UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

THE GETTING OF WISDOM?
CRITICAL EXPLORATIONS IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation explores the discursive construction of managerial identity. It seeks to analyse both theoretically and empirically how managers are 'made' through the process of management education, first, by creating a theoretical framework for exploring the discursive production of managerial identity, then by utilising this framework to examine the production of managerial identity and the construction of particular managers through an extant course of management education.

The organization of the dissertation reflects this dual purpose. Chapters one to three explore the limitations of extant approaches to the analysis of managerial identity and construct the foundations of an alternative framework for analysing the construction of managerial identity. The concepts of 'discourse' and 'governmentality', it is argued, provide a means for overcoming the binary oppositions that have marked critical analyses of managerial identity by indicating the relational and dislocated nature of any social identity.

In chapter four the framework is deployed to examine the construction of managerial identity through the operation of management education. In this way, the management education sector, and the MBA in particular, functions as a case study for exploring how managers are 'made' through the operation of management education.

Chapter five presents some concluding thoughts and avenues for future research.

List of contents

List of Figures

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Chapter One: Several Identity Crises

Introduction: a very peculiar practice

The origins of this research lie in my employment by a faculty of business management at a New University in 1989, initially as a researcher and subsequently as a lecturer in organizational behaviour. I joined from university from whence I had just graduated as a mature student in politics and sociology. Before this I had had a career as a social/community worker, in both local authorities and voluntary organizations.

My political history was one of activity on the left-left and as a Trades Union activist. I had been educated in social work and sociology at Ruskin College and the Open University, for whom I also worked as a part-time tutor in social science.

Coming to management studies with this biography was a profoundly disturbing experience; indeed one might say it engendered an identity crisis. I seem to have entered a world where fifteen apparently contradictory things were taught in a day without anyone appearing to find it remarkable or disturbing. Coming from social work where 'the nature of things and what one might do about them' was a continuous source of dialogue and anxiety, and from a high quality education in social science, I found the whole thing very strange indeed. No one seemed to be worried about the foundations of their teaching and seemed oblivious to the debates that raged in their source disciplines. My attempts to engage people in a dialogue about such matters were met with indifference on a good day and outright hostility on a bad one. The tone was one of eclectic, pragmatic, technical knowledge that had 'practical purpose', the stock of which seemed to increase with each new edition of the popular textbooks. Alongside this was an increasing emphasis on student-centred learning and forms of distance education, both of which were government funded, an immediate source of suspicion in my mind but not, apparently, anyone else's'.

Even my research supervisor and head of department, who had completed a PhD utilising ethnomethodology[1] and had a background in critical sociology (incidentally two words *I* was learning to forget, or at least whisper), was apparently indifferent to my concerns about 'the nature of things', indeed he had recently

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[1] By a strange twist of fate this was at the very institution which currently employs me.

presided over a course review that had removed an optional course on theoretical perspectives on organizations because 'it was too difficult for the students and they didn't find it relevant'. I knew that I had not come to a centre of critical studies but this seemed like an act of vandalism; where was critique, where the search for Truth?

After a while I changed my approach and tried to appeal to my colleague's self-interest, pointing out that if they did not develop a coherent body of knowledge then someone else would probably do it for them, and they might not like the result, but this too merely created hostility. This was after all, I was told, a 'vocational' university, a clear message that was reinforced at a subsequent date when *my* contract wasn't renewed!

My i.d. crisis wasn't at its most profound in the SCR however, but in the classroom. How was I going to teach this stuff? What kind of stance should I adopt? Was it fair to the students to foist the worries of social theory onto them when they had been recruited in the expectation of getting a business degree and going on to do deals with Richard Branson? The old relevance-rigour debate came home to me in a big way.

My tactic to deal with this was an ambitious one, I tried to act 'the student's friend'. No one wanted the job of first year undergraduate tutor so I stepped forward. By this means I attempted to close the gap that many of my colleagues seemed to enjoy creating, and this, I argued to myself, gave me a bit more latitude to explore some of the more contentious issues around the topic. I also, to be frank, enjoyed the students, they were light relief after the SCR. It also seemed to work quite well, contrary to my colleagues' assumptions a number of students seemed to enjoy getting their teeth into more meaty stuff. However, I continued to feel uncomfortable about aspects of my stance, was I really doing them any favours?

With the postgraduates things were a little different. They, even more than the undergrads, knew what they wanted and if it didn't sound like what they knew then it was no good. Here my tactic tended to be to move it up a gear, to try to draw them in by appealing to their vanity and experience, 'I'm sure you all know this but...' and then launching off into some esoterics that they could hardly counter. I also played the simpleton, 'You know what you need so I'll just tell you what I know and you use it as and when'. This I termed the 'toolkit plus' approach. The toolkit of technique was

offered but in the context of an exploration of the political dimensions of organization and a certain amount of reflection on interpersonal skills. This too was an uncomfortable stance on occasion, but I argued to myself that these were adults and could make of it what they wanted. This stance was reinforced by the senior members of the course team who saw themselves as trying to do something different with the post experience students. However, their 'something different', had the smack of T-Group training about it and I had experienced enough of that to know that it wasn't something with which I was much in sympathy.

I had thought social work was a contradictory and impossible profession- I now had to add management education to the list[2]. But *why* was it like this? I was running out of things to keep me sane and so decided to investigate the roots of these dilemmas that I was experiencing, and which others had begun to explore.

My chosen approach was via recent developments in social theory, but which theory? I had been teaching an Open University course in beliefs and ideologies and in the course of that had begun to feel uneasy about many of the foundations of critique that I had taken for granted for so long. I was beginning to look towards post-structuralism and post-Marxism as offering possibilities, but like Dews (1987) my early contact with post-structuralist thought was a profoundly disturbing experience. Here was exciting stuff, but whose implications seemed to run counter to my most deeply held political convictions. Despite this (or perhaps because of it) I felt that there were fruitful possibilities that needed to be chased down and examined. In particular it began to occur to me that the issue at the heart of the matter was an assumption of the relatively unproblematic identity of 'The Manager' (MacIntyre 1981) that informed the practices of much management education. My hypothesis, such as it is, is that the shape of management education is derived from somewhat questionable assumptions as to the 'nature' of this identity.

These then are the sources of this research. I hope it helps.

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[2] A point reached by Freud some years earlier of course. " It almost looks as if analysis were the third of those impossible professions in which one can be sure beforehand of achieving unsatisfactory results. The other two, which have been known much longer, are education and government" (*Analysis Terminable and Interminable* 1937, Standard Edition 22, Hogarth Press, London)

Identity in Crisis

In recent times the question of identity has become a central theme in a variety of debates within the social sciences (du Gay 1995). Within sociological thought the dominance of class as the master category through which all social identities are mediated has been problematised by, for example, the growth of new social movements, feminism, black consciousness and the 'green' movement to name but a few. Similarly in international relations the notion of the modern nation state as sovereign has been cast into doubt by the growth of global interconnectedness. It seems clear that despite the difference in the usage of the term the idea of identity is one which is increasingly problematical. As Mercer comments:

> '...identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty' (1990:43).

It can readily be seen that this sense of crisis has reached the world of paid work and employment. Changes in the occupational and industrial structure of modern western societies have raised questions about the identity of a modern economy conceived of in terms of both the domination of large scale industrial enterprise and the industrial worker as a white, male breadwinner working full-time (Pateman 1989). The growth in services, the globalization of production and exchange and the 'feminization' of the workforce have all served to remind us of the 'constructedness' of those stable identities. To these it seems we may add that of the manager. Seldom has there been so much debate and theorizing over what the manager does and doesn't do, or should and shouldn't do.

For some (e.g. Laclau 1990), this sense of crisis leads to the view that the economic itself is a historically malleable category and thus any economic identity is a contingent identity. This suggests that any identity is established on the basis of something else, something exterior to itself, that it can never manage to fully constitute itself since it relies upon something outside itself for its existence. Thus an identity only constitutes itself on the basis of what it is not. However, because that identity would not be what it is outside of the relationship with the force 'antagonizing' it, the last is also part of the conditions of existence of that identity. Like some Gestalt figure and ground, or Yin and Yang, they are part of each other,

one cannot see one without the other being present. In this way, Laclau suggests that all identities are ambiguous achievements since they are always 'dislocated'. As he tells us, every identity is dislocated insofar as it:

> 'depends on an outside which both denies that identity and provides its condition of possibility at the same time' (1990:39).

In this way the idea of identity itself becomes an ambiguous achievement, dependent upon its ability to define difference and 'vulnerable to the entities it would so define to counter, resist, overturn, or subvert definitions applied to them' (Connolly 1991:64). Following Laclau we may say that if any identity is a contingent identity then it follows that power is always inscribed in the relation an established identity has to the difference it constitutes, this is since threats to that established identity can only be resisted through repressing that which antagonises it. Thus, and the same broad point is made by Foucault (1977), to study the conditions of existence of any established identity is to delineate the power relations making it possible. Also, since an established identity is an articulated set of elements there can be no identity without the exercise of power, 'its characteristic structure, its "essence" depends entirely on what it denies' (Laclau 1990:32).

As an example, Pateman's (1989) work on the welfare state draws attention to the contingent nature of the identity of the modern industrial worker. Rather than being a universal, gender free 'individual', she argues 'the modern worker' is a male breadwinner who has an economically dependent wife to take care of his daily needs and look after 'his' home and children. The public identity of the modern worker is here established through the power and status afforded to men as husbands, and the 'making up' of women as economic dependents or 'just housewives' relegated to the private sphere. However, as Pateman shows, the conditions of existence of this mythical identity were seriously undermined during the 1980s and this revealed its historically contingent character. Changes in women's position, technological and other transformations in the workplace, including large scale unemployment in manufacturing, have all served to problematize the 'violent hierarchies' of practice through which the fixed stable identity of the modern worker was established. Similarly as Allen (1992) and others have shown, the identity of the 'national economy' has been problematized through the globalization of production and

exchange, which increasingly takes place with no regard for national or international boundaries, effectively rendering national economies 'sites' through which forces move.

If every identity is dislocated in the way that Laclau suggests, reliant upon a constitutive outside which at once affirms and denies that identity then the effects of that dislocation may not be unambiguous. So while old identities are swept away and new ones erected, albeit temporarily, in their place, there may be possibilities for 'good' as well as 'bad'. Using Pateman's example once more we may readily see that to the extent that the identity of the modern worker was founded on the subordination of women then his passing may be seen as more of a gendered tragedy than an unambiguous one.

In the process of dislocation stable identities are uncoupled and new forms are brought forth. This thesis is an attempt to explore these processes within the sphere of management. In particular it is concerned with the construction of new managerial identities through the operation of management education. In line with the theoretical framework sketched above this involves the delineation of the relations of power/knowledge and the revealing of the pedagogical practices through which the identity of the contemporary manager is constructed.

Dislocation in the (post)modern world

Many commentators have noted that such processes of dislocation as described above are taking place in the world of work and within capitalism more generally (Sabel 1982, Lash and Urry 1987, Harvey 1989, Beynon 1992). However, the nature and causes of such dislocation, and how to interpret it, have been the subject of a great deal of disagreement. For some the growth of service work, for example, is seen as a change in the relationship between different spheres of social activity and opens up the possibility of new forms of work-based identity (Urry 1990). Others see servicing as an extension of the ethos of manual industrial labour and thus as a continuity of that labour, albeit within 'different sets of relationships and contexts' (Beynon 1992:182).

From this short sketch we can see that Urry and Beynon operate with different conceptions of dislocation and identity. For Beynon the focus is on 'objective' characteristics that are part of a process that is predetermined - the onward march of capital, and the subject, the worker, is absorbed by the process. For Urry the process is more ambiguous. Here the identity of work is seen to be transformed by changes in its organization, so that there is no 'work' as a transhistorical formation. If we accept this, Urry argues, then our analysis of dislocation and identity must reflect the more complex picture that is presented. For example if, as Urry and others such as du Gay suggest, the dynamics of contemporary consumer culture are seen to be implicated in the construction of work identities, then an examination of work organization and behaviour can no longer be solely tied to a 'productionist' analysis and must go beyond to incorporate elements of analysis that have not traditionally been associated with the study of work and identity. In particular, this implies the use of theoretical tools that have largely been utilised within cultural studies.

It is in line with these exhortations that this thesis is presented. It is concerned with the production of managerial identity and the construction of subjects through a course of management education at this historical and cultural juncture. It is also concerned with the utilisation of methodological and theoretical tools that have not formed a large part of the armoury of those concerned with the investigation of such topics. In particular I am concerned to utilise the insights of the work of Foucault and his successors, as well as the post-Marxist thought of Laclau and others.

Research strategy and methodology

> 'Knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary to go on looking and reflecting at all' (Foucault 1987:8).
>
> 'Surrender and catch' (Woolf 1976).

From the introduction above it can be seen that an exploration of the identity of the contemporary manager is of necessity one which goes beyond the categories of research that have traditionally been used in the field. As Rose (1989) notes, recent 'socio-critique' has had a good deal to say about such matters but is seen by many to be lacking in a number of respects. The perceived need is to incorporate elements of theorising and investigation that serve to uncover the operation of practices of power, that serve to illustrate the power effects of, in this case, the discourses and practices of management education. In this way it is proposed here that the 'shape' of management education as currently practised will be revealed; not necessarily as a set of neutral practices which serve to equip managers with 'what they need to know', nor as a set of state-derived imperatives, but as a set of discursive practices that actively 'make' managers. This, as Foucault terms it, 'genealogical' view is well expressed by one of his successors, Dean (1992):

> 'Such a perspective examines what might be called veridical discourses, those discourses that are charged with the systematic production of truth and by means of which statements are organized in disciplines or sanctioned bodies of knowledge...These veridical discourses are understood as arising from and seeking to direct what might be called institutional practices or governing practices, i.e. practices that organize and codify ways of doing things such as curing, relieving, administering, punishing, etc, and that involve the government of conduct, whether of self or others...Genealogy thus examines the mutual interpenetration of regimes of truth and regimes of practices...genealogy is the methodological problematization of the given, of the taken for granted' (1992: 216)

The use of Foucauldian approaches to investigate such issues has not gone unchallenged. For example Armstrong (1994), in discussing the uses to which such approaches had been put in the field of the history and sociology of accounting, suggests that the use of such an approach does little more to illuminate that field of practice than had earlier Marxist attempts. Indeed he suggests that the Foucauldian turn in accounting theory is profoundly misleading. In particular he notes that:

> 'On the methodological front, both Foucauldian genealogy and its extension via the sociology of translation pose questions of validity which have received little attention in their accounting application. Both appear to call for much the same kind of evidence as the methods of traditional history' (1994: 25)

Drawing on Habermas (1987) Armstrong asserts that the Foucauldian approach:

> '...stands accused of juxtaposing a naively positivist epistemology with an anti-realist ontology. In plain English, the method assumes that it is possible for the historical record to "speak for itself" without the mediation of some interpretive framework. At the same time it asserts that reality can only be apprehended through the medium of discourse' (1994: 29)

For Armstrong, in common with other neo-Marxists (e.g. Neimark 1990), these kinds of problems can only be seriously tackled by the importation of a notion of powerful and particular 'interests'. As I shall argue later this is merely to repeat the error of previous generations of thinkers in insisting that power needs to be held by somebody for some purpose. By contrast the reading of Foucault that is presented in chapter three denies the necessity to see power in this way. In doing so it also challenges the methods of conventional history by countering a simple linear view of history as 'progress' and erecting in its place a more subtle view in which institutions and the discourses that surround them are seen to be often the result of accidents or arbitrary localised events. Further, Foucault denies the centering of the human subject in historical analysis, arguing for the relative independence of social practices and their discursive formations. Intentions are still acknowledged here but the outcomes of such intentions are seen as independent of what was intended (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982).

The focus upon discourse and the problematization of the taken for granted has led to a mix of methodologies which attempt to explore the given, the 'shape', of management education. In pursuing this research I have employed participant observation, unstructured interviews with the 'architects' of an MBA course, unstructured interviews with former and current members of that course - the 'punters', and selective analysis of documents associated with the development and operation of the course. In effect the operation of an MBA programme serves as a sort of case study for the theoretical framework which is derived from a genealogical perspective. As Dean (1992) suggests when writing of genealogy:

> 'Such an approach lends itself to a multiplication of causes, a concern for complex conditions of emergence and existence, and seeks a progressive, necessarily incomplete understanding of aspects of the past rather than a reconstruction of a social totality. This methodology proceeds, then, by case-histories or case studies. These replace conventional historiographic criteria of exhaustiveness with those of intelligibility and are always open to revision and extension' (1992: 217)

Mitchell (1983) has provided a thoroughgoing defence[3] of this form of investigation by reference to what he terms 'logical inference'. He defines the case study as a 'detailed examination of an event (or series of related events) which the analyst believes exhibits (or exhibit) the operation of some identified general principle' (1983:192). His concern is with the basis on which general inferences may be drawn from case studies. In developing his argument he draws attention to a distinction between statistical inference and logical inference and the commonly held view that the former is in some way superior to the latter. However, Mitchell argues that nowhere are the strict tenets of statistical inference practised and that there is commonly an eliding of forms of inference:

> 'In analytical thinking based upon quantative procedures both types of inference proceed *pari passu* but there has been some tendency to elide logical inferences with the logic of statistical inference: that the postulated logical connection among features in a sample may be assumed to exist in

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[3] But see Hammersley (1992) for a partial rebuttal of Mitchell

> some parent population simply because the features may be inferred to coexist in that population' (1983:200).

