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Management and Management Education: a Psychosocial Exploration

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ABSTRACT

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MANAGEMENT AND MANAGEMENT EDUCATION: A PSYCHOSOCIAL
EXPLORATION

by Paul Freedman

This thesis explores the interaction of changing forms of managerial identity and the experience of management education. It seeks to analyse the effects of such interaction in an effort to understand its dynamics and to develop approaches to management education that might enable that enterprise to be more satisfactorily configured. The approach taken is to firstly consider how changes in managerial identity are being shaped and theorised, in an attempt to develop a more adequate framework for incorporating aspects of managers' experience, and secondly, by deploying this framework to examine the experiences of a small group undertaking management education.

The organization of the work reflects this two-fold division, with the first two chapters considering the evidence for changes in the identity of managers and reviewing the extant approaches that are taken to understand such changes. In doing so certain limitations in these extant approaches are noted and a tentative framework for overcoming these is developed. The notions of experience, and the anxious defended self, it is argued, provide a more adequate way to grasp the complexities of contemporary managerial identities.

In the second part of the work (chapters three, four, five and six) the theoretical framework developed earlier is deployed to examine the experience of management education in the contemporary moment. The impact of changes in what it means to be a manager, the anxious experience that attends this and the ways in which these impact on the educative encounter are considered. The concluding chapter summarizes the main arguments of the thesis and some conclusions are drawn considering the positioning of contemporary managers in relation to management education and the ways in which such managers might be worked with.

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Prologue: A Fear of Flying?

*Come to the edge.
We might fall.
Come to the edge.
It's too high!
And they came
and he pushed
and they flew...*
(Logue 1996)

This poem, among others, is pinned on the wall of my office. It serves as a reminder to me, and perhaps a marker to others, of the educational approach that I attempt to enact. My reading of this poem is that it speaks both to the responsibility that I have as an educator, and to the importance of flying, which I take to be the active engagement with ideas and the cultivation of learning. It also speaks to the teaching and learning strategy I attempt to enact, which is one of encouraging and rewarding risk-taking, a disposition I hold as important, both in terms of learning and managing.

*All their lives in a box! What generations of masters, not meaning to be cruel
But needing their labour, taught these creatures such patience
That now though sunlight strikes on the eye's dark jewel
Or moonlight breathes on the wing they do not stir
But like the ghosts of moths crouch there.
Look it's a child's toy. There is no lid even,
They can climb, they can fly, and the whole world's their tree;
But hush they say to themselves, we are in prison.
There is no word to tell them that they are free,
And they are not; ancestral voices bind them
In dream too deep for wind to find them.*
(Anon)

This fragment of another poem also speaks to the educative world I inhabit. I use it in class occasionally, commonly in an attempt to get people to come to the edge. The managers I teach often recognise themselves in it, indeed the sentiment it invokes - getting 'out of the box' - is one they commonly report being exhorted to follow in their organizations.

However...

If expressions of doubt elicit deadly silence, fierce rebuttal, calumny, or disbelief then one can be sure he or she has tapped into a sacred fact that symbolizes something which to the believer must not be allowed to be doubted, let alone proven false (Stein 1994:180)

It is then an experience of puzzlement, and some pain, when I am, frequently, faced with masters in management students who enter the educative encounter, or at least my corner of it, seemingly unwilling to fly, or even to come to the edge. This unwillingness is manifested in a variety of ways, sometimes in terms of a friendly disengagement, at other times with a cold resentment, occasionally in outright hostility, not least to the use of poetry in a management classroom! Overall, something like anxiety appears to be the dominant emotion. Whatever the mode or degree of unwillingness, I commonly feel a mood of antagonism that I find troubling and which seems, to me, to sap the possibilities for 'real' learning, or at least learning appropriate to a higher education setting.¹

That this is a common experience among (many of) my colleagues is little comfort to me. I worry about what I am doing, whether I could do it better, and why many students are apparently antagonistic towards learning, particularly it seems, in my subject area of organizational behaviour. These same colleagues occasionally remark that this is what comes with the territory and that I should go and get myself a job in a social science department, after all, they say; 'these are management students - what can you expect? Just do what they want and expend your energies somewhere else, like trying to improve the department's RAE'.

I both understand and do not understand, am both amused by and appalled by such sentiments. Together with others (e.g. Willmott 1994b) it seems to me that management and management education is rather too important to be left to those who simply engage uncritically with manager/students on their own terms, not least in terms of the social and environmental effects that flow from contemporary management practices. Further, this appears to deny the purpose of higher education as I understand it.

