placebos or other substances to be administered to the participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?)		X
8. Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses or compensation for time) be offered to participants?		X
9. Will you be involving children under sixteen for whom additional consent will be required?		X
10. Will you have difficulties anonymising participants and/or ensuring the information they give is non-identifiable?		X
11. Will you have difficulty in explicitly communicating the right of participants to freely withdraw from the study at any time?		X
12. Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS?		X
13. If you are working in a cross-cultural setting will you need to gain additional knowledge about the setting to be able to be sensitive to particular issues in that culture (e.g. sexuality, gender role, language use)?		X
14. Will you have difficulties complying with the Data Protection Act (e.g. not keeping unnecessary personal data and keeping any necessary data locked or password protected)?		X

15. Are there potential risks to your own health and safety in conducting this research (e.g. lone interviewing other than in public space)?		X

If you have answered NO to all of the above questions and you have discussed this form with your supervisor and had it signed and dated, you may proceed to develop an ethics protocol with the assistance of the Ethical Protocol Guidance Form which must also be completed. If you have answered YES to any of the questions, please complete PART TWO of this form below and adopt a similar procedure of discussion with supervisor, signing and proceeding to develop an actual ethical protocol with the assistance of the Ethical Protocol Guidance Form. Please keep a copy of both forms and protocol for your records. Only in exceptional circumstances will cases need to be referred to the School's Research Ethics Committee.

Part Two For each item answered 'YES' please give a summary of the issue and action to be taken to address it.

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary

Signed : Ann Patey (Researcher)
Date: 13 October 2010

To be completed by the Supervisor (PLEASE TICK ONE)

☐ Appropriate action taken to maintain ethical standards – no further action necessary. **This project now has ethical approval.**

☐ The issues require the guidance of the School of Education's Ethics Committee. **This project does not yet have ethical approval.**

COMMENTS:

Signed (supervisor on behalf of SoE Research Ethics Committee):

Date:

There are aspects to research governance that lie outside 'ethics', but which are important for you to consider. These include data protection, insurance, and health and safety issues. You should seek advice re same from your Supervisor in the first instance, and then if necessary from your Programme Director.

Student Research Project: Ethics Review Checklist - Form CH2-Student

This checklist should be completed by the researcher (with the advice of the research supervisor/tutor) for every research project which involves human participants. Before completing this form, please refer to the Ethical Guidelines in the School's Research Student Handbook and the British Educational Research Association guidelines (http://www.bera.ac.uk/guidelines.html).

Project Title: Crossing the Divide – Professional Transitions within Higher Education

Researcher(s): Ann Patey - Student ID number: ██████

Supervisors:

Dr Felix Maringe Email: fm2@soton.ac.uk

Dr Brenda Johnston Email: bhmj@soton.ac.uk

Part One	YES	NO
1. Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent? (e.g. children with special difficulties)		X
2. Will the study require the co-operation of an advocate for initial access to the groups or individuals? (e.g. children with disabilities; adults with a dementia)		X
3. Could the research induce psychological stress or anxiety, cause harm or have negative consequences for the participants (beyond the risks encountered in their normal life and activities)?		X
4. Will deception of participants be necessary during the study? (e.g. covert observation of people)?		X
5. Will the study involve discussion of topics which the participants would find sensitive (e.g. sexual activity, drug use)?		X
6. Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing or physical testing? (e.g. long periods at VDU, use of sport equipment such as a treadmill) and will a health questionnaire be needed?		X
7. Will the research involve medical procedures? (e.g. are drugs, placebos or other substances to be administered to the participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?)		X
8. Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses or compensation for time) be offered to participants?		X
9. Will you be involving children under sixteen for whom additional consent will be required?		X
10. Will you have difficulties anonymising participants and/or ensuring the information they give is non-identifiable?		X
11. Will you have difficulty in explicitly communicating the right of participants to freely withdraw from the study at any time?		X
12. Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS?		X
13. If you are working in a cross-cultural setting will you need to gain additional knowledge about the setting to be able to be sensitive to particular issues in that culture (e.g. sexuality, gender role, language use)?		X
14. Will you have difficulties complying with the Data Protection Act (e.g. not keeping unnecessary personal data and keeping any necessary data locked or password protected)?		X

11 Feb 08

15. Are there potential risks to your own health and safety in conducting this research (e.g. lone interviewing other than in public space)?		X

If you have answered NO to all of the above questions and you have discussed this form with your supervisor and had it signed and dated, you may proceed to develop an ethics protocol with the assistance of the Ethical Protocol Guidance Form which must also be completed. If you have answered YES to any of the questions, please complete PART TWO of this form below and adopt a similar procedure of discussion with supervisor, signing and proceeding to develop an actual ethical protocol with the assistance of the Ethical Protocol Guidance Form. Please keep a copy of both forms and protocol for your records. Only in exceptional circumstances will cases need to be referred to the School's Research Ethics Committee.