On the basis of this distinction Mitchell argues for the irrelevance of representativeness in case studies:

> 'The process of inference from case studies is only logical or causal and cannot be statistical, and extrapolability from any one case study to like situations in general is based only on logical inference. We infer that the features present in the case study will be related in a wider population not because the case is representative but because our analysis is unassailable....The extent to which generalizations may be made from case studies depends upon the adequacy of the underlying theory and the whole corpus of related knowledge of which the case is analysed rather than on the particular instance itself' (ibid:200, 203).

As with Glaser and Strauss' notion of 'theoretical sampling', Mitchell draws our attention to the power of the argument for treating case studies as exemplars for exploring the implications of a particular theoretical position. It is is this sense that my own short case study is presented in chapter four. I trust that the reader will find the analysis unassailable - or at least temporarily convincing.

The thesis follows the line of the argument outlined above. In chapter two I examine extant accounts of managerial identity and management education. In particular the concepts of power and identity are explored. These accounts are shown to be unsatisfactory due to a continual recourse to one pole or other of a series of binary oppositions. In chapter three the work of Foucault and other post-structuralists is used to suggest an alternative framework which does justice to the concept of agency while not falling into wholesale subjectivism. Chapter four is concerned with the operation of a course of management education and functions as a case for exploring the construction of managerial identity through discourse and educative practices. Chapter five is a short concluding chapter which summarises the arguments presented in those preceding it.

Chapter Two: Management in Theory

> 'The manager, then, plans, organizes, motivates, directs, and controls. These are the broad aspects of his work. He adds foresight, order, purpose, integration of effort, and effectiveness to the contributions of others. That is the best use of the word "manage". That is the work of the manager' (Strong 1965:5)

Introduction

The sense of identity crisis referred to in chapter one has reached the shores of management and management education in recent years. In place of the certainties that once formed the core of managerial identity and practice, and which are expressed in the above quote from Strong, there now exists a veritable babble of voices, each of which claims ones attention as being the 'truth' about management. In addition there has been a considerable amount of debate in the public arena, particularly concerning the status and value of management education.

This chapter is concerned with charting the development of this situation and in so doing presents the major views in the complex of managerial identity, practice and education. Each of the extant approaches outlined here, it is argued, are limited in their treatment of the important areas of identity, power and agency. Following a review of these perspectives and their shortcomings, an alternative framework is outlined, one which attempts to overcome the deficiencies identified.

Following Steier (1992) we may assert that all educational programmes are based on assumptions about the structure of knowledge and the epistemology of the particular subject area. In the case of management education we may readily discern a number of distinct approaches to the subject (pun intended). These are presented below and are prefaced by the perspectives that are seen to underpin them. The discussion is primarily focused upon the themes of power and identity since it is here, it will be argued, that the possibilities for critique are to be found.

Mainstream Perspectives

The historian of management education Locke (1989), has detailed the development of what he terms a revolution in European management education. For Locke this positivist revolution, which took place in the mid 1960s, entailed the adoption of the methods and outlook of the natural sciences as applied to the problems of management. This process had already taken place in the United States and is well represented in the recommendations of Gordon and Howell (1959) and Pierson (1959). These reports, sponsored respectively by the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation, set the scene for the development of U.S. business education through being enshrined in the standards of the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, and came ultimately to define the agenda for most business education. As Locke tells us, the apparent success of the model forced a rethink in Europe:

> 'Such educational dynamism convinced Europeans that they had to follow suit or fall hopelessly behind in managerial know-how. Consequently the 1960s and 70s brought rapid and profound changes to European educational systems' (1989:163-4).

An early effect of this 'revolution' was the establishment of the first British business schools at London and Manchester in 1965. These were recognisably modelled on the Harvard system and were, in effect copies of what was taken to be the best in business education.

Snell and James (1994) suggest that an appropriate label for the underlying orientation that informed, and continues to inform, these developments is that of the 'tangible':

> 'Educators and developers who have a tangible orientation tend to regard the managers job as one of attaining clear, practical, tangible results which are readily quantified and assessed. They believe that managerial success is to be achieved by drawing on conceptual tools and analytical techniques from the field of microeconomics, policy and decision science, operations research, quantitative analysis, systems engineering and possibly behavioural science (which must be factored in somehow)...it sets great store on the value of factual knowledge and analytical techniques' (1994:320-21).

This orientation can be seen in the current prospectus from the London Business School:

> ' The curriculum emphasises the practical. It stresses the importance of integrating different functional specialisations and of implementing solutions to real business problems...The Executive MBA programme has two roles. First, it has an *educational* role in that it prepares managers to meet future challenges through critical appreciation of a broad range of managerial issues. Managers learn how the activities of a business mesh and a range of alternative approaches to problems used by firms in different industries. Second, the Executive MBA has a *training* role in that it improves a managers capability to "do". This can range from an ability to design, implement and manage a variety of different processes, to general confidence and ability in skills such as analysing balance sheets, conducting negotiations and building teams' (1995:3, 5) (emphases in original)

These conceptions of the management task reflect a series of assumptions about the nature of the social world. Here is the legacy of the 'classical or traditional' (Massie 1965) theorists of management such as Fayol (1949) and Gulick and Urwick (1937). These writers were concerned to establish a tradition of the application of science to the problems of management as they saw them. They were also concerned to establish a classificatory schema whereby the 'principles of management' could be clearly explicated and subsequently taught.

This tangible perspective aspires to a general theory of management that is universal in its scope and is modelled on a positivistic system of deductive law-like explanation. The source of such a perspective is of course the natural sciences where such general theories are thought to prevail successfully. Writers such as Fayol (1949), with a history in engineering and administration, were concerned to present 'one best way' of managing that would be universally applicable regardless of situational or contextual variation.

Alongside the 'principles of management' the development of scientific management has to be seen as the most important source of mainstream thinking. Developed principally by Taylor at the end of the nineteenth century, scientific management can be seen as the ultimate attempt to apply the principles of natural

science to the resolution of the developing problems of industrial management. In Child's (1969) terms it fulfils both the important functions of management theory; it serves to enhance the technical, administrative, ends of optimum performance and efficiency by the detailed analysis and planning of operations; and also serves to legitimate management and to secure approval for its expertise of authority by demonstrating that it is expert.

The combination of these developments leads to a view of management as functionally necessary, indeed vital, since production can now no longer proceed without management's coordinating and design activities. The corollary of this was a transformation from a populist conception of labour to a managerialist view. As Littler and Salaman (1982) tell us:

> 'Under 19th century modes of work control the workers saw themselves as the sole creative factor in production. In the USA, and to a lesser extent in Britain, Taylorism and the rationalization movement generally undermined the populist view of labour and substituted a conception of labour as a passive factor of production, a mere appendage of the machine' (1982:259).

Many have seen this as the defining moment of the creation of the identity of modern management. It is, from this point on, a separate function distinct from the shop floor, possessed of unique expertise and responsibilities and with major claims to authority over the shop floor upon which the efficiency of the whole enterprise depends. From the mainstream perspective the dominant image is that of management as a rationally designed and operationalised tool for the realisation of instrumental values. Management is here seen as being about means rather than ends and constitutes a neutral social technology which is necessary to attain agreed upon collective goals, which would be unrealisable without it. This is in turn based upon a view of organizations in which they are seen to be the functionally indispensable mechanisms that transform individual values and goals into superhuman collectivities. As Reed (1989) notes:

> 'Formal organizations guarantee the social immortality of mortal individual human beings to the extent that they facilitate long-term institutional identity, continuity and stability in an uncertain and unforgiving world. Management is characterised as the organizational machinery that both enables and protects

> that sense of immortality in a social world where the conflict between sectional interests and the confusion it creates is endemic' (1989:3).

This image of what management is raises the idea of the arrangements through which these guarantees are to met to a status of paramount importance. This focus on structures draws on a systems approach in which organizations are seen as social units that must fulfil functional needs or imperatives that are thrust upon them by their 'environment'. In this way the existence and persistence of management structures is accounted for in terms of the contribution that such structures make to the survival of the organizational system as a whole. The ways in which these functional imperatives are seen and classified varies between exponents of the approach, as does the degree of 'openness' shown by each system, but the overall thrust is the same. Changes within the organization are theorised to result from the failure of the internal management structure to adapt to changed imperatives from the internal or external environment. Therefore 'good' management is seen as that which is able to identify those points of 'strain' between the organization and its environment and take corrective action to restore the equilibrium. This view of management can be seen to have been the received wisdom for the greater part of the 20th century. Subsequent empirical studies using, for example, diary methods (Stewart 1967, Kotter 1982), and work by those within the decision making school such as March and Simon (1958), cast doubt on the veracity of the picture pointing out that 'real life' is rather more messy, in particular by charting the nature of managerial work as characterised by brevity, discontinuity and 'muddling through' (Lindblom 1959). However this has not shaken the belief that managerial knowledge, skills and experience are common and transferable. Indeed, as Thompson and McHugh (1990) suggest, the critique that has been developed from these 'studies in realism' has only been an internal and empirical one which tells us that managers don't necessarily do what they are commonly thought to do, but not why they do what they do do:

> '...by focusing on individual jobs rather than management as a process, behaviour is unsituated and neglects the institutional context and functions' (1990:138).

I shall have more to say about this matter of context in the next section but for now we may note that from this overall perspective the identity of the manager is relatively

straightforward; it is of the generalist, professional, morally neutral, functionally necessary individual applying universally derived principles to the resolution of organizational problems. Typically the concept of identity is conflated with that of role, an 'objectively' given communal or cultural attribute. Drawing upon functionalist sociology, power is here seen as a generalised social resource which regulates social relations. The power of individuals is seen to expand through their interdependence (synergy) and the practical benefits of this are seen to flow naturally to all, with the actions of individuals being seen to be governed by the teleological purpose of maintaining interdependence. Although some, i.e. managers, are seen to have more influence than others this is explained by their functional importance in maintaining the social system, and not their pursuit of institutional dominance. This can be seen to reflect the dominant, Weberian, view of organizations as sites of rational activity, as systems which have needs for coordination and control, and the underlying epistemology of positivism.

This view has become the dominant paradigm for the education of managers despite the very considerable denting it has received at the hands of the empirical studies that we noted above, indeed the lessons from those studies have been incorporated into the paradigm so that managers are typically taught to see politics and other 'irrational' practices as problems to be resolved. In this way political activity is pathologised and joins the list of factors to be taken into account by the effective manager.

The dominance of this paradigm goes some way towards explaining my personal discomfort in inhabiting this world, attuned as I was to the criticality of sociology and political theory it was hard for me to grasp the extraordinarily sanguine way in which the themes of identity and power were being viewed and presented. Like MacIntyre (1981) my view was, although I wouldn't have expressed it in such terms, that management is an inherently moral activity.

Mainstream Management Education

Following from its commonsensical, unitarist view of the world and the necessity and desirability for politically and morally neutral management to exist, the mainstream conceptualizes management as purely technical activity. Education is therefore seen as

the acquisition of techniques whose value lies in their potential for practical and effective application. The emphasis is on propositional knowledge - knowing 'that' rather than the 'who' or 'how' of knowing (Code 1993, Fox 1989). A glance at any commonly used textbook, for example Huczynski and Buchanan (1991) with its representation of the task of management to ensure 'controlled performance', will confirm the truth of this. Even a self-confessed 'unconventional' text such as that of Henry (1991) promotes the concept of creativity as an instrumental one:

> 'By understanding the creative process and characteristics of a creative environment the creative manager is better placed to remove the barriers to creative action' 1991:11).

This 'technicist' (Grey and Mitev 1995:77) stance is one which can be seen to pervade the education of managers and is one which 'succeeds' by virtue of its reinforcement of 'common sense' ideas. As Grey and Mitev point out:

> 'Many students articulate or imply an attitude to learning management which profoundly contradicts the intellectual projects of critical approaches to management. This attitude consists of a related set of concerns that education should be 'useful', 'practical' and 'relevant to the real world'. Such an attitude places a premium upon learning 'techniques', whose practical relevance should be demonstratable, and these techniques should be backed up by constant reference to 'real world' examples or case studies' (1995:77).

In this way, Grey and Mitev argue, mainstream management education uncritically reflects the 'reality' of mainstream management practice, and in doing so stands in a functional (managerialist) relationship to management itself. As Salaman and Butler (1990) point out, many management educators share a similar view of how managers learn:

> 'Consciously or not, they have assumed that to be a manager has definite implications for how, or indeed if, managers learn. The conventional assumption is that managers learn best through doing, through experience, whenever possible;...most of all it is assumed that managers will only learn when the subject has obvious and immediate practical application. The words "theory", "academic", "model" are usually seen as negative, even pejorative. What is valued is certainty, tied to prescription' (1990:185)

The issues here are of course very old ones in the philosophy of education, relating to the conflict between liberal and utilitarian conceptions of the subject, and may be traced back as far as Cicero, Locke, and in the more modern context, Newman (1851/1960). However, as we have already seen they seem to be rarely rehearsed in the corridors of the modern business school.

Our case study course exhibits many of the features of this mainstream orthodoxy. For example the current prospectus has as its heading 'Meeting Business Needs'. The rhetorical tone of the prospectus is set by this heading and consists broadly of reassuring prospective students and their employing (funding) organizations that their development needs in 'today's unpredictable and rapidly changing world' will be met by the Sandbourne programme.

As Salaman and Butler point out this kind of marketing strategy is not surprising, given that we may surmise that the propensity to learn and the preferred/rewarded form of learning is in some ways set by the organizations from which students come. In their words:

> 'Thus, management structures and cultures probably have serious implications for management learning. One further implication of this is that the success of training and development programmes could well be sorely limited by the impact of the value/reward structures delegates come from. Thus not only may management structures define how managers learn. They may also establish managers' resistance to learning' (1990:186)

Although the technicist view of management pervades in the realm of management education there has been, since the late 1960s, considerable debate as to the nature of organizations and management. The lines of the debate are outlined below. My purpose here is to indicate the ways in which the dominant paradigm has come to be challenged but also how this has largely failed to be translated into activity within a critical management education.

Critical perspectives

Returning to Snell and James (1994), they note the development of a different orientation towards management and management education that take the above noted

'studies in realism' somewhat more seriously, seeing in them the possibility of both an alternative epistemology of management and the foundations of a new pedagogy.

In Snell and James' terms these represent a celebration of 'the intangible'. Here the roles of managers resist simple functional pigeonholing, being negotiated, largely implicitly, by managers with members of their role-set and with other stakeholders, both inside and outside the organization. While the simple definitions of management activity offered by the classical school might be a convenient fiction in the classroom they are not an adequate analysis of the manager's job(s) on which to build a management education programme. Rather, the pedagogic process has to both reflect this 'reality' and prepare neophytes for the task ahead, a task which is marked by politicking and the use of interpersonal skills.

From this intangible orientation learning is seen not as a straightforward matter of acquiring and practising analytical techniques, but rather as a complex business of secondary socialization, of being receptive to kindly offered advice, of taking careful observations and of milking lessons of one's own experience or from those close to one. In this way learning is seen as rather more site-specific and not as easily distilled for mass consumption.

This orientation is one which is found in both academic and non-academic circles. Many reports produced in the 1980s, for example, were concerned to lay the blame for poor academic performance at the door of management education. Hayes and Abernathy (1980) claimed to have established a clear link between the declining competitiveness of the United States economy and the methods of educating managers that were prevalent at the leading business schools. In particular they took the view that the preoccupation of U.S. academics with analytical detachment and methodological rigour had blinded them to learning from their experience of the complexity and subtlety of managerial roles. This theme was subsequently developed in the best-selling management text of the modern era, that of Peters and Waterman (1982), and in a host of other critical texts, all of which championed the intangible and 'irrational' in organizational life.

In Britain too the work of Handy (1987) and Constable and McCormick (1987) reflected this concern of establishing a link between the long-run decline of the economy and the ways in which managers were being educated, with the latter

suggesting ways in which the provision of management education and the restructuring of awards could be changed to reflect the needs of post-experience students more accurately.