Like Lather (1996), I find myself caught in a 'troubled space' between a humanistic and romantic notion of knowledge as the cure to a series of social ills, but an attraction to ideas that disrupt humanistic notions such as agency, will and liberation. In this I am both suspicious of the potentially oppressive results of humanism but wanting to avoid the fate

¹ I am aware that this is a highly, some might say hopelessly, romantic notion of education, but one that I am loath to abandon as an educator. For an alternative view see Usher and Edwards (1994:25).

Rorty (1985:177) ascribes to Foucault when he comments that ‘he forbids himself the tone of the liberal sort of thinker who says to his fellow citizens: “We know there must be a better way of doing things than this; let us look for it together” ’.

Mirroring my experience, Jones (1997) comments on the ‘benign incomprehension’ that is exhibited by undergraduate education students when introduced to poststructuralist notions of the constituted subject. This response she attributes to the pervasive commonsensism of the subject in/of education, a commonsensism that insists on the reinsertion of the humanist subject and a contemporary desire for clarity - a clarity that mirrors what is already known and can be quickly mapped onto existing experience, with as little pain as possible.

These themes of a desire for commonsensism and clarity seem to be highly significant too in the management classroom, indeed, seem likely to be rather more keenly felt and expressed given the ‘vocational’ nature of much management education. However, as I explore later, such desires and the practices that inform them are widely considered to have ‘failed’ in recent years, with managers and management educators commonly exhorted to work and teach in ‘different’ ways. Such exhortations have always been part of the critical vocabulary but have been joined by more mainstream voices, such that there is now a clamour, in many quarters, for managers to be taught, and to practice ‘differently’. Ironically, it is precisely the notion of ‘doing things differently’ that seems to lie at the heart of the trouble. The anxiety that is aroused in the classroom is one which apparently tends towards leaving things untouched, towards a denial of the need to do, or be, different(ly).

The issues that arise through this reflection concern how such ‘different’ ways might be worked with in the management classroom. In particular, how and why do manager/students come to be positioned/position themselves in relation to particular forms of knowledge, and what does this say about the nature of management, managers and education in the contemporary moment? These are the questions that drive this thesis. In particular, it is concerned with exploring the issue of how the apparent fear of flying exhibited by many manager/students is to be understood and worked with.

Chapter One: An Introduction

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. (Mercer 1991:43)

These are difficult times for managers². Their predicted, reported, or demanded demise has become the staple fare of a variety of popular and academic accounts; the issue of ‘what management is’, and ‘what managers do’, what can be termed the ‘identity’ of management, has become a central theme in a variety of debates within the fields of management and organization studies.

It has become commonplace to regard this domain, among others, as one in which there is an ‘identity crisis’. Recent changes in the industrial and occupational structures of western society have problematised the identity of a modern economy conceived of in terms of the dominance of large scale manufacturing industry, and the identity of the modern industrial manager defined as a white, male, person of a certain status (du Gay 1996). Such developments have revealed the ‘constructedness’ of ostensibly stable, unified and ‘natural’ economic identities. In doing so they have served to indicate that rather than being some ‘originary’, unchanging ‘base’, the ‘economic’ is a cultural and historically malleable category, and, thus, any economic identity, such as that of the manager, is a contingent identity. Viewed in this way, the dispositions and attributes constituting the manager must be approached as a series of historically specific assemblages without any underlying ‘essential’ or ‘natural’ form (du Gay 1996, Hollway 1991, Rose 1989, McNay 2000).

Such processes are well illustrated by work such as that of Jacques (1996). Through an analysis of the historical growth of industrialisation in the United States. Jacques shows how the category of ‘employee’, along with its corollary ‘management’, only came into being at a particular historical moment, a moment marked by fundamental changes in the nature of U.S. society. In this way the form that identities take is intimately bound up with their conditions of existence.

Addressing the contemporary conditions of existence of management, Pullen and Thomas (1999) have indicated that the identity of sovereign organizations conceived of in terms of hierarchically ordered structures, over which managers preside, has been increasingly problematised over the previous two decades by a series of developments. In particular, the

² I use the term managers, but it should be noted at the outset that my principal interest is in those normally termed middle managers, the paid salariat, rather than those of higher rank. It is this group that are seen to
Footnote continued on next page

threat/promise of global competition, turbulent markets and rapid change are argued to have dislocated such structures, such that rather than being seen, as previously, as the guarantors of order and efficiency, they are commonly viewed, by a range of critics, as the source of the problems faced by western organizations (MacIntyre 1981, Peters T. 1992). Importantly, for the present discussion, the resolution of such problems is increasingly seen to lie in the reworking of the managerial 'character':