Part Two For each item answered 'YES' please give a summary of the issue and action to be taken to address it.

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary

Signed : Ann Patey (Researcher)
Date: 13 October 2010

To be completed by the Supervisor (PLEASE TICK ONE)

☐ Appropriate action taken to maintain ethical standards – no further action necessary. **This project now has ethical approval.**

☐ The issues require the guidance of the School of Education's Ethics Committee. **This project does not yet have ethical approval.**

COMMENTS:

Signed (supervisor on behalf of SoE Research Ethics Committee):

Date:

There are aspects to research governance that lie outside 'ethics', but which are important for you to consider. These include data protection, insurance, and health and safety issues. You should seek advice re same from your Supervisor in the first instance, and then if necessary from your Programme Director.

Appendix 4

Titles, Roles and Responsibilities of 32 members of the Association of University Administrators who replied to initial email communication providing information about themselves but who were not interviewed as part of the research due to geographical and time constraints.

Academic Contracts

- Commenced as HE Lecturer, then 50/50 Lecturer/Senior Tutor/now Head of Student Services
- IT Lecturer and Technical Support
- HRM Lecturer – moved from Faculty-level administrator to academic
- Senior Lecturer in Marketing – was in an administrative role but in a different university
- Senior Lecturer – moved from an admin to an academic role

(Total of 5 staff who have been administrators and are now on academic contracts)

Administrative/Academic-related Contracts

- Head of Skills and Development Team
- Academic Registrar – but does some teaching
- Student Support Manager, now a Researcher but wants to move into a lecturing role in the future
- Academic Standards and Policy Officer – wants to move into academia
- Undergraduate Teaching and Support Team Manager – was an academic
- Research Assistant then to Departmental Administrator then to Central Services as Quality Manager
- Director of Marketing and Communications
- Professor of Higher Education Management – was an Administrator then to Director of Planning then to HE Management Lecturer (academic) then back to current role
- Faculty Quality Manager
- Academic Support and Operations Manager in Careers Centre Job Shop, then seconded to University Events' Team in Registry
- Career Management Director
- Academic Administrator – trying to move into an academic role (undertaking an EdD)
- Administrator (undertaking research into Professional Administration)
- Administrator (undertaking research on administrators' work-related identity within HE)
- Graduation Officer – undertook tutorials for Maths foundation students, delivered module sessions and has marked academic pieces of work
- Student Financial Support and Scholarships Officer – trained as an academic, undertook a Doctorate, and then moved into administration
- Planning and Market Intelligence Analyst – intended to become an academic but decided on administration
- Director of Student Services – was an academic at a previous university
- Assistant Director (Policy and Communications)
- Assistant Registrar – has moved between academic, IT/Information Services and now in Registry
- School Manager – was a Manager for a Welsh Assembly-funded research institute
- Recruitment Officer
- Administrator for business sales, external relations, faculty management, academic administration and internal business consultancy
- Executive Administrative Assistant – worked for HEFCE previously

- ➤ Head of Student Services
- ➤ Head of Student Information Centre
- ➤ Health and Safety Technician - delivers training courses

(Total of 27 who have worked in a variety of roles but who are now paid on administrative contracts. 4 are trying to move into teaching roles. 4 have been academics and are now administrators)

Titles, Roles and Responsibilities of the 15 participants who were interviewed as part of this research.

Academic contract

- ➤ Deputy Vice Principal/Professor – always been on an academic contract but has undertaken administrative roles
- ➤ Lecturer – Faculty of Business, Enterprise and Lifelong Learning – was a teacher then moved into administration and now a new lecturer

Administrative/Academic-related Contracts

- ➤ Business Development Manager – was a teacher and moved into administration
- ➤ Academic Support Unit Manager
- ➤ Teaching Support and Quality Manager – was an academic researcher and a lecturer then moved into administration
- ➤ Head of Biological Services – was a TESOL teacher then moved into administration
- ➤ Faculty Quality Manager
- ➤ Head of Skills Training and Development Team – was a teacher and moved into administration
- ➤ Assistant Academic Registrar – was a researcher and moved into administration
- ➤ Student Records Systems Advisor
- ➤ Director of Student Affairs – was a lecturer and Deputy Head of School of Education then moved into administration
- ➤ Senior Research Assistant and Lecturer in History Department (dual role)
- ➤ Director of Professional Services and a lecturer for the Open University (a different organisation)
- ➤ School and Community Liaison Officer – wants to undertake a PGCE to do school teaching and some lecturing
- ➤ Research Associate – was an administrator now in an academic-related post and trying to move to be a lecturer.