Perhaps the most developed thoughts on these lines came from the work of Porter and McKibben (1988). These authors made the somewhat radical (at least to mainstream educators) proposals that the education of managers needed to encompass study of the ancient classics (for 'roundness'); opportunities to face up to the messiness of the socio-political environment of business; an appreciation of the international dimension; more cross functional integration; and 'serious' attempts to develop people's people skills.

Importantly, none of these reports suggested a radical overhaul of management education in favour of some new paradigm, rather the tone is of getting 'the balance right'. In this sense then we may see this as an additive model whereby elements of intangibility are grafted on to a substantially unaltered corpus of knowledge and practice.

This recognition of the intangible is made explicit in Sandbourne's prospectus material where the innovative nature of the programme is outlined:

> 'Traditionally, MBA programmes have tended to produce people with a highly analytical approach to business - people who use "tools" to analyse and solve problems or to analyse companies, for example. Due to their excellent background, these people are extremely adept at dissecting a case study but have not always been so successful in managing a real company. It has been argued that traditional MBA programmes have tended to develop a certain "hardness" of character, perhaps arrogance, on the part of participants. This has sometimes had negative implications for the workplace. The (Sandbourne) MBA is innovative because we concentrate on developing managerial competence rather than analytical skills. Where previous courses have been knowledge-based, our MBA is based on developing competence and personal growth - promoting real effectiveness in the workplace. We aim to make our participants aware of their effect as managers on those around them and to accept what they learn from that as part of their personal growth' (Prospectus 1995)

Although we may describe this as a critical approach, celebrating as it does the intangible and 'irrational', it is clear that it remains managerialist, not seriously challenging the status quo of mainstream management. Although management may be more complex than previously thought, nevertheless its possibility is still held to be desirable, and the technicist identity of the manager is not seriously questioned.

A Political Perspective

Alongside the public expressions of disquiet at the lack of relevance and sense of failure, there has been, initially at a more academic level, a growing debate around ways to conceptualise organizations and management. Here we may point to a body of work that I shall term 'political' which seeks to recast the nature of organization and management as an inherently political process. Drawing upon insights from symbolic interactionism and a radical reading of Weber, writers in this tradition (Silverman 1970) conceptualise the organization as a continually reworked network of social action, in which the formal control systems are seen to constitute a background context that is subject to continual renegotiation through the routine transactions of personnel. By this means the role of structure is downgraded to that of a temporary accomplishment and:

> '...an emergent product of processes of negotiation and interpretation enacted by differently placed participants within the jurisdiction of organizational rules and administrative programmes' (Elger 1975:97).

Here the view of management is of a social process geared to the regulation of interest group conflict in an unstable environment. The focus is upon management as a plurality of competing coalitions which often compete over organizational design and routinely use power to resolve the situation. There is then a profound shift from structure to process which rejects the static and mechanistic conception of management that is deemed to inform the work of those within the mainstream tradition:

> 'The political perspective offers an approach that deals with individual managers as knowledgeable human agents functioning within a dynamic situation where both organizational means and outcomes can be substantially shaped by them' (Reed 1989:6).

In terms of what managers do, or should do, there is a stress on the improvement of political skills and techniques via the affording of a deeper understanding of the political nature of organization. This to improve the possibilities of effectivity as a result of knowing the likely obstacles that confront management in the accomplishment of preferred outcomes (see Lee and Lawrence 1985).

Here then management organization is seen to be a political system in which institutional order and operating practices have to be continually reworked through the negotiated transactions between coalitions. The dominant image is of a 'pervasive pluralism' (Burns 1982).

Power in two dimensions

The concept of power has received its most detailed attention through the use of this action frame of reference. Beginning with the development of a more subtle idea of power within political institutions, the action frame has provided the most fruitful source of theorising about the nature of power in organizations. In contrast to the functionalist approach power is here seen as a socially constituted resource secured and mobilised by individuals and groups in pursuit of their sectional interests. This can be seen in the early work of Dahl (1961) and Polsby (1963). These writers were concerned to examine the concentration of power within political decision making and in so doing developed what Lukes (1974) terms the 'one dimensional' view of power. This is seen to be the potential ability of a person or group to realise their objectives. While accepting this view as one aspect later writers, notably Bachrach and Baritz (1970) developed the 'two-dimensional' view which attends to non-decision making , arguing that Dahl's sanguine focus on actual decisions effectively ignores the shaping of the agenda that takes place before decisions are made:

> 'Of course power is exercised when A participates in the making of decisions that affect B. Power is also exercised when A devotes his (sic) energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A. To the extent that A succeeds in doing this B is prevented, for all practical purposes, from bringing to the fore any issue that might in their resolution be seriously detrimental to A's set of

> preferences...to the extent that a person or group - consciously or unconsciously - creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person has power' (1970:7-8)

The importance of this to our discussion can be seen in a number of ways. First, it reinforces the view of organizations as sites of political activity, Bachrach and Baritz quote with approval Schattschneider's famous words:

> 'All forms of political organization have a bias in favour of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others, because organization is the mobilization of bias. Some issues are organized into politics while others are organized out' (1960:71)

Secondly, it recasts the figure of the manager as implicated in the mobilization of that bias. Far from being a neutral coordinator of 'the system' in the interests of all, a view of the manager as political mover comes into view. Much of this view of power rests in turn upon a view of identity to which we now turn.

Do it yourself identity

As might be anticipated from its theoretical roots in symbolic interactionism and Weber, the political perspective offers an actionist view in which identity is seen as rather more problematic than through the lens of mainstream thought. Specifically symbolic interactionism has always denied the utility of macrosociological reasoning. On this count sociology must:

> '...dwell on the world of the self and the grammar that sustains that world' (Rock 1979:236)

The focus is therefore not upon the structural features of the social world, rather, with portraying that world as a fluid and changeable series of transformations and encounters:

> 'Symbolic interaction involves the *interpretation,* or ascertaining the meaning of the actions or remarks of the other person, and *definition,* or conveying assumptions to another person as to how he is to act. Human association consists of a process of such interpretations and definitions. Through this process the participants fit their own acts to the ongoing acts of one another and guide others in doing so' (Blumer 1966:537-538)

Of crucial significance to Blumer's mentor, Mead, and therefore to symbolic interactionism, are the notions of self and identity. Mead's work was directed at breaking down the Cartesian dualities of mind and body, individual and society (Henriques et al. 1984), and can be seen to rely on the notion that the mind and the self are formed within the social, communicative activity of the group. For Mead language and discourse are social activities and not the property of individuals, in this he resembles the later Wittgenstein and de Saussure. However, for Mead, as Burkitt (1991) has argued:

> '..the original and primary function of language remains as a medium for the more successful adjustment of individuals within their social activity' (1991:37)

Language thus plays a central role in the regulation of social behaviour and the maintenance of social order. In addition it is the means by which people emerge as social selves:

> 'The individual experiences himself, not directly, but only indirectly, from the standpoint of the same social group, or from the general standpoint of the social group as a whole to which he belongs. For he enters his own experience as a self or individual, not directly or immediately, not by becoming a subject to himself, but only insofar as he becomes an object to himself just as other individuals are objects to him or in his experience; and he becomes an object to himself only by taking the attitudes of other individuals towards himself within a social environment or context of experience and behaviour in which both he and they are involved' (Mead 1934, quoted in Burkitt 1991:36)

This claim, that there is no private self but only that which emerges through a process of interaction and communication, is a radical one which goes against the 'commonsensical' individualism that can be seen to inform mainstream and radical understandings of identity. In particular it leads to a conception of the self as the shifting centre of social formations. In contrast to macrosociological approaches that maintain a 'God's eye view' and which maintain that the world can be made to yield up its underlying logic, if only we can clear our eyes of mystifications, or disadvantaged positions, or a lack of the right intellectual weaponry, it posits the

notion of the social being animated from the everyday practices of people in interaction.

In relation to Silverman, perhaps the most influential figure in the establishment of this perspective, Willmott (1994) notes:

> 'Silverman objects to the way that the intentional and meaningful quality of human action is disregarded in [functionalist] accounts of organizational work. he challenges the assumption that the behaviour of organizational members can be adequately analysed as "an impersonal process, reflected in the action of individuals but quite separate from their intentions" (1970:38). Against this he argues for analysis that studies organizational work as a product of how organizational members "attach" meanings to situations' (1994:93-94)

Radical perspectives

As can be seen from the above, the political perspective, rooted as it is in the action frame, draws attention to the importance of political activity in organizations. In doing so it also draws attention to the role of agency and choice (Child 1972) in shaping organizational structures and to the need to situate power use within the institutional context of the organization.

Yet it is in this area - the interaction between institutional context and managerial power politics, and its implications for a more systematic understanding of the link between power relations and organizational change - that criticisms of the political perspective have been most strongly voiced. These criticisms relate both to the pluralistic conceptions of power relations that have informed the work of those working within the perspective and the relative neglect of the institutionalised structures of power and control of the political economy within which organizations can be seen to operate. In short such perspectives are seen as quite as managerialist as their mainstream counterparts. An example of this critique can be seen in the following quote from Willmott (1984):

> '...the pluralist perspective is still limited to the analysis of the mobilization of power resources by a variety of groups within organizations whose institutional formation is largely taken for granted. For although this highlights the significance of structural power differentials and conflicts of

> interest within organizations, the pluralist perspective offers little or no explanation of the distribution of power. Nor, relatedly, does it attend to the institutionalization of relations of power in the structures of work organization' (1984:361)

Similarly in relation to the perspective on identity we see a similar critique being mounted. For example, Burawoy (1979) takes to task the assumptions present in the work of Roy (1973), a highly influential account of the subjective elements present in the routines of the workplace. For Burawoy, Roy's reliance on an exclusively interactionist methodology leads to his failure to delineate the broader environment within which his studies were conducted. As a consequence, Burawoy argues, the wider social relations within which the interaction he describes are inscribed are effectively ignored. Burawoy notes that Roy tells us nothing about the company, 'the union, other departments, the state of various markets and so on. The interactionists' insistence on being a closed (secret) participant observer imposed serious limitations on the material that could legitimately deployed in analysis' (1979:34).

From a radical perspective too the elaboration of such concepts as 'career' can be seen to be ambiguous achievements. On this view many different types of paid work involve similar symbolic processes of identity construction. However this 'levelling' also has the effect of eradicating difference. As Hughes (1971) expresses it:

> 'We need to rid ourselves of any concepts which keep us from seeing that the problems of men at work are the same whether they do their work in the labs of some famous institution or in the messiest vat room of a pickle factory' (1971:300)

In place of this perceived paucity radical perspectives conceptualise management as a control mechanism that functions to fulfil the imperatives imposed by a capitalist mode of production and to disseminate the ideological frameworks through which these structural realities can be obscured. In terms of economic imperatives the need is for a sufficient degree of control over the production process to secure the efficient extraction of surplus value and level of profitability. In terms of ideological demand the need is for the maintenance of the subordinate position of labour within the process so that resistance is minimised or contained within the rules of the game.

The radical perspective derives from a Marxist reading of organizational analysis which attempts to link the routine organizational work done by managers to the determining (more or less) structure of production and social relations within which it takes place. In this way the facts of organizational politics are not denied but are seen as subordinate to the structure of capitalist relations in which they are embedded.

The clear implications in terms of our discussion is that here managers are seen as agents for, or bearers of, an economic logic that demands that labour is controlled and directed towards ends it might otherwise reject. This is not seen as a necessarily straightforward process and a major effort of researchers in this area has been directed towards analysing the twists and turns of managerial structure and strategy as it attempts to cope with the internal contradictions that are generated by attempts at control. This is well illustrated in the modern literature on the labour process begun with Braverman (1974). The major contradiction is seen to reside in the simultaneous desire for control over and cooperation from labour, and the parallel implementation of structural and ideological mechanisms such as more coercive supervisory methods and cooperative ideological appeals which ensure that these objectives are simultaneously negated (Storey 1983, Littler and Salaman 1984)

The implications for management education are not well spelt out within this literature but seem to consist of 'helping' managers develop a deeper awareness of their role in regulating the conflict of interest between capital and labour, and recognising the source of their organizational problems in the contradictory tensions that this regulatory role produces (Fox 1985, Alvesson and Willmott 1992). In addition recent literature (Nord and Jermier 1992) has suggested that management education should concern itself with teaching managers the limits of their influence through an appreciation of the limits of rationality.

Alienated Identity

For a view of identity from within this frame we need to return to the work of its key inspirer, Braverman (1974). For him (as for Mayo, paradoxically) the key to understanding identity was to found in the effects of modern economic organization on traditional forms of work-based identity. His text is tinged with a profound sense

of 'the world we have lost' and there is a clear assumption that work is a crucial source of meaning in people's lives. Work is seen not just as a source of livelihood but as a consistent, stable source of self-identity. However, on Braverman's account the processes of differentiation integral to the development of modernity involve the disarticulation of this 'essential' link between a persons sense of who they are and what work they perform. Humanity is thus defined through work and the dynamics of modernity are seen to be pathological - as undermining people's essential identity. Modern work is therefore seen as ultimately alienating; estranging people from one another and from their 'true' identities. For Braverman, as a Marxist of an orthodox stripe, the solution was the destruction of capitalism and its replacement by a social system in which people could once more be their 'true selves'. As we shall see in chapter three this view of identity is one which is seriously deficient in a number of important respects, as is the radical view of power to which we now turn.

Three dimensional power

An influential and subtle attempt to theorise power which is broadly within the radical perspective is that of Lukes (1974). Building on the one and two dimensional views already elaborated Lukes comments:

> '...is not the supreme and most insidious exercise of power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as divinely ordained and beneficial? To assume that the absence of grievance (as Bachrach and Baratz) equals genuine consensus is simply to rule out the possibility of false or manipulated consensus by definitional fiat' (1974:24)

For Lukes the 'third dimension' of power is expressed through the development of institutional rules and routines which are not attributable to the decisions or non-decisions of particular individuals. Consensus in decision-making is thus manipulated so that the 'real' interests of individuals is denied. In contrast to the one and two dimensional views it maintains that:

> '...men's wants may themselves be a product of a system which works against their interests; and, in such cases, relates these interests to what they would want and prefer, were they able to make the choice' (1974:23)

Importantly, for Lukes, power in this third dimension is routinely exercised through 'the control of information, through the mass media and through the processes of socialization' (ibid 23) all of which are involved in 'the shaping, determining or influencing' (ibid 23) of human wants. Through this insidious exercise of power, compliance of individuals to the demands of others is unobtrusively secured.

Towards a critical management education?

Out of this complex of ideas we may see the beginnings of a programme of critical pedagogy. Reed and Anthony (1992) describe mainstream management education in terms of 'an unreflective pragmatism or hucksterism poorly suited to the spirit and condition of the times' (1992:610). Anthony (1986) accounting for this state of affairs and the lack of critical management education courses, notes that:

> 'The ostensible explanation is that managers would find such courses impractical, unreal, "academic" [but] managers reject critical disciplines and concepts because they have been taught to reject them' (1986:139)

In these comments Reed and Anthony locate themselves within the political brand of critique outlined earlier. For them, and others, the notion of commonsense is a created one, one which is to be sure elevated above 'theoretical', 'academic' or 'abstract' thought, but which cannot be equated with some idea of basic, pre-theoretical knowledge. On the contrary, the notion of commonsense is an achievement, one which implies a complex, albeit unarticulated, set of theoretical ideas and commitments, which are rooted in the tenets of the mainstream approach to organizations and management detailed earlier.

However, as Grey and Mitev (1995) suggest, there are paradoxes of commonsense that can be seen to provide openings for more critical stances to be taken. Noting the comfort which post-experience students feel when working within the mainstream parameters, they also point out that students often bemoan the lack of stimulation commonly associated with the presentation of packaged knowledge, for example in the form of case studies. Although as they suggest, this critique is often

couched in terms of teaching style, and the responses to it are often addressed through this problematic, the problem can be seen to lie, not in the style of presentation, but in the limited understanding of the world entailed by the commitment to 'commonsense'. As they put it:

> 'Commonsense requires the unquestioned delimitation of the terrain of relevance from that of irrelevance' (1995:79)

This paradox comes home most fully when dealing with more 'theoretical' topics such as organizational behaviour, culture and change. At the risk of overgeneralising students can typically be seen to react in one of two ways. The first of these are the 'hardnoses', they will regard these topics as irrelevant and therefore failing to meet the commonsense criteria of value, such students will typically regard such material as the 'soft waffly stuff' in which the word soft is clearly a denigration. Students taking such a view often regard the intrusion of 'academic' concepts as unnecessary to the 'real' business of, for example, 'managing' people.