The dominant discourses of organizational reform throughout this period [have] all placed enormous emphasis on the development of more flexible, responsive and entrepreneurial forms of conduct which would overcome the assumed stasis, rigidity and inefficiency of 'bureaucracy'. In particular they indicated that the required transformations were in large part dependent on the formation of certain attributes and dispositions amongst managerial staff. (du Gay 2000:63)

In this process the contingency and 'constructedness' of apparently given and timeless identities is revealed as the conditions of their existence are exposed and reworked. This is not to argue that the 'bureaucritique' discussed by du Gay is 'right', indeed, he mounts a thorough challenge to such a view, but is to draw attention to the fragile, historically contingent accomplishment that managerial identity represents.

It might be anticipated that the effects of such dislocation are likely to be ambiguous, since it both destroys and creates new identities. For example, Jacques proposes that the 19th century creation of the 'employee' erected both the possibility for the exercise of various forms of discipline and the vision of an autonomous individual. Similarly, the contemporary dislocation of the manager might be expected to unleash new articulations and identities, related perhaps to the erosion of the formal subordination of managers' other - the non-manager. It is an exploration of such articulations and identities that form the core of this work. In particular, it is concerned with delineating and examining the 'inhabiting' of managerial identities and their relation to management education, since it is in the post-experience educational encounter that many of these issues seem foregrounded. A further consideration concerns the ways in which such new ways to be might be worked with in the management education classroom.

Dislocation and the manager

Signs of such dislocation and new, ambiguous, articulations can be seen in recent research on the 'state' of middle management. In the face of organizational restructuring, largely premised on perceived developments in global competition and technology, such managers

bearing the brunt of the present situation, and are those typically to be encountered on programmes of management education.

are commonly portrayed as bearing the brunt of redundancies, experiencing high levels of job insecurity, having their roles and careers redefined, and suffering identity crises. Market-led change strategies are seen as responsible for the transformation of organizational landscapes and the roles of organizational members, particularly, it is argued, middle managers. For example Dietmann and Stead (2000:11) characterise the results of their investigations with a range of managers as follows:

They share a common feeling of not having much control over what is happening around them; similarly they perceive their levels of work performance to be merely average in contemporary work situations that clearly demand greater productivity, quality, excellence and efficiency. They share a sense of being overworked with a need to work long hours which apparently are thought to be neither particularly productive nor a source of satisfaction. Overall, they are not feeling especially good or bad, just somehow dissatisfied and insecure.

Other empirical investigations have reported more ambiguous results (e.g. Scase and Goffee 1989, Dopson and Stewart 1990, Newell and Dopson 1996, Thomas and Dunkerley 1999). Some of this work reveals a picture of demoralization and decline, while other accounts find evidence of 'new model' management in which the role has been positively transformed by new challenges and responsibilities.

A developing literature suggests that the claim that middle managers, and indeed management, are being reworked, may not rest entirely on empirical studies that map changes in the numbers and roles of those designated as managers (Grey 1999, Scarbrough 1998). What is at issue here is a shift in the 'image and ideal of managerial work' (Willmott 1984). On this view, what has been taken for granted for so long, the existence and persistence of management as an idea and an ideal, is under threat, and in many cases managers themselves are seen as the problem. As noted above, much contemporary and influential organizational language (e.g. Peters T. 1992) writes managers out of the equation, or attacks them as the source of all evil. Such critique is generally premised on a 'non-value added' perception of middle management. As Scarbrough and Burrell (1996:178) note, middle managers are accused of being:

costly, resistant to change, a block to communication both upwards and downwards.

They constantly underperform; they spend their time openly politicking rather than in constructive problem solving. They are reactionary, undertrained and regularly fail to act as entrepreneurs.

While much of this critique is made at the level of the character and behaviour of managers, what it also suggests is a collapse of faith in, and an erosion of, forms of, management knowledge, such that the historic coupling of the needs of capital accumulation and the

position of the managerial class is under suspicion. This is significant since such forms of management knowledge have served as the templates for both managerial practice and management education throughout the industrial world (Engwall and Zamagni 1998, Locke 1989). Such a collapse of faith has resulted in the exposing of the fragility of management knowledge and has unleashed a seemingly endless series of fads and fashions (Collins 2000), thus:

Far from emerging as a stable, confident and established set of techniques, management knowledge and science appear as fragmented and unstable...if the dream of post-war management was the establishment of a recognized managerial science, by the 1980s and 1990s that dream was not only unrealized but, with increasing obviousness, unrealizable. (Fournier and Grey 2000:12)

To this point we may see the opening of the twenty-first century as presenting a rather pessimistic picture of the fate of management and managers compared to the optimism characteristic of the opening of the twentieth. The concerted effects of technological, market and social changes seem to imply, if not the dissolution of managerial work, then its radical redefinition. These developments can be seen to reveal the 'constructedness' of previously stable unified and 'natural' economic identities and can be read as radically de-differentiating the historical difference between the manager and the managed, such that managers may be seen to be subject to a process of proletarianization (Scarbrough and Burrell 1996), and workers to a process of managerialization, captured perhaps in the phrase 'we're all managers now' (Grey 1999). This dual convergence might be expected to have significant impacts on the reception and utilization of forms of management education.

The Rise of Managerialism

There is though an apparent paradox, at the same moment as debating the decline of management, commentators have also noted the triumph of 'managerialism'; the extension and diffusion of managerial practices into many areas of social life, notably the public services (Enteman 1993, Ferlie *et al* 1996, Clarke and Newman 1997, Exworthy and Halford 1999). Under the influence of New Right thought, the 1980s and 1990s have seen management elevated to what Fournier and Grey (2000) consider an iconic status, with managers seen as bearers of a 'real world' realism; the embodiment of technical expertise; and as moral champions, concerned as they are with (conceptions of) justice, accountability, democracy and quality in public services.

This triumph of managerialism might be read as a sign that management is surviving, even flourishing, as Grey (1999:572) notes:

...it is the insinuation of management into a huge range of human activities and actors previously thought of as lying outside the specialist domain of management which constitutes one of the key 'achievements' of managerialism.

For Grey there is no paradox, indeed one entails the other, the earlier cited assault on 'the manager' is read as an attack on a particular kind of manager. Accordingly, what we are witnessing is a redefinition such that the image and ideal of management as popularly understood for the past century or so is being rewritten. In place of the 'old model manager'; the administrator/ bureaucrat, with his (and the gender assignment is not accidental) codified knowledge and rule-bound behaviour, is erected a vision of the 'new model manager'; the charismatic, enterprising, freewheeling doer-of-deals and visionary. In this way the internal crisis of management and the triumph of managerialism are co-implicated in the construction of new visions of what Scarbrough (1998) has termed the 'institutionalised meaning' of management.

This nexus of both decline and triumph might be seen to be productive of the kinds of anxieties I detailed in the prologue, centred as it is upon a set of experiences that threaten to dissolve the possibility of maintaining forms of personality. Indeed, sociologically informed psychoanalysts such as May (1977) reserve the term 'anxiety' for precisely those experiences that threaten the possibility of maintaining oneself as a personality. Further, anxiety, unlike fear, has no object insofar as it is understood to be rooted in the unbearable experience of being the subject of social failure. When 'wedded' to the experience of education, which carries many of the same 'risky' features (Salzberger-Wittenberg *et al* 1983), one may suppose that the level of anxiety is likely to be heightened.

Theorising dislocation and identity

Following Laclau (1990), it can be argued that the work world of the manager has been a primary site of 'dislocation'. However, while such dislocation can be recognised, its meaning and effects are subject to much vociferous debate.

Critical modernists such as Thompson and Ackroyd (1995) acknowledge that major changes have taken place in the organization of work but argue that the erosion of the distinction between management and non-management that is implied by terms such as 'empowerment' is highly exaggerated. Empowerment is here seen not as the erosion of managerial prerogative but its extension through the partial transfer of managerial responsibility to non-managers. In this way the continuity of exploitative, industrial capitalism is maintained, but through differing sets of relationships and contexts. From this position the role of identity and subjectivity in managerial life are largely marginal and consigned to the realms of bourgeois thought; management, in the last instance, being reducible to a function of capital.

For others, notably drawing on forms of post-structuralist thought, contemporary developments involve a change in the relationship between different spheres of social activity, and establish the possibility of new forms of work-based identity. For du Gay (1996), because an important feature of post-bureaucratic organizations involves, or at least invokes the rhetoric of, the 'empowering' of those who occupied the hitherto lower levels within hierarchical organizations, the traditional separation between management and non-management no longer holds. The inherently democratising nature of delayering therefore involves a distinct change in the cultural relations of the workplace, and the production of novel, 'hybrid' work based subjects (Urry 1990).