A second reaction to these topics is to fall back on the cry of 'that's obvious'. Here the argument being articulated is that of these ideas being commonsense; at best codifying 'what everyone knows'. As Grey and Mitev comment:

> '[This] may on occasion, simply indicate a reductionism in which complex ideas are reduced to commonsense and thereby denigrated for having been presented pretentiously. But it may also indicate a legitimate disappointment which reflects the banality of much of what passes for theorizing in management disciplines, involving as it does the simplistic importation of complex theories from psychology, sociology or economics' (1995:79)

This paradox results in that vicious circle that I articulated in the first chapter; what has to be taught has to be practically orientated toward commonsensical understandings of the 'real world', otherwise it is 'only' theorizing, but if it *is* so orientated, it is 'only' obvious commonsense.

For Grey and Mitev, in common with other critical theorists, the resolution of the problem is to be found in the importation of the insights of critical theory into the syllabuses of management education.

A developed example of such a programme is to be found in the work of Willmott (1994). This work is particularly instructive since it also contains an explicit debate between what I have here termed the political and radical approaches. The following examination of that debate will reveal the possibilities and limitations of each approach and will lead on to a discussion of other possible approaches.

Critical action learning

As we have seen many critical theorists come very close to a distinctly deterministic and economistic reading of the social world, as though one could simply reduce 'management' to a mere function of capitalist control (e.g. Braverman 1974) and therefore 'read off' managers 'true' class position. Willmott (at least in this paper) attempts to move beyond such a crude Marxist position by arguing that there is a need to pay attention to material interests but without reducing these to a simple either/or dichotomy. For him there is a need for the recognition of the somewhat ambivalent position of managers as both objects (sellers of labour) and as subjects (agents) of capitalist control. In order to do this he recommends the adoption of a structuration approach (Giddens 1984):

> 'By situating managerial work within the structure of a capitalist mode of production and exchange; it becomes possible to appreciate how the organization of their work, including the content and delivery of management development and education, is embedded within a contradictory and socially divisive nexus of relationships. This nexus, I argue, at once constrains and enables the development of alternative approaches to management education' (1994:121)

This approach leads Willmott to argue that the contradictions inherent within capitalism are productive of conditions which stimulate and facilitate critical reflection. He therefore recommends the adoption of a mixture of action learning (Revans 1982) and insights from critical management studies as a tactic for increasing managers' own self-awareness of their paradoxical position. In arguing this case Willmott asserts:

> '...the insights of critical management theory may simply fuel cynicism and/or guilt. But the likelihood of this happening is reduced when the cognitive

> insights of critical theory are fused with the more concrete and embodied process of action learning' (1994:130)

Here there is a recognition of the common experience of other 'liberatory' educators (Lather 1991), that it is often rather hard to convince those one would seek to liberate. However, Willmott seems to be suggesting that students will tear away the veil of their false consciousness (although he assiduously avoids the use of such a crude term) through the self-revelatory insights of action learning. For Willmott the advantage of the action learning approach, particularly in the radicalised form he is presenting, is that it promises to subvert the traditional approaches to theory and learning present in management education and thus 'empower' learners. The implications that flow from this analysis follow and are presented in the form of a dialogue with Willmott's main protagonists, Reed and Anthony.

As we have seen it is a commonplace among neo-Weberian management researchers such as Reed and Anthony to assert that managers necessarily work within normative frameworks that are sustained through institutionalised relations of power. Also common is a critique of approaches to management education and development that pay some form of lip service to notions of ethics and power but nevertheless treat management as a neutral technology in which values are only valued as a means of securing worker cooperation (Anthony 1990).

For such researchers there is a need to move beyond this 'unreflective pragmatism' (Reed and Anthony 1992) towards an educative practice that is based on an understanding of, and a 'reflective responsibility towards', the 'complexities and nuances of organizational relationships' (ibid: 603, 605).This is to resolve both the moral and practical consequences that flow from the unreflective approach to management that characterises much management education.

This programme is to be developed via the 'recovery of institutional and pedagogical nerve' (ibid: 610) among academic institutions, and the development of 'organizational professionalism' (ibid: 599) among professional managers. The latter is seen to be a developing consequence of the developing erosion of functional boundaries and specialisms within late modern organizational practice, as detailed by Larson (1979). While this may be an admirable aim, the problem behind the programme is, as Willmott and other critical management theorists have pointed out,

that there is no recognition of the necessary transformation of prevailing structures of domination. Indeed, Reed and Anthony themselves note that there is little sign of the required political will or even of a developing convergence within the organised field of management itself; as has often been noted managers are typically rather more 'locals' than 'cosmopolitans'. Further, as my own experience shows there seems little will among those engaged in management education to tackle such issues.

This then is the starting point for Willmott. For him the weakness of the neo-Weberian perspective is rooted in the failure to take seriously the structure of power relations through which managerial work is constituted and reproduced. Drawing upon a neo-Marxist perspective, Willmott argues that the structure of the employment relationship is such that the possibility for managers themselves to develop such a professional attitude is a non-starter. Similarly it seems clear that employers too are unlikely to welcome the development of the professional manager, a point actually made by Reed and Anthony when they chart the failure of a joint Management Charter Initiative/ British Institute of Management initiative to secure the recognition of a professional management programme. In this case employers were more comfortable with a competencies approach, of which more later. In a world in which managers are seen to be increasingly accountable to the private interests of shareholders, the possibilities for an autonomous professionalism demanded by the Weberians seems a faint hope. Similarly, Willmott argues that Reed and Anthony's optimistic talk of 'the integrity of the organization as a viable community' and relatedly 'the responsibilities of management to the organization' (1992:609) fails to recognise that the notions of integrity and community are 'already deeply compromised by capitalist principles of work organization' (1994:128). For Willmott an adequate analysis of management education must be capable of appreciating and analysing the forces that currently frustrate or promote the realization of integrity and community. Only in this way, he argues, is it possible to develop forms of action that enable 'reflective responsibility' to become embodied in managerial practice. Willmott's approach is presented at Fig 1.

Traditional management education	**Conventional action learning**	**Critical action learning**
The world is somewhere to learn about	The world is somewhere to act and change	The world is somewhere to act and change
Self-development is unimportant	Self-development is very important	Self development and social development are interdependent
Some notion of correct management practice, established by research, defines the curriculum	Curriculum defined by the manager or the organization	The interdependence of being means that no individual or group can gain control of the curriculum
Managers should learn theories or models derived from research	Managers should be facilitated by a tutor to solve problems	Managers should be receptive to, and be facilitated by, the concerns of other groups, in addition to individual tutors, when identifying and addressing problems
Experts decide on what should be learnt, when and how much	Experts are viewed with caution	Received wisdom, including that of experts, is subject to critical scrutiny through a fusion of reflection and insights drawn from critical theory
Models, concepts, ideas are provided to offer tools for thinking and action	Models, concepts, ideas are developed in response to problems	Models, concepts, ideas are developed through an interplay of reflection upon practice and application of ideas drawn from critical traditions

Fig 1. Source: Willmott (1994: 124, 127)

Critical perspectives and practice: an advance?

As can be seen there is no unequivocal picture of managerial identity that emerges from these critical approaches. As Knights and Willmott (1989:537) suggest, sociological studies of work identity have tended to gravitate, even despite best intentions, to one pole or the other of the dualities of social theory.

The Marxist problematic of alienation, whereby the oppressive structure of capitalist relations alienates 'man' from his species being as a creative labourer, tends to dominate the debate. Here there is no role for subjectivity, structure eradicates agency. As Barrett (1991) suggests, the question of subjectivity:

> 'is a massive lacuna in Marxism [one which has] stood in the way of a broader consideration of experience, identity, sexuality, affect and so on' (1991:110)

In opposition, we saw the development of the action frame of reference, whereby the focus is on the actors' own definition of the meaning of the situation. However, while it may be admitted that this places an active subject at the heart of the analysis, thus overcoming the structural determinism of the crude Marxist view, the subject that is presented is almost exclusively the product of the objective situation in which they find themselves (pun intended). Forms of identity are thus 'read-off' from structural factors. In addition the conception of 'the social' is an extremely limited and limiting one, seeming to consist of the interactional group and the generalised other. By this means there is no explanation of the wider society as a historical formation.

As Giddens (1979) tells us, the notion of human agency cannot be understood without the notion of structure and vice versa, nor can this 'duality of structure' be conceptualised outside of history. As a consequence:

> 'the social totality cannot be best understood as in functionalist conceptions of the whole, as a given presence, but as relations of presence and absence recursively ordered' (1979:255)

For Laclau (1990) the paradoxical nature of this indicates the centrality of the category of dislocation. For him this is:

> 'The primary ontological level of constitution of the social [because to understand social reality] is not to understand what society is but what prevents it from being' (1990:44)

Thus any identity is dislocated insofar as it:

> 'depends on an outside which both denies that identity and provides the conditions of its possibility at the same time' (ibid:39)

If subjects are simply the products of structure, as Marxists would claim, then total determinism governs social action and change and chance would be inconceivable. However, following Laclau, we may argue that if the structure that 'makes' the subject does not manage to fully constitute itself, if it can only constitute itself in relation to an 'outside', then full determination will not take place:

> 'The structure will not be able to determine me, not because I have an *essence* independent from the structure but because the structure has failed to constitute me as a subject as well. There is nothing in me which was oppressed by the structure or is freed by its dislocation; I am simply *thrown up* in my condition as a subject because I have not achieved constitution as an object...I am condemned to be free not because I have no structural identity, but because I have a *failed* structural identity. This means that the subject is partially self-determined. However this self-determination is not the expression of what the subject already is but the result of its lack of being instead, self-determination can only proceed through processes of identification' (ibid:44)

As we have seen, the emphasis on social action from the political perspective provides something of an antidote to the problems of structural determination that mark the radical perspective on identity. However, this is at the cost of asserting that the self has no structural identity, and consequently that agency can be theorised without reference to structure. Nevertheless it goes some way towards a more complete understanding by utilising notions of language (discourse) as the organizing principle of social life. In this it shares something with the approach of Laclau. However, for the latter, in common with other poststructuralists, discourse is not equated with a local moral order, as in interactionism, but rather is understood as constitutive of the social domain as a whole.

Similar problems emerge in relation to the notion of power. Lukes, in proposing his 'radical' view, is concerned to 'bring society back in' to the analysis of the politics of social life which, in previous analyses, focused on the actions or non-actions of participants to the neglect of their institutional context and mediation. However, as Benton (1981) tells us, the trick is only carried off via the counterfactual

identification of the 'real' wants and interests of individuals. Benton suggests that such arguments issue a licence to those who, in appealing to the 'real' interests of others, proceed to commit atrocities in the name of those they claim to know and serve. Perhaps even more importantly for our purposes, a weakness of the Lukes' thesis concerns the implausibility of imagining human beings whose subjectivity is not conditioned by power. If, as will be argued later, power is an inherent and intractable part of human existence, then to speak of the 'real' interests of subjects as if they could be unambiguously identified outside of power/knowledge relations is a contradiction in terms. It also commits the dualistic move of placing the individual outside of society, something Lukes (1974:54) thought he was avoiding.

Further, as Reed (1989) tells us, there remain other unresolved problems within critical management theories. In particular he notes a continuing failure to develop an integrated framework which links the study of managerial behaviour, organizational structure and institutional context within one perspective. Alongside this Reed notes the tendency for researchers to fall back upon either structural determination or strategic choice in the face of seemingly overwhelming evidence as to the explanatory primacy of each. Finally, a continual recourse to a functionalist explanatory logic that treats managers as the agents or bearers of social forces that contend in a wider institutional arena of which they have little or no theoretical knowledge. This tends to a treatment of managerial processes and systems as epiphenomena of deep structures that develop according to their own logic. Summarising the three perspectives presented in this chapter Reed notes:

> 'From the point of view of the mainstream perspective, managers are treated as the agents for a formal or instrumental rationality focused on design faults that they may fail to appreciate and enact to its fullest extent in specific situations, but which will impose itself on them eventually. Within the political perspective, a different kind of rationality prevails, one dominated by considerations of short term political advantage and power within the employing organization. But it tends to reduce managers to the status of ciphers for micro-social processes of which they possess little understanding and even less control. For those operating within the radical perspective managers are best seen as agents of morality. They act as conduits for an

> economic logic that has to be obscured, hidden and distorted in some way or another through the promulgation of various ideological mystifications' (1989:16)

These problems replicate themselves in the approaches to management education that I have outlined. It seems clear that the exhortations of the political theorists to recognise the 'situatedness' of organizational problems and the skills that are needed to manage these, whether they be the adoption of action learning or the 'reflective conversation with situation' of Schon (1983), are an attachment to the pole of action at the expense of a due concern with structure.

Similarly, although Willmott advances the argument a good deal in my view, here too is a concern to illuminate the 'reality' of one's position in the scheme of things. Behind Critical Theory always lurks the shadow of the 'true self'. Relatedly, the goal of the autonomous, responsible subject is merely an example of clinging to a discredited philosophy of humanism. As we shall see in the next chapter, Foucault, among others, shows that the pursuit of the humanist ideal tends towards the fostering and promotion of disciplinary effects which are at odds with the stated intention.

An attempt to theorise the relation between power, identity and agency in ways which do justice to the complex nature of these phenomema is presented in the following chapter. Its explication is followed by an analysis of some existing practices of management education.

Chapter Three : Beyond the fragments

Introduction

In the previous chapter I showed how existing attempts to theorise the notions of identity, agency and power were characterised by a continual recourse to one or other pole of the dualities of sociology, with debilitating effects on the understanding of management education. In this chapter I turn to attempts to resolve this problem and develop a tentative framework which, it will be argued, goes some way towards a more helpful understanding of the phenomena under investigation. I begin by setting out the essential elements of such an approach.

The discursive turn

The concept of discourse has become a prominent one in recent attempts to provide a means of escape from some of the great binary oppositions defining the project of the social sciences. For Hall (1992) discourse is:

> 'a group of statements which provide a language for talking about - i.e. representing - a topic. When statements about a topic are made within a particular discourse, the discourse makes it possible to construct the topic in a certain way. It also limits the ways in which a topic can be constructed' (1992:291)

Discourse may not be just one statement however. Statements are seen to be linked to form a 'discursive formation' (Foucault 1972). These statements are linked since any one statement implies a relation to all the others:

> '...whenever between objects, types of statements, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity, (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations) we will say, for convenience, that we are dealing with a discursive formation' (Foucault 1972:37-38)

The central feature of the concept of discourse is that it dissolves the traditional oppositions between language and social practice, meaning and human action. Discourse concerns the production of knowledge through language but discourse itself is produced through practice - 'discursive practice - the practice of producing

meaning' (Hall 1992). Because all social practices are seen to involve the production of meaning, all such practices are discursive. As Laclau and Mouffe (1985) observe:

> 'a stone exists independently of any system of social relations, but it is, for example, either a projectile or an object of aesthetic contemplation only within a specific discursive configuration. A diamond in the market or at the bottom of a mine is the same physical object; but again it is only a commodity within a determinate system of social relations. For the same reason it is the discourse which constitutes the subject position of the social agent, and not therefore, the social agent which is the origin of the discourse' (1985:82-83)

Discourse is thus always a material practice rather than simply a matter of speech and writing. At the same time the knowledge that a discourse produces constitutes certain sorts of power over those who are 'known' by it. As Foucault argues:

> 'there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge' (1977:27)

On this view when a knowledge is deployed in practice, those who are 'known' in a particular way will be subject *to it* and subjects *of it* (Beechey and Donald 1985). Thus forms of power work by constructing and maintaining the forms of subjectivity most appropriate to a given type of social practice. Subjectivities are constituted by and rendered instrumental to a particular form of power through 'the medium of knowledges or technical "saviour faire" immanent to that form of power' (Minson 1985: 44-45). Thus an intimate relationship is forged between discourse, knowledge, power and subjectivity.

For Foucault when power works to establish the 'truth' of a set of statements, then such a formation produces a 'regime of truth':

> 'Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth; that is the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as "true" and "false" statements; the means by which each is sanctioned; and the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth..' (1980:131)

On this basis Foucault argues for identities to be seen as historical categories rather than as referents that exist *a priori* and independently of their formation in discourse, and the power exercised over them. In contrast to, for example, Lukes, subjectivity is not to be equated to an abstract, essential individual whose 'real' interests are only

discernible through the counterfactual construction of relations free of the effects of power. From this it follows that power is to be seen as a medium of relations in which that complex, contradictory, shifting subjectivity is produced, transformed or reproduced through the social practices within which such power is exercised.