Thus, whereas for du Gay contemporary organizational forms can be seen to involve new articulations of work-based identities; for Thompson and Ackroyd these forms involve the extension of management responsibility into areas previously free from such responsibility, thus extending the degree of control over labour through the internalization of rules - as a strategy under which workers manage themselves 'internally' rather than being managed by external overseers. In such a circumstance the identity of managers, and middle managers in particular, is revealed, as orthodox Marxism has long asserted, as merely a 'deviant' form of wage labour. In this way the new model manager is subject to the 'onward march of capital' whether the latter is conceived of as 'organized' or 'disorganized' in character (Lash and Urry 1987).

Although both du Gay and Thompson and Ackroyd stress the dislocatory effects of contemporary capitalism, they operate with differing conceptions of dislocation. For Thompson and Ackroyd these effects have an objective meaning and are part of a process that seems largely predetermined. In this, the subject is largely determined and absorbed by the structure. For du Gay, the effects of dislocation are rather more ambiguous. The identity of 'management' here has no originary essence outside its dominant articulation, but is transformed by changes in its organization.

For du Gay, the exploration and analysis of such developments must reflect this greater level of complexity, so that, for example, the growth of 'empowerment' and its consequences must be seen as not merely economic phenomena to be analysed through a 'productionist' frame, but as part of wider cultural relationships. Thus, if the erosion of management as we have known it establishes new identities for managers as objects of analysis, it requires new approaches to understanding that object. In other words, understanding the contemporary experience of managers will require more than counting how many of them are being made redundant, rather, such experience can only be understood in its cultural milieu - within its conditions of existence. This is what du Gay (1996, 2000) attempts through his, largely Foucauldian, 'cultural economic' approach to understanding and analysing economic and

organizational life, and his utilisation of the subjectivising aspect of ‘enterprise’ as the prime discourse through which contemporary work identity is structured.

Experience Matters

This research takes these extant approaches seriously but attempts to go beyond them. Drawing inspiration from scholars who have sought to problematise such sociological perspectives, primarily through the use of varieties of psychoanalytical thought, I seek to explore managerial identity as a discursive construction, à la du Gay, but within a distinct set of material circumstances and within an ongoing encounter with experience. In this way I seek to transcend the ‘normotic’ (Bollas 1987:136) tendency in sociology; the tendency to ignore or downplay the subjective aspects or inner lives of individuals.

Such a turn appears to offer rather more purchase on the issues raised in my prologue, foregrounding as it does the existence of an already existing and experiencing subject, formed in interaction with the world and others and which is relatively capable of accepting, resisting or subverting that which comes its way, in the form of management education, and much else. Taking such a position raises the question of the extent to which the emotions noted in the prologue are simply part and parcel of the psychology of management, and not an artefact of management education. The central question which motivates this research is whether management education can be reconfigured to promote new forms of managerial practice, or whether the psychosociality of management might militate against such an achievement.

My chosen approach to achieve this understanding is to explore them through the psychosocial identity of the manager/student (Hollway and Jefferson 2000a). This approach draws primarily on Kleinian accounts of the ‘defended subject’ to explore how individuals come to perceive and react towards anxiety and threats to their selfhood. Alongside this, it draws upon contemporary work in social theory (Davies and Harre 1990) to assert the discursive nature of the subject, in that people are seen to draw upon and position themselves in relation to a variety of discourses in the social world. Such an approach allows the exploration of how those employed as managers are positioned/position themselves in relation to education, a perspective that offers important clues to how management education is perceived, received and consumed.

This approach seeks to explore what Cohen and Ainley (2000) have termed the ‘third space’ in which aspects of the social, the cultural and the psychic are researched together and in which the inseparability of each are acknowledged at the level of explanation. By this means it is hoped that a more complete understanding of what I have described as a ‘fear of flying’ can be obtained.

The following chapter (chapter two) explores extant approaches to theorising the identity of the manager. Following a characterization of the mainstream position it will be seen that critical consideration of work and managerial identity has tended to fall into the familiar dichotomous wrangling between those who argue for a largely materialist, structural, position in which managers are, more or less, the servants of power, and those who argue for a more nuanced form of agency. Attempts to resolve such dualistic forms of thought are introduced and evaluated. The psychosocial position is then outlined and developed. This approach, it is argued, provides a means of overcoming the debilitating binary oppositions that have characterised work in this area, while retaining a sensitivity to issues of both the psychical and the social. Such an approach draws attention to aspects of anxiety that are attendant upon contemporary management practice and knowledge.

Chapter three reviews the contested and fissured terrain of management education in order to provide the broad context on which manager/students encounter education. There it will be seen that 'what management education is for' is a highly contested area of debate, its terrain being traversed by a variety of discourses that vie for attention. Such a terrain, it will be argued, provides a rich source of anxiety.

This is followed in chapter four by a consideration of the methodological issues entailed in the exploration of the 'inner spaces' of managers. Issues of interpretation and the use of psychosocial approaches are discussed therein.

In chapter five, insights derived from the psychosocial formation are utilised to interrogate data derived from a series of narrative accounts.

The concluding chapter summarizes the main arguments of the thesis and some tentative conclusions are drawn concerning the positioning of contemporary managers in relation to management education, and ways in which such managers might be fruitfully worked with.

Chapter Two: Who do we think they are? Visions of management

Introduction

This chapter discusses and reviews the conceptual frameworks adopted by recent authors engaged in providing critically informed accounts of the reconstruction of managerial life. Before embarking on this however it is important to note one significant divide in this literature. On the one hand are works that can be seen to be 'helping' managers better manage difficult problems and situations. On the other are those that seek to explain, challenge or critically illuminate the problems, situations and managerial responses to these. Marsden and Townley (1996) helpfully call these two strands in management literature 'normal' and 'contra' approaches.

The 'normal' literature tends to provide descriptive accounts for the 'development' of managers. It typically draws conceptually from contingency or systems theories of organization, or economic models of economic behaviour. The tone of such literature varies but one major criticism is that these accounts tend to ignore critical discussion of the conditions and processes which give rise to the problems to which management is considered to be the response. Typically there is considerable talk about organizational 'environment' but this is presented in a somewhat anodyne, depoliticised fashion.

While the 'contra' literature is commonly accused of failing to provide answers to the question 'what is to be done?', its focus is the exploration and critique of processes that constitute, for instance, the problems for which management is the 'taken for granted' solution in the 'normal' literature. In this sense it is 'non-performative', 'de-naturalising' and consciously reflexive in intent (Fournier and Grey's 2000). For these authors, these are the defining features of 'truly' critical literature.

It is with the 'contra' literature that this chapter primarily engages. It is my contention that it provides a far superior account of the processes, forces or 'drivers' that produce 'management' and the 'manager' as the solution. However, in what follows I critically review this literature. I shall also draw examples from the 'normal' literature to highlight the contested nature of the debate over the changing character of managerial work. I begin with a review of the critical literature.

Approaching contemporary management

Studies of the changing character of managerial work approach the topic from a number of differing, but at times overlapping, orientations. Contra or critical literatures can be distinguished from a broad normal literature that provides and underpins advice and prescriptions to managers. Below I discuss this latter as a 'functionalist' orientation to work. Contra or critical approaches meanwhile can be seen to draw upon an eclectic mix of

Marxist, Weberian/Foucauldian, poststructuralist and feminist strands. In this section I review these orientations, note the characteristics of each through the work of particular authors and also address briefly how each approaches the question of the construction of the manager.

Managers/workers: workers/managers

Taking their cue from Braverman (1974) orthodox Marxist analyses of the changing character of managerial work are embedded within a broad political economy analysis. The key feature here is addressing and linking the changing conditions of work to the changing conditions of capitalist accumulation, and the changing responses of actors such as the state. The distinctive contribution of such analyses lies in their capacity to show how 'the rationality of technique in the modern industrial enterprise is not neutral in respect of class domination' (Giddens 1982:38). In doing so the orthodox camp follow Braverman's own adherence to Marx's conceptualization of the labour process whereby individuals are treated as 'the personification of economic categories, the bearers of particular class relations and interests' (Marx 1867/1976:92). This deliberately attempts to counteract forms of individualism and voluntarism and in doing so serves to show how forms of work are constituted within relations of production.

Discussing changing academic work for example Willmott (1995:12) argues:

...the key to understanding change in the organization and control of academic work lies in an analysis of the trajectory of the distinctive organization and dynamics of the capitalist society in which it is embedded, and not in the impersonal force of rationalization or the capacity of individuals to collaborate in, or resist, its seemingly relentless advance.

The main line of argument here is that pressures applied by organizations in response to the current conditions of capitalist accumulation, (e.g. issues of 'globalization', competitive pressure) are engaged in attempts either to reduce the cost of labour or maintain and enhance its contribution to processes of accumulation and legitimation. This is manifest in pressure and control from organizations in attempts to force down wages and salaries, to replace relatively expensive labour with cheaper forms or to substitute labour with technology. Yet, these processes, or potential processes, do not occur mechanically of themselves. They require the development of a managerial labour process which proves in varying degrees to be both complicit and resistant to the elaboration of such directions. Thus, as sectors (notably public sectors) become increasingly commodified through their intensified engagement with quasi or managed market processes, the manager becomes increasingly enrolled as a representative of capitalist production, rather than as a 'professional', or some other epithet.