Contrasting with previous conceptualizations of power, such as domination and exploitation, the Foucauldian perspective focuses upon subjugation, in which subjectivity is fetishised in identity (Knights and Willmott 1989).This is seen as 'economical' since it is a technique of the 'social' and the 'self' which is productive of a self-disciplining subjectivity. In effect modern technologies of power work by forcing individuals back on themselves so that they become 'tied to their own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge' (Foucault 1982: 212). In this sense our identity is confirmed and sustained through our positioning in social practices which reproduce prevailing power/knowledge relations. For Foucault these relations are both economical and technological. Technological insofar as they are exercised in and through specific bodies of knowledge (predominantly the social sciences) and economical in that their effect is to infiltrate the mind or soul so as to constitute bodies as subjects who discipline themselves. In this way Foucault forges a vital link between the constitution of subjects and the objectivisation and subjugation of human beings through specific knowledges. These knowledges are both a condition and consequence of relations of power - relations which are not 'merely' repressive but are also productive. As Knights and Willmott (1989) note:

> 'It is precisely the positive character of power/knowledge relations which renders them so attractive and plausible. For the technologies and mechanisms of power are productive of social practices which are a source of meaning and identity for individuals who participate in them' (1989: 550)

On this view subjects do not so much consent to the technologies of power as enter into practices which are a condition and consequence of their reproduction:

> 'From the gaze of hierarchical observation to the normalising judgements that constitute routine surveillance and examination, power not only controls the spatial and temporal distribution of individuals throughout a grid of social relations; it does so positively by encouraging subjects to improve their own circumstances of material and mental well-being. Such mechanisms of power

> invest the subject with power and thereby contribute to their own dispersal and reproduction. At the same time however, an unintended consequence of surveillance and normalising practices is to individualise subjects in a way which renders them more dependent on, yet increasingly insecure about, meeting the standards of institutionalised judgements' (ibid.: 551)

Foucault's analysis of the individualising effects of power illustrates how modern regimes push individuals back on themselves, with the result that self-consciousness becomes a constraining force tying subjects to their identities. It draws attention to the sense in which, rather than being separate essentials, power and identity are major preoccupations and affects of modern subjectivities. In this complex we see that identity is ever more important but ever more problematical. For Knights and Willmott this results in the 'fetishisation of self' whereby there is a tendency to become preoccupied with solidifying meaning through the objectification of self in fetishised identities.

Importantly, the notion of resistance is here seen not as the essential opposite of power, as lying somehow outside it, but as the condition of possibility for the operation of power itself such that 'each constitutes for the other a kind of permanent limit, a point of reversal' (Foucault 1982: 225). In addition resistance (as is power) is here seen as a socially constructed category, rather than some 'essence' waiting to be captured by empirical enquiry. It is thus necessary to explore the conditions of its operation and elaborate the constitutive effects of particular discourses. The material presented in chapter four is an attempt to do this in relation to the discourses of contemporary management education.

Imagining work

Having outlined the essential (or rather non-essential) elements of my approach to notions of power and identity I am now in a position to develop the framework for interrogating the substantive topic.

It would seem that we may apply the idea of the self being contextual to work and managerial identity without too much difficulty. As Lefort (1986) suggested, the categories of 'worker' and 'manager' do not connote some form of supra-historical essence or 'spirit' as the notion of alienation would seem to indicate - since they are,

as Marx himself indicated, a 'product of history' - only coming into being under certain historical and social conditions. Notions such as 'motivation' 'organizational commitment' and the rest of the lexicon of management discourse do not exist in some timeless, universal realm waiting to be found by, and deployed within, that discourse. The concepts themselves and the practices that bestow upon them a material reality are products of changes in the organization of work, of changes in the imagination of work. In these circumstances it becomes increasingly difficult to talk of an identity such as that of the 'worker' or the 'manager', since changes in the conditions of existence necessarily result in changes in the identity. If an employee's relations with an employing organization are discursively reconceptualised then rather than having the same identity, the 'employee' in a new situation, a new identity is established.

Marxists of an orthodox persuasion, Hyman (1987) for example, argue that 'shifting fashions in labour management' are purely and simply the outcome of an originary antagonism between labour and capital. In this way the identity of both are seen as essentially unchanging while lived history is seen as a series of empirical variations on an antagonistic theme. Knowledge of the 'real' identities of capital and labour is only available to those with the appropriate gaze. Baldamus put it this way:

> '...as wages are costs to the firm, and the deprivation inherent in effort means costs to the employee, the interests of management and the wage-earner are diametrically opposed' (1961:105)

The workers' interests are here simply reducible to increasing wages, reducing working hours, minimizing effort, and constraining exploitation by fighting for better working conditions and reformist legislation to protect them from the activities of rapacious employees. At the opposite extreme are those rapacious employers and their 'servants of power' - management and their servants, the occupational psychologists and the like. Their interests are equally simple and mirror those of the workers - a continual expansion of profit through increasing productivity, deskilling work, depressing wages, weakening the collective power of workers to disrupt the process of accumulation, while all the time casting a cloak of 'ideological legitimacy' over the essentially exploitative nature of the enterprise (Braverman 1974). From this perspective (which to be fair hardly anyone holds today) work entails the

subordination of an essential subjectivity. All attempts to reorganize business enterprises and the subjective experience of work without resolving the fundamental antagonism at the heart of capitalism are mere 'shifting fashions' since they are on a hiding to nothing. How subjects are positioned by, and use these programmes and practices of work reform is of no concern because they are seen to have no effect in overcoming the 'objective' relations of alienation and exploitation.

However, for those engaged in the promulgation of such programmes and practices, and here the management educators come into view, the subjective experience of work *is* of crucial importance. The orthodox history of the development of management thought has often been presented a journey from darkness into light and the light has clearly been represented as ways of working (Human Relations, Quality of Working Life, Corporate Culture etc. etc.) that claim to be able to restructure the enterprise so as to make the work both more subjectively meaningful while increasing profitability (Perrow 1989). As Rose (1989) has argued:

> 'Employers and managers equipped with these new visions of work have thus claimed that there is no conflict between the pursuits of productivity, efficiency and competitiveness on the one hand and the humanization of work on the other. On the contrary, the path to business success lies in engaging the employee with the goals of the company at the level of his or her subjectivity, aligning the wishes, needs and aspirations of each individual who works for the organization with the successful pursuit of its objectives. Through striving to fulfil their own needs and wishes at work, each employee will thus work for the advance of the enterprise; the more each individual fulfils him or herself, the greater the benefit to the company' (1989: 56)

While there is clearly a good deal of value in retaining the Marxist view that programmes of work reform play an important role in the continued domination of one form of economic life, from a Foucauldian view it is important to recognise that their claims to knowledge are not 'false' or 'ideological', nor do they serve a specific function and solution to pre-formed economic needs. These discourses do arise in certain social and politico-economic circumstances but they are not helpfully viewed as reflections or imperatives of such circumstances. Indeed we may say that they make reality and create ways for people to be at work. As Miller and O'Leary (1986)

suggest, the 'nature' or 'essence' of the internal world of the business enterprise is a function of changes in the practices of governing economic life, rather than the reverse.

In this way we may say that managerial thought and discourses of work reform are active in the creation of new images and mechanisms, which bring the government of the enterprise into alignment with political rationalities, cultural values and social expectations. In this process, people identify themselves and conceive of their interests in terms of these new images, formulating their own objectives in relation to them. As Rose (1989) tells us, these new ways of relating the attributes and feelings of individual employees to the objectives of the organization for which they work are central elements in:

> 'the fabrication of new languages and techniques to bind the worker into the productive life of society' (1989: 60)

Governmentality

At this point it is perhaps instructive to explore the notion of governmentality a little further since this provides the key to my later analysis. Specifically, what is meant by the term government in the statement by Miller and O'Leary? Clearly this is not some simple equation of the role of management thought with the wishes and imperatives of the state, although as the quote from Rose suggests there *is* a link with the wider world beyond the enterprise. The term 'governmental rationality' which is collapsed into the neologism 'governmentality' provides the link here. For Foucault (1980) the originator of the term, government is a form of power referring to the conduct of conduct:

> 'to govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of actions of others' (1980: 221)

In this way government is seen as a form of activity aiming to shape the conduct of persons. This via the relation between self and self, private interpersonal relations, relations between social institutions, as well as with relations concerning political sovereignty. Importantly this is a discursive activity such that forms of government rely on a mode of representation, a language that depicts a certain domain and claims to capture the nature of the reality represented and also re-presents it in a form for

deliberation, argumentation and, crucially, intervention. Thus the government of an organization only becomes feasible through discursive practices that render the 'real' comprehensible as a particular 'reality' with specific characteristics, whose components are linked in some systematic fashion (Hacking 1983). Particular programmes of intervention and specific technologies of government flow from this rendering of the 'real' into the domain of thought as 'reality'.

However, as I have already noted, discursive activities work through subjects. As Foucault shows us forms of power work by constructing and maintaining the forms of subjectivity most appropriate to a given type of governmentality (Minson 1985). Particular rationalities of government involve the construction of specific ways for people to be; in Hacking's phrase they actively 'make up' people.

Importantly, for Foucault this does not annul the concept of agency, rather:

> 'when one defines the exercise of power as a mode of action upon the actions of others, when one characterises these actions by the government of men (sic) by other men - in the broadest sense of the term - one includes an important element: freedom. Power is only exercised over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse components may be realised. Where the determining factors saturate the whole there is no relationship of power' (1982: 221)

In this way, as Gordon (1991) suggests:

> 'to the extent that the governed are engaged, in their own individuality, by the propositions and provisions of government, government makes its own rationality intimately their affair' (1991: 48)

In this sense government is bound up with ethics. For Foucault ethics is:

> 'the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself, *rapport a soi*...which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions' (1984: 352)

Ethics are seen as the means by which individuals come to understand and act upon themselves in relation to the true and the false, the permitted and the forbidden, the desirable and the undesirable (Rose 1989).

Pastoral power

For Usher and Edwards (1995) and Townley (1994) the forms of contemporary governmentality are best expressed through Foucault's (1981) idea of pastoral power. In addition to the notion of disciplinary power with which we have been concerned thus far we need to consider the idea that power works too through the active engagement of the subject. This engagement is most usually seen in forms of confession. As Townley (1994) tells us:

> 'The confessional works through avowal, the individuals acknowledgement of his or her own actions or thoughts. From its original meaning of being the guarantee of the status, identity and value granted by one person to another, avowal came to signify acknowledgement of ones own thoughts and actions. It is a process which confirms identity. Through the act of speaking, the self is constituted, tied to self-knowledge which has been uncovered through prior self -examination. Identity is affirmed at the point of speaking' (1994:111)

Importantly for our discussion Townley (1995a) draws upon a distinction first made by Foucault (1988) between self-awareness and self-formation. The distinctiveness of these are shown at Fig 2 below:

	Self-awareness	**Self-formation**
Truth obligation	discovers truth 'in' the subject-duty to know who he/she is, what is happening inside	recovers/remembers truth; rules of conduct
Sources of error	bad intentions; faults of moral character	distinction between what has been done and what should have been done. subject has forgotten rules of conduct
Practices	decipherment and excavation: retreat into self to discover faults and deep feelings; disclosure of secret self. obligation to disclose oneself and the renunciation of self in order to access another level of reality. focus on thoughts	memory: retire into self to remember rules of action and laws of behaviour; recall principles of acting and seeing through self-examination, to see if they govern your life. progressive consideration of self. focus on actions

Relationship to self	conscience is the money-changer of the self, who unifies the authenticity of currency, looks at it, weighs and verifies it. interrogation based on hierarchy	dialogue with self
Purpose	judicial/judging what happened in the past. to lead individual from one reality to another, for the transformation of self. illumination, purification. sacrifice of the self	administrative/taking stock. mastery over oneself through acquisition and assimilation of truth. we must ask ourselves to render account of our conduct of ourselves.
Effects	the self as object. the development of pastoral power	the self as subject. the establishment of order

Fig 2. Source: Townley 1995a: 274

For Townley the predominant form of self-knowledge in management education is that of self-awareness. She argues that the view of self is that of an object of study that must be known and acted upon according to the rules of the game. In this there is an inherent distrust in the process of self-knowledge, a fear that one may be led astray by the tarnished soul and that 'truth' must be continually verified by an outside person - a mentor who can give guidance and confirmation that one is on the 'right path'. In this lies the exercise of pastoral power:

> 'this form of power cannot be exercised without knowing the inside of peoples minds, without exploring their souls, without revealing their innermost secrets. It implies a knowledge of the conscience and an ability to direct it' (Foucault 1982: 212)

Townley illustrates this through an examination of the common practices of modern management, such as appraisal, assessment centres, selection tests etc. From this she proposes that we may see managing as constituted by a discourse of needs:

> 'The dominant motif in this practice of self-awareness is of the inner self constructed through needs. The rationale for the introduction of appraisal is that 'you need to know who you are'...Needs have become such a part of the institutionalised structure of meanings that they constitute our sense of self. They become a way for individuals to understand themselves, as a means of

> constructing a sense of identity....This discourse of needs acts to constitute how our relations with others, including the act of management, are conducted' (1995a: 279)

Self-knowledge as self-formation implies a very different process. Although there is still distance between the knower and the known self, this does not entail the same objectification:

> 'In self-formation the sense of self is of the individual being "centered" (as opposed to self-centered) "belonging to oneself", or "being one's own master" (1995a:276)

In this important sense then one is one's own judge as to the correctness or otherwise of one's behaviour, thereby removing the need for the other to judge or pronounce. For Townley this shift implies a grounding in a reworked discourse of rights rather than of needs. Space does not permit a further consideration of these ideas at the point, but suffice to say Townley proposes that a discourse of rights leads to notions of reciprocity and collective action that promise to remodel the practices of management.

To this point I have been drawing together the threads of a new perspective on power and identity through which we may interrogate our topic. From this perspective we may recast the development of management thought and practice in a way which draws attention to their role in the differential constitution of 'The Manager', according to the changing practices of governing economic life. We may thus see how managers have been 'made up' in different ways - discursively reimagined - at different times through their positioning in a variety of discourses.

The rest of this chapter is concerned with the elaboration of such a perspective through the examination of a number of contemporary discourses. I begin with perhaps the most pervasive of these - that of competence.

Competence for what?

> 'Outcome statements can be created for all learning which is considered important or that people want...If you cannot say what you require, how can you develop it and how do you know when you have achieved it'? (Jessup 1991:130, 134)

> 'There can be no justification for assessing knowledge for its own sake but only for its contribution to competent performance' (ibid.:121)

In his discussion of management education Fox (1989) draws attention to the Foucauldian concept of 'panopticism'. By this Foucault (1980) refers to the prison design formulated by Bentham in 1791, and to the ideas that it ushered in. For Foucault the Panopticon functioned as a kind of utopian dream organization, and in doing so exerted a lasting influence over those concerned with organization. In brief the Panopticon embodied principles of disciplinary power that displaced those traditionally exerted by those in authority, this through being modelled upon a central tower from which all the inmates of the prison could potentially be seen by those with authority, but could not see if they themselves were observed at any particular moment. For Foucault this development is part of the transformation from a feudal order to disciplinary society:

> 'Prior to discipline control was exercised via monarchical edict. The rights of sovereignty allowed the powerful feudal kings and lords to appropriate the goods and wealth of their people via discontinuous and permanent systems of surveillance...This new type of power, which can no longer be formulated in terms of sovereignty...is disciplinary power' (1980:104-5)

This form of power is based upon the idea of systematic surveillance, monitoring, intervention, reform and training, by which means the individual comes into view. The instruments of this power are those of hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement, and the examination. Through these means, Foucault argues, subjects are constructed by being individualised:

> 'instead of bending all its subjects into a single uniform mass, it [disciplinary power] separates, analyses, differentiates, carries its own procedures of

> decomposition to the point of necessary and sufficient single units' (1979:170)

By this means we may see the exercise of power through the collecting and documenting of knowledge - 'one way looking' (Fox 1989:724). This knowledge is held in dossiers, files, case notes, reports and in being so held inscribes the subject.

The relevance of this for our discussion of both work and education can be seen in a number of ways. First, organizations are pre-eminently sites of hierarchical observation insofar as the upper, managerial layers are able, and claim the right to, survey the lower levels without being surveyed in the same way. Second, the upper levels are able to exercise the power of normalising judgement through the panoply of personnel techniques and appraisal systems which are part of all 'progressive' organizations in the modern era. Finally, the examination is operationalised through the operation of those systems, and the ensuing judgements become the basis for selection, promotion etc. In education too the proliferation of assessment procedures, evaluation and appraisal mechanisms bear witness to the continued extension of the process of panopticization that marks out modern life. Many programmes of management education (although not our case) demand a high level of performance at a common entrance examination, the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) and/or examination at a number of stages. In our case admission is through an 'in-depth' interview, a confessional practice. Interestingly, a whole industry has grown up around providing private tuition in order to pass the GMAT.