Such an enrolling was pointed out by Braverman in his updating of Marx's analysis of managers as agents of capital. While broadly agreeing with Marx, Braverman complements his mentor's work with an appreciation of how, as sellers of labour, managers 'share in the subjugation and oppression that characterizes the lives of productive workers' (1974:418). Though enjoying a 'petty share in the prerogatives and rewards of capital' (ibid:315), which serves to create a material and social cleavage between managers and other employees, Braverman contends that most of these 'mental workers' are simultaneously targets of capitalist control, and are not simply or principally its agents. In this way Braverman highlights the extent to which much managerial work parallels the terms and conditions of employment experienced by other workers and thus bears the 'mark of the proletarian condition' (ibid:467).

In such a situation managers might be expected to exhibit some features of their condition such as the 'unbounded cynicism and revulsion' noted by Braverman (1974: 151). In other words the subjectivity and identity of managers would seem to be a prime area of concern. Despite this, and a recognition of the importance of the 'missing subject' (Thompson 1989:237), the orthodox reading of Marx that lies behind the analysis does not allow for such a focus, with managers simply treated as personifications of capital, thereby marginalising any consideration of the role of consciousness and action in the reproduction and transformation of the interdependent, though asymmetrical, relationship between capital and labour. In his attempt to counter the individualism and voluntarism of mainstream forms of analysis in which persons at work are viewed as somehow outside the relations of production, Braverman and his contemporary adherents eschew any consideration of consciousness. In this they share the managerialists functionalism, such that management is seen to arise as a 'need' of capital at a particular moment.

In relation to the themes of this research, such structural-critical frameworks explain the changes in the characterization of managers in largely functional terms, with the concerns of individual managers largely not of interest. As O'Doherty and Willmott (2001:462) argue:

The role of subjectivity in the mediation of capital-labour relations is consequently marginalized, viewing its preoccupation as a reactionary return to the limitations of bourgeois analysis. Condemning recent efforts to incorporate subjectivity within ...analysis, it is complained that radical labour process critiques have effectively been ceded to researchers concerned more with the labour process as a site for the production of relations of subjectivity.

This latter concern, it is argued, from within the orthodox camp, neglects matters of labour as an economic category; matters of collectivity; and, sin of sins, as being an endorsement of managerialism.

While orthodoxy is itself critiqued from the ‘subjectivity’ camp, it retains some value as a means of accounting for the changing nature of managerial work. It is clear for example that the processes of the commodification of labour, including that of managerial labour, described by the orthodoxy are taking place, similarly it remains true that the fermentation of antagonistic relations engendered by capitalist modes of production can motivate the mobilisation of important forms of collective resistance. No less relevant, however, for analysing the development and transformation of labour processes is the question of how these relations come into being in tandem with multiple lines of tension and division, and it is ways of doing this that are considered below.

Iron cages and panopticons

The above view on the nature of management is self-consciously un-Weberian. In contrast, a highly influential approach to understanding management takes the work of Weber, and his intellectual successor, Foucault, rather more seriously. Here analysis is concerned less with the political economy but with how these dynamics are played out. In general the process are labelled and characterised as ‘rationalizations’ or ‘modernizations’. The core line of argument, for instance in du Gay’s work (1996:10) is that organizations are both producers of and subject to ‘the restless synergies of plural modernizations’. As noted above, Marxist work is suspicious of such pluralism, arguing that such notions fail to grasp the essentials of the capitalist mode of production. In defence of both positions Parker and Jary (1995) argue that the analysis of work *should* be concerned with the political economic analysis at a broad level, but that the use of Foucauldian categories are required to explain *how* the elaboration of changes at the level of work organizations and subjectivity is carried out. Writing of universities, Parker and Jary argue that they are at risk of becoming ‘McDonaldized’ (Ritzer 1992), such that they are in danger of becoming fast-food outlets that:

[will] sell only those ideas that its managers believe will sell, that treats its employees as if they were too devious or stupid to be trusted, and that values the formal rationality of the process over the substantive rationality of the ends (1995:335)

In relation to work subjectivity they describe the modern workplace in uncompromisingly Foucauldian terms as ‘a legally constituted web of corporate surveillance’ (1995:327). For these authors the result of these worsening conditions of labour and increased surveillance and accountability changes the way people come to know themselves and their role. Careerism, ritualism and retreatism come to be the core responses.