For Foucault these techniques of recording and of classifying, while giving the appearance of working in the 'interest' of the subject through identifying 'what they are good at', are nonetheless not neutral since they work by the establishment of norms, norms which by definition include some and exclude others. The flipside of 'what one is good at' is 'what one is bad at', 'deficient' in or 'need'. As Usher and Edwards (1994) comment:

> 'Persons therefore become subjects by being classified in relation to norms. In effect they become their capacities and it is through these capacities, or the lack of them, that they become the objects of surveillance, examination and governance. The significance and power of normalization is precisely that it appears neutral...Assessment is therefore carried out against objective criteria

which subjects have to accept (because not to do so would be irrational and deviant) as saying something about what they are as persons' (1994:103)

By this complex we see that in becoming subjects to be measured and classified persons also become subjects who 'learn the truth' about themselves.

An example of this process of panopticization can be seen in the recent moves towards competence-based education within higher education. Competence is the latest in a long line of attempts to more fully realise the goals of disciplinary power and can be seen to be part of a wholesale shift toward purely instrumental forms of knowledge, being predicated on the perceived failure of knowledge-based vocational qualifications. In essence its promoters claim that the achievement of a level of externally determined competence, marked by the award of a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ), indicates a known level of competence that has been derived from the 'real world' organizations. In addition, competence is seen as an important catalyst in the improvement of the quality of the UK workforce. It is, as Ball (1990) tells us, an outcome of the Great Debate initiated by Callaghan in 1976 that sought to forge a closer link between economic performance and a particular kind of educational practice and discourse. As Hyland (1994) also remarks, the discourse of competence has proceeded from the workplace to the school and thence to the university. Given management education's close affinity with the world of work, and its tussle between utilitarian and liberal conceptions of education, it is perhaps not so very surprising that it should be one of the first homes of such a development.

The claims of the efficacy of competence have not gone unchallenged. For example (Barnett 1994), writing from a critical theory perspective, claims that the approach begins from the concerns of interest groups and in doing so assumes that the identification of the required benchmarks is unproblematically derived from those groups. It is as if the practitioners of social work and law, for example, are the only authorities of what counts as best practice. However what counts as best practice is a contested matter in both of these and many other (perhaps all) fields. The identification of occupational standards is not something that can be settled, and competencies read off, in some absolute fashion. Similarly the notion is a static one. Can we be sure that today's standards will be equally 'useful' tomorrow?

Similar criticisms are raised by others and concern, in effect, questions of whether the approach will work; whether it will do what its promoters claim; and whether it is a 'proper' approach to knowledge and teaching. However, this is repeat the same problematical moves that we saw in relation to managerial identity and power and relies on some notion of 'true knowledge' or 'ideology' or 'humanity' to advance an argument against the concept of competence.

From the Foucauldian perspective the question is rather one of exploring what work the discourse and practice of competence might do. As we have seen the important issues here are ones of surveillance, discipline and power/knowledge. These form the basis of the following discussion.

For Usher and Edwards (1994) the pronouncements of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ), the lead body in the formation of competence based education, are to be interrogated in terms of the ways in which they reframe ideas about knowledge, in relation to performance. In this way they argue, we may see the statement that providing for progression in levels of competence 'does not imply building into the requirements of an NVQ knowledge and understanding *beyond the needs of the employment to which the award relates'* (NCVQ 1988: 10) in terms of the role it performs in marginalising knowledge and understanding unrelated to workplace performance. By this means they argue that the operation of competence effectively excludes forms of potentially resistant and oppositional knowledge and in doing so creates the subjects most suited to its operation - docile bodies. This is not an uncontested operation however. As Usher and Edwards point out, there are activities, they cite law and education as examples, where qualification based upon pre-defined performance would simply not be acceptable or appropriate. In these and similar occupations a whole body of knowledge exists which is simply not amenable to rendering into competence. In these cases the exclusion of such knowledge would render competent performance impossible. This is, in the view of these authors, a kind of 'return of the repressed' (1994: 105) of knowledge. Similarly, in relation to the notion of transferability, which is part of the discourse of the modern enterprise economy, there exist serious problems with regard to the degree to which narrowly conceived competences can assist with the kind of problem solving that is alleged to be needed.

Among the responses to these challenges has been the furthering of the range of possibilities by including the concept of 'generic' competencies which were previously considered to be attributes of the person, and an increasing challenge to educators to define just what it is that they are trying to do, as reflected in the quote from Jessup at the head of this section.

For some, and here again we may cite Barnett (1994), the development of competencies is just a continuation of the process of vocationalism that has long been a part of the educational scene. As such it is a symptom of the march of instrumental reason that characterises the era of late capitalism. However, following Foucault we might also see it as a distinct moment in the development of subjectivity. For Usher and Edwards this is achieved through its projection as a 'progressive' form of practice, through its articulation in humanistic language and practices of meeting human 'needs'. As we saw in chapter two the language of humanistic education has provided an important counter to the language of the mainstream, placing as it does an active subject at the heart of the enterprise. Indeed its power is seen in its partial appropriation by the critical education project of Willmott. In this way we may see the use of 'humanistic' practices such as student centred learning within the discourse of competence giving the latter its power:

> 'The assessment of performance through competence, articulated within the dominant liberal humanist discourse is powerful in sustaining a regime of truth and in itemising and normalising the behaviour of people in the workplace. Discipline and governance are exerted as the ever more 'humane' exercise of power' (Usher and Edwards 1994: 108)

Indeed the very term competence is one which entails its obverse, incompetence, It is hard to argue with the term since its opposite (if that is really what it is) is pejorative, no one would want to champion incompetence. It has in itself then a persuasive, seductive (Bauman 1992) power. In this it is the source of a discipline and a self-discipline; discipline in the sense of an apparatus of public surveillance technology (check lists etc.) that at once itemises and demands a competent performance, and self-discipline in the sense that standards are known to self and a constant self appraisal is required. In a chilling phrase Usher and Edwards put it thus:

> 'In operating within a discourse of competence, learners themselves become the subjects of their own surveillance; like the prisoners in the cells of the Panopticon they sit in judgement upon themselves. In the discourse and practices of competence-based qualifications, they are disciplined through self-discipline. Through them power is exercised over them' (1994: 110)

In the domain of management education this discourse has perhaps best been expressed through its articulation with the discourses of enterprise and excellence. A discussion of this articulation forms the last part of this chapter.

Competence, Enterprise, Excellence

Since the time of the second Conservative victory the notion of enterprise has been a central feature of the social and economic discourse of Britain (Gamble 1988). In essence the argument is that the permissive and anti-enterprise culture that had been fostered since the end of the Second World War had become a serious obstacle to reversing the all too evident decline of the British economy.

Attempts to operationalise a new enterprise order have taken the form of an enlargement of the market sector, at the expense of the public sector, and the introduction of the discourse of the market into practically every sector of the economy. At the same time the vision of the enterprising self has come into view. Here the qualities of self-reliance, personal responsibility and risk-taking are regarded as human virtues and promoted as such. As Keat (1990) writes, these two strands of the contemporary discourse of enterprise are interwoven:

> 'On the one hand, the conduct of commercial enterprises is presented as a (indeed the) primary field of activity in which enterprising qualities are displayed. And given that these qualities are themselves regarded as intrinsically desirable....this seems to valorise engagement in such activities and hence more generally the workings of a free market economy. On the other hand, however, it is also claimed that in order to maximise the benefits of this economic system, commercial enterprises must themselves be encouraged to be enterprising, i.e. to act in ways that fully express these qualities. In other words it seems to be acknowledged that enterprises are not fully enterprising and enterprising qualities are thus given an

> instrumental value in relation to the optimal performance of a market economy' (1990: 3-4)

Gordon (1991) suggests that by this means the notion of enterprise has become the pinnacle of the thrust that began with the idea of efficiency and has become an approach capable:

> 'of addressing the totality of human behaviour, and thus, of envisaging a coherent, purely economic method of programming the totality of governmental action' (1991: 43)

In other words, enterprise is a form of governmentality. Rather than being simply equated with the project of Thatcherism it can be seen to have no simple originary point or 'belongingness' in neo-liberal thought. Instead we may see it as an intersection of discourses and programmes developed outside the field of official government. It has certainly formed a central role in the restructuring of management discourse.

As Wood (1989) tells us, one of the most distinctive features of 'new wave management', that which is reflected in our case study, is the shift it attempts to initiate from 'reactive to proactive postures' (ibid 387) and the new forms of work based identity it tries to forge amongst *all* members of the organization. For Wood the appeal of excellence has as much to do with the cultural reconstruction of work based identities as with the 'values of technologies or organizational forms they propose' (ibid 387).

This is well expressed in the literature of cultural 'excellence' (e.g. Peters and Waterman (1982). Here culture is narrowly defined in terms of shared values and is unambiguously portrayed as the answer to the problems created by the increasingly dislocated nature of global capitalism. Thus we may see new wave management as being concerned with changing values, norms and attitudes in order that people make the 'right' contribution to the success of the organization for which they work. Excellent or strong cultures are those which enable organizational members to identity with the goals of their organization. In this way as Willmott (1993) argues, 'corporate culturism' (516) goes beyond behaviour but rather seeks the hearts, minds and souls of its targets. In this it has a moral as well as a managerial significance:

> 'When corporate cultures are 'strengthened' employees are encouraged to *devote* themselves to its values and products, and to assess their own worth in these terms. By promoting this form of devotion, employees are simultaneously required to recognise and *take responsibility* for the relationship between the security of their employment and their contribution to the competitiveness of the goods and services they produce...What, in effect, advocates of corporate culture mean by the strength of culture is its lack of contamination by rival "ends" or values to which the discretion of employees might otherwise be "misdirected"' (1993: 522)

Throughout the present century many schemes have been advocated by a plethora of schools of thought which attempt, both consciously and unconsciously, to eradicate conflict and contestability from organizational life through integrating the work-based subject and the organization. The manager has played a central role in these schemes. Whether we look at Mayoite Human Relations, neo-Human Relations, or the Quality of Working Life movement, there is a clearly explicated view that there is a possibility, indeed a necessity, to reconcile the needs and desires of management and workers through the deployment of their own particular expertise. In effect whether articulated in terms of a need for 'belongingness' (Mayo et al) or a desire for 'self-actualisation' (Maslow, Herzberg et al.) what may be seen to unite these projects is a concern with the production and regulation of subjectivities. Miller and Rose (1988) tell us that they each construct:

> 'images of the enterprise, techniques of management, forms of authority, and conceptions of the social vocation of industry which can align the prevailing cultural values, social expectations, political concerns and personal ambitions...They have provided means for linking together changing political rationalities and objectives, the ceaseless quest of business for profitability and a basis for managerial authority, with interventions aimed at the subjectivity of the employee' (1988: 172)

The excellence project is firmly established on this trajectory. It follows in the footsteps of its predecessors in seeking to construct a vision of the organization as an organic unity, but it does so through the articulation of a new vocabulary of the employment relationship in which the workers' relation to his or her work is

reimagined in line with prevailing ethical systems, political rationalities and the profitability imperative. Within the discourse of excellence the internal world of the enterprise is reconceptualised as one in which productivity is to be improved, production and service quality assured, flexibility enhanced, and innovation developed through the active engagement of the self-fulfilling impulses of the organizational members.

Critics of the excellence movement have stressed its similarity with the previous discourses of human relations and have argued that it is merely an old tune on a new fiddle. However this stress on continuity misreads the 'new ways to be' created by the new discourse. Whereas within the discourse of human relations the worker was considered to be a *social* being in search of social fulfilment through belongingness, in the new 'entrepreneurial order' (Miller and O'Leary 1986) the worker is presented as an individual in search of meaning at work. As Willmott argues:

> 'Self-direction is commended but, crucially, its scope and course is dictated and directed by the construction of employee commitment to core corporate values' (1993: 524)

In this way 'Excellent' organizations seek to cultivate 'Enterprising subjects' - autonomous, self-regulating, but productive individuals:

> '...governing the business organization in an enterprising manner involves cultivating enterprising subjects - autonomous, self-regulating, productive, responsible individuals -through the simultaneous loose/tight 'enabling and empowering vision' articulated in the everyday practice of the organization' (duGay and Salaman 1992: 626)

The enterprise culture operates through the principles of self-awareness, with the promise of self-improvement through remodelling, creating the enterprising self.

> 'Becoming a better worker is represented as the same thing as becoming a more virtuous person, a better self' (duGay and Salaman 1992: 626)

The enterprising self is a calculating self; a self that calculates about itself and that works upon itself in order to better itself and find meaning. This practice of calculation is perhaps nowhere better stated than in the concept of competence. Here

we may see the intersection of economic success, career progress and personal development in one seductive package.

Interestingly for our discussion the competencies said to be needed by the contemporary manager are those of the wise gardener - nurturing his/her charges to fruition as fully developed, creative, enterprising, entrepreneurial subjects.[4]

This chapter has been concerned with the development of a further critical strand in the debate about management and management education. In place of the dualities of the extant approaches a more nuanced approach has been explored which draws attention to the constitution of management as a discourse and a practice. Some of the important discourses have been explored.

At this point it might be objected that the vision presented here is every bit as totalizing as those it seeks to replace, leaving little or no room for resistance or self-determination. Far from presenting new avenues for exploration, it is said, this form of explanation merely draws attention to the impossibility of escape. All are trapped in discursive cages and the role of the theorist is merely to describe the limits of the subject's imprisonment. In this way it is argued the role of the theorist as critic is effectively denied; as Habermas (1987) put it 'why fight'? For example Alcoff (1988) claims that post-structuralist theories such as this deny:

> '..the subject's ability to reflect on the social discourses and challenge its determinations' (1988: 417)

However, the work of Laclau (1990) and others draws attention to the element of indeterminancy present in the constitution of subjects through discourse. As we have already seen the meaning of linguistic categories, and thus material practices, are overdetermined by language practices, therefore there can never be a complete closure or determination of the former. While all meaning is discursive, it is impossible for any particular discourse to exhaust the meaning of a particular social practice. In this way the experience of individual mangers is complicated by the multiplicity of

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[4] Jerzy Kozinski got here first in his satirical novel Being There (1970), in which the pronouncements of a gardener become the words of a 'wise' president.

interpretations available in the form of competing discourses. Holmer-Nadesan (1996) puts it thus:

> 'The subject's identity is not pre-given as the structural intersection of social structures, Rather, with each articulation (in speech and practice) the subject invokes his/her identity by drawing upon discursive forms but always/already partially. The inability to fully determine the identities of self and practice has the effect of engendering space for contingency and for choice' (1996: 52)

This localization effect is just what genealogy attempts to unearth, the actual practices of identity construction in their detail, replete with elements of resistance or not, depending on the local conditions.

In the next chapter, the role of a course of management education in the production of such discourses and practices is considered in detail.

Chapter Four: The getting of wisdom?

> 'The question (overt or implied) now asked by the professional student, the State, or institutions of higher education in no longer "Is it true"? but "What use is it"?...This creates the prospect for a vast market for competence in operational skills' (Lyotard 1984:48)

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with putting some flesh on the bones of the framework outlined in the previous chapter. To that end it represents an attempt to utilise that post-structuralist frame to examine the development and operation of a programme of management education.

Context and method

The context for the study is a New University in the South of England (Sandbourne). In line with the methodological issues discussed in chapter one, this was not chosen on the basis of its representativeness, but as a theoretical sample (Glaser and Strauss 1967). I was interested in management education, they were in that business, ergo they are a theoretical sample. This seems justified since I make no general claims, rather my interest is in the particular. Also the course was developed at a time (1986) when the sense of identity crisis that has been the theme of this dissertation was becoming ever more tangible and I surmised that this would leave its mark upon the course in ways which perhaps more established courses would not yet bear.
At a more pragmatic level this was a site which was open to me and therefore presented no problems of access.

Specifically in relation to this research, this was a site where I had experienced the sense of identity crisis to which I have alluded. I also knew it to be a site where there had been attempts to address the issues that have been the themes of this dissertation. The bulk of this chapter is therefore concerned with a consideration of these attempts.

I recognise of course that these points are not necessarily plusses in terms of doing research, indeed sometimes I felt a little too immersed, but overall I feel I have

produced an account which would not necessarily have been enhanced by being someone else or somewhere else.

The development of an epistemology

This short genealogy is put together on the basis of extended, unstructured interviews with the three principal architects of the MBA course, similar interviews with a number of students and from the documentary record. The focus is on the discourses and practices of that course. It begins, at least publicly, with the then principal of the then Institute of Higher Education making a typically grandiloquent gesture in nominating a team of staff to put together an MBA course to serve the needs of local business. As one of the architects (#1) told me, this was in the context of a total lack of post-graduate courses and no real research activity to speak of. However, there was a good deal of experience of developing and running a Diploma in Management Studies (DMS) course and this was seen as a foundation.

From the beginning there was a sense among the team of wanting to do something 'different':

> 'We all knew what MBAs were supposed to be about and that they were crap as far as some people were concerned..Our view was that we wanted to be developing managers rather than analysts and we were clear about that' (architect #1)

Here is reflected the sense of concern that was abroad at the time (e.g. Hayes and Abernathy 1980) - that MBAs were not sufficiently focused on the needs of business and that this was a matter of the curriculum of the typical course being too heavily weighted towards analysis and technical issues at the expense of 'people management skills, ethics and political management ' (Financial Times, Tuesday April 9th: 15). It was also a reflection of the developing critique that we have already considered and charted in our critical approaches to management education. Significantly, one of the principal external advisors to the course architects was one John Morris, a man who had already made a mark in the development of the 'developmental humanism' approach (Morris and Burgoyne 1973). In addition, one of the architects (#3) of the course had completed his doctoral thesis at a Polytechnic where another of the 'gurus'

of this approach (Pedler) was a major player. Returning to the first of these points, a U.S. contributor to the public debate remarked:

> 'As a recent MBA I can state that my previous work experience and MBA program left me unprepared to contribute much for the first three years in the company. My MBA program served to develop my analytical and financial skills but did not emphasise the development of my managerial skills. The irony is that now most of my day is spent managing and problem solving with a myriad of personalities' (Debate 1992:132)

This is a rather damning indictment of the mainstream, technicist approach that was described in chapter two and which was operationalised in terms of a 'professional education model' (Raelin 1994), developed largely as a result of two earlier foundational reports (Gordon and Howell 1959, Pierson 1959) and which was borrowed from extant models of developing professional practice: law, medicine, the ministry etc. Here, as we have seen, was a distinctive vision of the identity of the manager.

The critique seems, on the face of it, rather paradoxical. Here was a model of management, organization and education supposedly founded upon observation of, and research in, the 'real world' being criticised by that real world. However, in line with the perspective presented earlier in this dissertation we may view it as a response to the changing rationalities of government. From a view of management as being primarily concerned with tight control and command of the body of the worker, there was developing, as we saw in chapter two, a new conception of governmentality in which control of the subject was to be exercised through knowledge of the subject. In this way we may see the ostensible turn away from the 'hard' analytical skills towards the 'softer' areas of interpersonal relationships as part of that shift.

Sandbourne's architect's response to the challenge was to accept the 'blame' in the sense of 'recognising' that there were shortcomings in the mainstream approach, but proposing that they could be countered or at least moderated by the addition of elements drawn from elsewhere. As Willmott (1994) notes, this is not a unique approach:

> 'Given the force of criticisms being directed at established approaches to management education in the UK, North America and elsewhere, it is notable

> how few management academics are willing to defend the status quo, and yet continue to teach as if they are fully committed to it. Texts are revised but not abandoned or radically transformed. There has been no robust defence of existing criteria or teaching methods - for example on the grounds that a narrow function based approach is entirely appropriate, or perhaps because the critics simply misunderstand or caricature what is actually present' (1994:114)

For Willmott, as a self-styled critical intellectual who wants to revitalise Marxism, the answer to the challenges facing management education is to embrace a form of critical action learning. For our local architects revision takes the form of a similarly add-on approach but one which is less self-consciously critical:

> 'We had a kind of creative zeal at that time and wanted to do something different...we wanted to give them that [the traditional model] but we wanted to give them something more' (architect #1)

The 'something more' turns out to be a variant of the action learning model outlined by Raelin (1994). In describing the genesis of this architect #1 puts it in relation to the contribution of architect #3:

> 'He brought a clear view about how necessary it was to do good research and did some good research, he came up with some good authors, some good work, that we found a good foundation to work from. Boyatzis at the time was virtually unheard of in this country really and he [Architect #3] found him and actually photocopied pages out of Boyatzis and pasted them together and said 'look, this is what I have found what do you think?' [also] I remain sold on the idea of this thing that John Burgoyne does about the meta qualities of the hypothetical manager, the ideal manager, that is something that at masters level and MBA in particular that you are trying to get at those things - it's difficult to define but they are the things that are the foundations for developing knowledge and skill and ability - and they are deeply hidden in the brain in a sense; they are the mental agility, the creativity, the self-knowledge and so on that he describes' (architect #1)

In line therefore with the implications of the critique being offered up, the Sandbourne architects, rather than mount a thoroughgoing defence of the status quo, adopt a

position of incorporating elements of humanistic education and in doing so take the view that they are enhancing the potential of course members to be 'ideal managers'. Interestingly, they were encouraged in this endeavour by members of the validating body, CNAA. Although this body had course guidelines which until then had been regarded as fairly rigid and which insisted that some 70% of course content should be of a 'functional' nature, the course architects got a clear message that they were being encouraged to do something else, a point that was subsequently reinforced by the validation of the course and glowing praise from the panel. Having said that there was a good deal of debate at the validation event around the loading and sequence of events. As one of the architects put it:

> 'When we first developed the programme we put all of the basic functional knowledge at the front end, that was what they learned first, then they went through a much less certain process, strategic management, which is where you try to merge it all, and then ended up with the Adaptive Manager Programme (AMP) which is about all the less certain things, and the people who were judging it [the CNAA panel] said this is the wrong way around, you know.. this is low level, first level stuff, you know, people need to be able to handle their time, manage their stress, at the beginning of an MBA programme... and so we had to argue quite strongly that we were talking about something that belonged at the end, and I remember I said we were about *making tough managers, not hard managers*...there is this higher level that we were instinctively aware of that we were trying to develop in the third year of the programme, that others said were study skills...one of the conditions of approval was that we would review the sequence...we have and we haven't changed it' (architect #1) [emphases added]

The source of this sequencing was said to be the work of writers such as Burgoyne, who had argued for the revaluation of traditional forms of knowledge, arguing that what were generally prized and rewarded as being the higher forms of knowledge were in fact the basic levels of 'real' knowledge, that what education should be about was the 'freeing up' of people's thinking in order to release their latent potential. In this Burgoyne and his co-workers drew explicitly on the work of Rogers (1967, 1983) and other strands of humanistic psychology. However, as Usher and Edwards (1994)

point out we may see this movement as part of the discourse of contemporary governmentality in the sense that in drawing upon the grand narrative of the maximised and fulfilled self, that discourse ties the subject ever more tightly to the project of the discourse - a project which is revealed as ultimately conservative and conforming.

What is being alluded to in the discourse of the architects is a notion of the authentic subject, as it were, pre-existing its creation in society and capable of being brought to the surface (liberated?) by some means. The means are, as the reader might anticipate, rooted in reflection upon experience in order to reach a level of self-awareness. However as we saw in chapter three, the distinction between self-awareness and self-formation suggests that this surfacing is less likely to be an unambiguous liberation than a confessional practice which will tie the created subject ever more tightly to the orthodoxy of organization. By refusing to engage in the structured realities of organizational life, in which differences and division are not merely symptomatic of bad interpersonal relationships, but very real differences in access to goods, status, prestige etc, the architects reproduce the discourse of enterprise.

Before discussing these means in detail it is worth examining the other source of research evidence that was utilised in the making of the course. This was an extensive (although how influential is a matter of dispute between the architects) consultation with local employers. This took the form of face to face meetings and the circulation of a questionnaire. From these it was gleaned that:

> 'The course should provide a professionally relevant programme of development at the Masters level which enhances managerial effectiveness. As a view of management education this is hardly novel. However, turning this into an organizing principle for curriculum development has proved to be problematic; for within management education conceptions of relevance and managerial effectiveness and of how these might best be provided for remain controversial' (CNAA submission document February 1987, Vol 1:18)

At this point the literature on 'what managers do' and the stated needs of the local employers meet. As we have already seen the former presents a picture of the manager

as a 'fixer' who spends most of his/her time talking, listening and politicking rather than rationally planning and coldly executing policy. From the latter:

> 'Our discussions with employers indicate that graduates from our MBA programme are likely to have responsibility at a senior level, either within a functional area or across part of a division of his/her organization. They are likely to work within a fairly ill-structured and turbulent environment and be called upon to:
>
> exercise creative leadership
> set objectives
> modify complex systems
> work across functions increasingly within a strategic context
> tackle ill-defined issues
> identify themes and patterns
> resolve intractable problems
> (ibid :20)

What is particularly interesting here is just how transparent the course architects were prepared to be in their discussion of the indeterminancy of the management task. Rather than argue explicitly for an unequivocal matching of the course syllabus to some notion of 'what managers really ought to do', they embrace 'messiness' and make that a key theme of the flagship element of the course. In this they place an active, enterprising, entrepreneurial subject at the heart of the enterprise. The focus becomes more of 'what managers ought to be', in the light of the acknowledged messiness of organizational life, and their anticipated role as they raise their nose from the grindstone and fix their eyes upon the stars.

The teams response to their 'discoveries' is the 'something different' alluded to earlier:

> 'What this calls for, as Boyatzis (1982), Boydell and Pedler (1981), Cunningham (1987), Pedler, Burgoyne and Boydell (1986), Stewart (1984) and Toffler (1985) have argued in their various ways, is the development of personal wisdom and the ability to:
>
> cope with high levels of uncertainty
> explore the future

anticipate and manage change

operate effectively in a political context

take responsibility for managing one's own development

The development of these competencies forms the basis of the AMP in year three which comprises a variety of task based activities...*Arguably the most important quality is the ability to review, evaluate and develop one's own competence and effectiveness,* and we have attempted to provide for this throughout each part of the programme' (ibid: 20-21) [emphases added]

In relation to this notion of competence architect #3 was keen to stress the serendipity of its formation and the understanding that the course team brought to it:

'We were aware at that time that there was a good deal of scepticism about MBAs and in that context the work of people like Boyatzis was helpful in the sense of focusing attention on things like values, things like beliefs, the softer end of management rather than the kind of quantitative...takes you away from the GMAT for example...so that was...I found the book in the library and in a sense it became the rhetoric...so it was one of those happenstances really ...there was this notion of a competent manager, right, so the notion of competence got introduced, though *not* in the sense it subsequently came to have, the sense which was given to it by that wonderful man Gilbert Jessup...well I mean what they did was to er hijack the term really, so to us competence meant something that was somehow difficult to ..um.. you couldn't pin it down, it was ..um.. you couldn't follow a reductionist view of management and business studies, it was something which was essentially uncertain, you might say contested, certainly open ended, transformational and the like' (architect #3)

Architect #3 uses heavy irony here in his reference to the work of Jessup. For him, as for Barnett (1994), there is a sense of the word and the idea being hijacked and turned to purposes that it was not originally intended to have, The process by which this had happened apparently eluded our architect, although Barnett offers a Habermasian account whereby 'the world we have lost' is further being eroded by the forces of instrumental reason. On this account there are two rival versions of competence:

academic competence which is similar to architect #3s version, and which is marked by the students mastery within a discipline, and operational competence, which is marked by a narrowly conceived economic purpose to learning. As we saw in chapter three it is this latter definition that has come to dominate thinking and practice in the area of management education.

Similarly, in relation to the term of 'wisdom', both architects #1 and #3 voiced the course teams' commitment to their role in the development of this as a key managerial attribute. Barnett too values wisdom as a goal, indeed a virtue of higher education and, again drawing upon Habermas, considers wisdom as some kind of integration between knowing, reflection and chosen action, a view which is mirrored by the architects with their talk of the adaptive manager, the tough manager, the manager with developed meta qualities.

To the extent that wisdom is as he describes it, Barnett argues that modern, instrumental forms of knowledge ('mere technique') rule it out of court, or, in the language of the architects have 'hijacked' it. Barnett does not however argue that the very practices of gaining wisdom have heralded its demise, as I shall do below, but prefers a more structural explanation in which:

> 'The very human interest lacking in wisdom - purposive/instrumental - is colonizing alternative interests which would otherwise have encouraged wisdom...wisdom as a form of deep reflection, collective exchange, and a recognition and even a critique of inner values, is put in jeopardy. Indeed it ebbs away; it is surplus to requirements' (1994:151,153)

However, we might equally argue that the getting of wisdom is another means of positioning the subject such that the subject is more closely aligned with the rationalities and requirements of the excellent organization, an organization which is increasingly marked by dislocation and indeterminancy. On this reading wisdom is less an exploration of self and ones inner values in a kind of social vacuum, than a realignment of self with an externally derived order, albeit one that masquerades as being internally derived.

In the next section I explore just how the notions of competence and wisdom sketched out by the course team became a teaching and learning programme, and the implications of the forms of practice that this engendered.

The development of a pedagogy

> 'The central theme of year three is the effective manager' (CNAA submission 1987 Vol 1:30)

The focus in this section is on the adaptive manager programme (AMP) since it was here that the ethos of developmental humanism came to greatest prominence. As architect #3 remarked:

> 'This was an activity in search of a term really ...um....we wanted a part of the programme which dealt with the essential uncertainty, open endedness..um...the turbulence of change and all those sorts of things, and we had some activities in mind which were things like managing culture, managing uncertainty, managing the future, all those sorts of things, and we wanted to collect those together and I can remember sitting down with [members of the course team] and during that the notion of the adaptive manager was created...and really that was borrowed from Toffler 'cos I think there was a book called the Adaptive Corporation or something like that. We were a bit reluctant to accept it in the first instance because kind of adaptive also could mean like you know...you adapt to something that happens to you...and so the discussion really was about how can we make adaptive mean something was proactive, because people had got so used to using that they were cynical about it, so, in the end we convinced ourselves that adaptive could mean this kind of forward looking thing about being able to anticipate change as well as cope with it when it happened' (architect #3)

> 'The kind of managers that I think we sought to grow would be capable of withstanding the pressure of what the environment forced upon them, and we wanted them to be able to initiate change, but not see it as a constant need;

> that you have to be constantly influencing your environment, but rather that you can manage your environment, there is a difference there' (architect #1)

Here in these two statements is the ethos of the AMP which drives the third year of the course:

> 'In year three the course moves from a central concern with the functional [year one] and strategic[year two] aspects of managerial competencies to the development of personal qualities. Course members select their own programme of developmental activities...*from the menu of themes in the AMP*...The AMP programme comprises a variety of task based activities, some undertaken individually and some within small groups. Each of these activities are concerned in their various ways with developing the capability of course members to explore the future, manage themselves, cope with uncertainty, anticipate and manage change and operate more effectively in a political context. Course members choose from a range of activities under each of these headings and these include self-assessment, peer counselling, goal setting, action planning, investigative work and presentational work involving a variety of media' (CNAA submission Feb 1987, Vol 1: 27-28) [emphases added]

From these quotes we may see that the AMP pushes at the boundaries of what I have here described as the mainstream, but only insofar as to take somewhat more seriously the critiques offered up by varieties of the critical approaches. In short, the instrumental vision of managerial identity is not challenged but an add-on approach is taken in order to equip managers with the skills they are assumed to need in this turbulent world of late-modernism. There is a clear resonance here with the notions of do-it-yourself identity outlined earlier.

The teaching package that was developed to deliver this vision was to offer a menu of 12 topics under headings. The rationale for this menu was described as a certain nervousness on the part of the architects for embracing action learning as a full-blown principle throughout the programme because:

> 'It didn't have enough content in it really, *it didn't force people to look at things that were important*...yes adaptive manager, yes open ended, yes not rational, but whoever they were they would have to deal with power, they

> would have to deal with culture, right, they'd have to deal with uncertainty, they'd have to deal with the future, *so there was a kind of ruling in and a ruling out'* (architect #3)

On the face of it this betrays a certain doubt as to the mission on which they were embarked, there is an adherence to the do-it-yourself nature of identity but a mistrust in the individuals' ability to identify their own needs and thus choose the appropriate resources. Following Townley we may see this process of ruling in and out as a conduit of pastoral power:

> 'Needs are not self-revelatory, but have to be interpreted, either internally as the self deciphers internal, or, as is more usual, external needs....Within this scenario, interpreters of needs are privileged as experts' (1995a:282)

This mistrust and reliance on expertise can also be seen in the teams choice of menu topics. They are described as 'areas of inherent difficulty' and are to be interrogated individually and a written report produced. Alongside this the topic is to be presented to one's group:

> 'We started saying - *they need to know about things like this don't they*, how can we develop creativity, how can we develop self-awareness, and then we thought of the idea of giving people a task and making them do it themselves, we were already into the Kolb cycle so that was sort of in the back of our minds and I still have a view...the whole course is one big Kolb cycle and almost every unit is a Kolb cycle...they read a book they test it out, they feel what it feels like to have tested it and then they reflect on it, or, we give them an experience or we get the students to give each other an experience of a presentation and so on....so in that way its like a wave I suppose with lots of little things going on inside it but there is a sense of that is part of what we thought we were doing, we were making people not just sit and listen, or not just do, they are having to read, they are having to report back and in a work context, as well we were anxious that it was...I suppose that it had a face validity, that it was seen to be applicable to a workplace, that was important as well' (architect #1)

This last point reminds us that the architects were constrained too in what they could do, this is after all a product which is to be sold in the market place and as such must

be seen to have the right identity. The rationale for this element of the course is presented in the CNAA submission in the following way:

> 'The AMP sets out to involve participants in a range of learning opportunities designed to help managers become more flexible, more adaptable, more creative and *thus more successful* in their own management activities. Furthermore, the programme is designed to enhance the overall course philosophy of helping students to *regain responsibility* for their own management development. Specifically within this programme opportunities exist for participants to equip themselves to manage this process' (CNAA submission 1987 Vol 2 emphases added)

Interestingly by the cohort of 1993/94 this same paragraph had transplanted itself to the course handout and 'regain' had become 'gain', a change that no-one I spoke to could recall being responsible for.[5] In the latter too we find the following:

> 'A key feature of the AMP is the *opportunity* at the end of each task to present your findings to the rest of the cohort...the range of tasks represents a variety of opportunities in terms of methods of investigation and management skills and competencies addressed. You are encouraged to present your findings by the use of an innovative report vehicle. Examples might be by the use of video recordings, exhibition or dramatised performance' (Course handout 1993/4 emphases added)

Assessment of such presentations is conducted on the basis of staff panel appraisal, although there was some experimentation with peer group assessment with the early cohorts. This was not well received, with students apparently preferring the 'objectivity' of the course team. However, one of the architects commented:

> 'For me there was a big issue about us sitting on judgement on what they were doing with their own personal work and telling them that this is 70% and this is 60%....I always have difficulty with that...and I know that sometimes I reflect in the mark the excellence of the individual rather than the excellence of the work in front of me. I know there's a lot of person behind the words,

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[5] In the external prospectus for the 1995 course this phrase had changed yet again into 'This unit is also designed to help students to become responsible for their own management development'.

> and I'm marking the person as much as the words so I think there's a problem unlike in more traditional forms of teaching and assessment' (architect #1)

The issues around group working too are seen as problematical:

> 'The other problem around assessment is the fact that this works because we give people tasks to do in groups....it would be nothing if it weren't done in groups and the groups include people...some of whom want to get a distinction and others who enjoy doing it at a different level, they enjoy the learning that they get but without stressing themselves so they don't put in the same energy and apparent effort that others do and there's a regular, like weekly, concern that one student or another expresses..Two weeks ago we had a student, and now he's withdrawn from the course, his colleagues came to see us and said he's not pulling his weight in the second task, he did the same in the first task but everyone gets the same mark and we didn't complain but this time he's not getting away with it, it's just not fair...he went off on holiday at Christmas, and that's saying something about their culture that you're not supposed to go off on holiday at Christmas..but what really capped it for them was that he'd gone off for a long weekend skiing somewhere' (architect #1)

One might read these stories as the inevitable consequences of a liberal humanist attitude to learning and assessment, indeed the principal way in which such issues are dealt with is to remind the group that this is what 'real life' is like and that they have to learn to manage it. Alternatively, as here, the errant student is told that they just aren't doing what's required and that they should think about whether they want to stay with the programme. Given this is at the end of the programme and most students receive employer funding, this is a pretty big decision to make.

Another reading of the situation is to suggest that the mere acquisition of habits of reflexivity, wisdom, creativity and the rest of the lexicon of contemporary management is not enough. Rather they must be demonstrated, and publicly demonstrated, as having been acquired. Thus in line with the framework developed in chapter three we see students judged by the fullness and frankness of their

confessions, and by this means are positioned as educated managers. This may be demonstrated by a consideration of the formal assessment on the course.

Grades are awarded on the basis of:

> 'Content: did it [the presentation] demonstrate that effective research had been undertaken? Was there evidence of breaking new ground/developing new models to explain the perceived problems and opportunities within the task?
>
> Shared learning: how effectively did the presentation communicate with other course members the key learning points from the task?
>
> Presentation: was the approach used by the presenter(s) relevant to the task theme, effective as a means of communication, and was adequate documentation used to underpin the topic? (Course handout 1993/4)

On the face of it this is innocuous enough, even standard fare for such assessments, but in the subsequent discussions among the panel and interviews with architect #1, it was clear that what was to be rewarded most highly was a confessional practice in which people publicly acknowledged their 'needs' and set out a programme by which they would be met. For architect #1 this was the 'proper' use of the course. In recalling one student, whom he rated very highly, he told the story of how, at the last session, she had pulled her original application, read her 'reasons for wanting to do the course' and declared her former naivety in some detail. It was clear that this was the kind of benchmark against which others should be judged.

Overall grades for the AMP are arrived at by averaging the mark for the written report with that of the group presentation. However, all the architects and most of the interviewed punters expressed doubts about the equity of this scheme. From the punters there were worries about 'passengers going through the motions' (punter #2) but still getting a good grade because they happened to be in a good group. From the architects there were the same worries and also the anxieties alluded to above by architect #1.

To this point it seems clear that the course is redolent with examples of discourses which reflect the discourse of needs identified by Townley. Despite their humanistic, even egalitarian, intentions the course architects nevertheless developed a regime of pastoral power by which students were continually positioned as people

who needed to know things, or were lacking in some in some way, or who needed remedial education. Further, these 'lacks' are continually needing to be acknowledged (confessed) and thus expunged. In their place is erected an edifice of the wise student, the student who knows. It is surely no accident that the students who were held to be the 'best', at least by architect #1, the course head, were those who produced clear evidence of having 'explored themselves'. By contrast he expressed very sincere regrets when he recalled students who had 'failed' in his view, by not taking the opportunity to explore themselves in the ways he thought appropriate.

Effects: the 'punters' perform

> 'The agency of domination does not reside in the one who speaks (for it is he who is constrained), but in the one who listens and says nothing: not in the one who knows and answers but in the one who questions and is not supposed to know' (Foucault 1981:62)

> 'The Adaptive Manager aspects were to many an exercise in amateur dramatics rather than a structured vehicle. There were many who were not too good at applying their 'acting' abilities and therefore did not apply themselves as best as they probably could and coasted through on the benefit of others. Some gave up on the course at this point and saw the remaining tenure of their relationship with the same as being an endurance test. A great pity for them' (punter #1)

In these two quotes we see the essence of the issues at hand. For Foucault the kind of relationship established between the architects and the punters is, contrary to the architects desires, one of domination, a domination secured by the very identity projects put into place by the architects, which *they* see as opportunities for self-discovery and development. In the second quote it is telling that punter #1, in common with others, should use the metaphor of the theatre in describing his experience, for it is the language of the theatre which is most redolent with talk of character, personas, and the becoming, temporarily, of someone else. The theatre analogy may also be one which indicates superficiality, a world of pretence, of the suspension of disbelief. Also interesting is the implicit contrast between the ways that

he viewed the process and the ways that others did the same, and also of others lack of acting abilities, a lack which seems to carry a certain degree of condemnation in the eyes of this student. Exploring these issues will enable us to discuss the effects that the AMP had upon those who were made subjects to/of it.

As I suggested in chapter three it is possible to view Foucault as having constructed a totalising scheme whereby the effects of power are inescapable. However, later poststructuralists (Knights and Vurdubakis 1994) have suggested that in making ourselves we are able to call upon a whole range of diverse discourses, some of which may be in tune with the locally dominant discourses, while others may be in some sense oppositional to those discourses. In addition discourses do not work upon blank slates but upon subjects with histories, biographies and interests derived from a myriad of social intersections.

For punter #1 there seems a concordance between his views and those of the AMP. In his expression of regret; 'a great pity for them' there seems an alignment, one might say an identification, with the aims of the programme. Against this he seems to suggest that those who chose to 'coast' missed out in some sense, but that this was their choice in some way, that they were free to choose not to identify or consume the products of the discursive formation on offer.

All of this suggests that, in line with Laclau (1990) and Hacking (1986), we may assert that the inherent dislocation of governmentality creates space or possibilities for the utilisation of the products of discourse. In contrast to those who would argue for the straightforward transmission and utilisation of ideologies we may argue that because there is a surplus of meaning and only a partial determination of the subject then there exist possibilities for the subject to adopt a number of positions relative to the dominant discourse. Hacking (1986) suggests that we view this as a framework of two mutually constitutive vectors; 'labelling from above' which here would be the needs based humanistic educative project of our architects, and 'the actual behaviour of those so labelled, which presses from below, creating a reality which every expert must face' (ibid: 234). These are not the old dualities of object/subject but are *mutually constitutive* of each other. As duGay (1995) puts it:

> 'The subject of the second vector has no 'proper' place of its own. It operates within a space delineated by, but not equivalent to, the first vector. Therefore

> it does not manifest itself through its own autonomous representations but in relation to its ways of 'using' or 'consuming' representations and technologies emanating 'from above'...By focusing on the tactics of those so-labelled it becomes possible to delineate the ways in which people remain 'other' within the very colonization that assimilates them' (1995:100)

However, as we have seen tactics such as these are not autonomous but are developed *in relation to* the discourse which is antagonising them. In this sense they remain within the ambit of that discourse, severely limited in their effects to free the users of those tactics from the capillary power of the discourse.

My research with the punters, in which I asked them to reflect in their own words on their MBA experience, reveals a range of tactics. For some there was clear identification with the stated aims of the course and a kind of confession:

> 'I know now that I was too narrowly focused on my area of expertise. The course enabled me to see things with a wider view, more strategically. I feel I am now able to contribute more' (punter #3)

This idea of a wider view, or a broader picture, was a common one among the students I talked to. This mirrors other published research which examined the developmental outcomes of MBA programmes[6] . In all cases students reported valued increases in confidence, self-esteem, personal credibility and independence.

However, we may note other voices who doubted the value of the process they were obliged to engage in. A number of students suggested disparagingly that the AMP was an exercise in amateur dramatics with which they engaged in the manner of resigned compliance rather than wholehearted acceptance. It was for these students, a game to be played. Indeed one of them commented that among his group it was seen as manipulation of the tutors to be engaged in the exercise:

> 'It was obvious what [he] wanted and so we gave it to him. It was clear that he wanted image rather than substance' (punter #3)

What seems to be suggested here is the surfacing of a different discourse with which to counter the labelling from above. This was articulated in terms of a gulf between

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[6] An example here is Hilgert A (1995) 'Developmental Outcomes of an executive MBA programme' Journal of Management Development 14 (10) pp 64-76

the academics' knowledge and the students own knowledge of the 'real world' of business. By this means the 'expert' discourse was resisted and indeed, at least in the eyes of the students involved, subverted to their own ends, ends which were concerned with keeping their own, organizationally derived, identities intact. In this way they were able to use the vision of needing to manage the 'other' i.e. their subordinates in their organizations, as a counter to the challenge of the AMP discourse. For some this was voiced in complaints about the lack of structure and 'meat' on the AMP, for others there was a concern about the lack of interpersonal skills training to deal with 'real' problems.

When asked about the notion of 'wisdom' and what it meant on the course, one of the punters commented:

> 'I'm not sure that it should be an objective actually of an MBA course, to produce wisdom. Yes, higher levels of understanding certainly, synthesis, an integrative approach but I don't see wisdom necessarily as having a practical application. I see wisdom as a body that can stand alone, somebody who is wise doesn't necessarily have to go out and make practical applications in industry...I'm not too sure how the two sit together comfortably or integrate. I still see them maybe as separate, wisdom perhaps is something that I tend to understand or have a perception of as a traditional academic type model, wisdom, knowledge, not necessarily one that can be applied in a modern commercial industry...I don't think wisdom is a fashionable word, competence is a helluva fashionable word which maybe sums up some of things that we are saying, it's that ability to apply in an everyday work setting' (punter #5)

However, in no case was there a direct challenge to the process, nobody point blank refused to get involved with the essential aspects of the programme. The one person who did so left the programme after the first year after mounting no public challenge. In this way the tactics of the 'passengers' about whom both architects and punters expressed such concern start to make a different kind of sense. Far from being symptoms of laziness or the avoidance of self-discovery, they are revealed as a tactic for avoiding the colonization by discourses which were mistrusted. Even those who stayed with the programme and, on the face of it, identified with the ethos, refused to be drawn into some aspects of the programme. For example despite the exhortation to

produce innovative report vehicles, none of the punters I spoke to were willing to engage in such identity threatening activity, preferring the apparent mimicking of 'academic' or consultancy styles of presentation in which scientific distance was preserved.

In their various ways each of these tactics testify to a challenge to the dominant discourses of the AMP. Can we then say that the project has failed? Foucault would tell us that the question is the wrong one. The exercise of power demands freedom and that in this sense the very resistance proffered by the punters, their failure to take the programme seriously and their ironic distancing from its clutches, paradoxically enhance their reproduction of its central claims. By marking themselves out as figures who refuse to examine themselves or to publicly acknowledge the need for self examination, they reinforce that perception of themselves as those who lack, or need to know. In this way they become ever more the targets for technologies of government. In addition, by refusing the humanistic aspects of the programme they might also be seen to reinforce the technicist aspects of management. In some ways these effects are mediated by the liberal regime of the course, so that the competence movement has not yet forced itself too strongly into the assessment procedure. This is changing and at that time the true unintended effects of the discourse of liberal adult education will come home to roost. On that day the failure to examine oneself in accordance with the rules of the game will result in failing the course and thus irredeemably marking oneself out as 'unenterprising' and 'incompetent'. This is a clear example of the ways in which formations of power work ever more comprehensively *because* of the failure they create rather than being undermined by such failure. This then is the enduring legacy of the poststructuralist frame, in enabling us to understand why what we might think of as failure is in fact the conditions of possibility for power to exist at all, we are forced to consider again the ideas of power, failure, resistance etc with which we traditionally view social life.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

I set out to do a number of things in this research, the first was to explain the shape of management education to myself. This I have attempted to do through the critical examination of extant models of workplace and managerial identity.

Alongside this I have utilised models of understanding that attempt to go beyond existing ways of theorising issues such as identity and power and in doing so have attempted to illuminate the practices of identity production at work in the education of managers. Although perhaps not sufficiently developed in the text there was an attempt too to see how far such models could be taken or whether radical revisions needed to made in order to make them stand up. In particular one must ask whether Foucauldian analysis can stand alone or whether, as a number of authors have indicated, one needs to introduce material considerations in the form of 'interests' or 'motives' into the equation. In the case of management education it would seem likely that despite the case for the turn taken here one must take account of other, more materially based aspects of the making of managers. Further, Foucauldian analysis is often accused of leading to fatalism and despair by indicating the impossible nature of acting at all. This, to the extent to which it is so, is a serious issue which must be explored by all those who would seek to critique management education as presently conceived and practiced.

A related issue concerns the very future of management education as an enterprise. If, as Usher and Edwards (1994: 198) assert, 'there is no global, universal knowledge, only local, particular knowledges' then this would seem to undermine the present relationship between producer/educator and consumer/learner in ways which play into the hands of those who would characterise all management education as training, narrowly conceived. In this way rather than the celebration of this as a liberating, ludic, moment we may find ourselves presiding over the absolute demise of any form of education, as presently understood, at all.

For myself I feel that I now have a more complex set of understandings about this most peculiar of practices and in producing same have extended the boundaries of, at least my, knowledge. There remain many other unresolved questions, of course. For example, the personal and professional trajectories of the architects of the course are here left unexplored. The gendered nature of the identity of the Manager is also

disregarded here, although it certainly has an important bearing on the issues under consideration. Last, but certainly not least, we know little of what these managers so 'made up' actually do in the workplace, following their consumption of management education. Do they for example merely repeat the nostrums of their tutors, or do they continue to reflect on the process through which they have been? Alternatively do they merely see such a process as qualification-getting and do what they have always done. Indeed is this the preferred strategy of their employers? And what effects, intended or otherwise, do these potential strategies have?

These are questions which remain to be explored but which press urgently for our attention. I feel convinced that management is too important to be left to the managers and those utilitarians who would seek to merely mirror their perceptions in management education, although I recognise in making such a claim that I leave myself open to a charge of intellectual imperialism and hankering after foundational certainties. Ultimately a good deal rests on the shoulders of the Manager and it seems important that a plurality of views should address themselves to the constitution of what managers do. There are limits however and recent contributions to the debate seem to take themselves and the potential for change rather too seriously. As in other branches of education there is a need for urgent debate to define the limits and possibilities of practice. Hopefully this work is something of a contribution to such a debate.

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