At this point a number of problems with both the Marxist and Weberian/Foucauldian analyses emerge. First, each could be said to adopt an over-determined or over-socialised

understanding of the social subject and downplay the problems, disorder and unintended consequences of either instituting or achieving the desired outcomes from the adopted methods. Secondly, there is a lack of engagement with the problems of actually achieving these new relations or configurations. To take Parker and Jary as an example, they argue that their ideal type of 1990s public sector organization exhibits, among other things, 'greater managerial power'. Management discourse, has been imported, they argue, to enhance the 'importance of management as a process and to legitimate the activities of particular members- executives, directors and so on - as key decision makers' (1995:324) In this they stress that the language of line managers, customers, and products begins to displace the previous language of clients, students or whatever. A major objection to Parker and Jary's claim is that just because a language is found in a particular social domain, it does not necessarily mean that existing languages and practices have been reconstructed to mirror the new discourse. One cannot, it seems, simply read the effects directly off a discourse without addressing the extent to which the 'new' managerial discourse leaves unchallenged those practices they attempt to narrate in new ways. This view also leaves unexplicated the ways in which passive or active resistance is directed at and potentially rebuffs greater managerial power. It seems likely, for example that rival discourses of professionalism might well leave managerial identities in a somewhat ambivalent situation with regard to new managerial discourses, thereby perhaps leaving such discourses in a rather ambivalent position themselves.

These ideas occur in part because of a somewhat selective use of ideas from Weber and Foucault. Much is made here of one of the two Webers that occur in the literature (du Gay 2000). This Weber is the 'dark side', where all is an 'iron cage of rationalization', such that little is said about the residues of affective and value rational action or about the paradox of consequences. Likewise, and unsurprisingly, much is made of Foucault's panopticon and virtually nothing is made of the central importance of transgression in Foucault's work (Knights and Vurdubakis 1994). Such a focus on transgression suggests a rather more nuanced position than that pursued through the panoptic vision foregrounded here. An alternative Foucauldian position is considered later, for now I turn to mainstream understandings of management and the manager.

Despite these issues such forms of analysis have provided a much needed antidote to the dominant instrumentalist, systemic analysis of managerial identity, to which I now turn.

Managerialism

In this approach, what might be termed the orthodox reading, organizations are understood to be made up of various functioning parts, each contributing to the general equilibrium of the

organization. This whole itself is in turn seen as part of a broader system which undergoes various instabilities to which it attempts to respond and change. In this 'evolutionary' reading each organization is considered to have various functional capacities and characteristics, whose work is managed by managers responsible for and able to respond to the changing conditions of the system, realigning and managing change in relation to their own functional areas. Failure to do so is commonly blamed on poor communications, inappropriate structures, or an intransigent workforce.

Such a systemic functionalism does not simply assume that systems function in and of themselves. In this picture systems and functions are staffed by people who carry out various roles, with role being understood to comprise various tasks which in turn require particular skills or knowledges appropriate to each particular functional element in the whole. While there has been a general move in the direction of the importance of language, culture and values, this typically overlays roles, structures and functions.

Thus, managerialist characterizations³ of the existence and persistence of managers are commonly held to begin, and largely end, with conceptions of instrumental rationality. As du Gay (2000:4) notes, this draws upon a self-consciously Weberian lexicon where that writer is posited as:

the grand theorist of modernity whose analysis of the rationalisation of existence highlights the interrelated material and cultural transformations that implanted formal or instrumental rationality as the dominant regulative principle in the development of modern societies.

This second take on Weber erects the bureaucratic organization as the primary vehicle of this formal rationalization, and the bureaucrat as the personal embodiment of all that is rational. As Gabriel (1998) suggests, the pronouncements of Weber on bureaucracy have haunted the study of organizations and management through their establishment of the image of organizations as passion-free zones.

For writers of a managerialist persuasion (e.g. Donaldson 1985) the work of managers is both highly rational and in pursuance of legitimated, unitary ends, which are argued to be widely agreed by all. Summarising this view, Reed (1989:2-3) states:

³It is important to note that what is described here as the managerialist characterization is in fact pieced together largely from critical accounts. In fact it is rare to find an articulated account from within the mainstream, except as a defence against critics, as in the case of Donaldson's work. This might be taken to be further evidence of its assumed naturalness and commonsensism. Indeed, a glance at any commonly used textbook on management or organization behaviour (e.g. Robbins 1998) reveals the largely uncontested tone in which such accounts are presented, commonly without justification.

However, it is also possible to argue, on the basis of historical evidence (e.g. Nyland 2001) that what is actually presented here as a coherent characterization is a rather convenient strawperson and represents a view that no-one actually holds. Nyland, as a self-confessed revisionist historian, presents a view of Taylor and Taylorism

Footnote continued on next page

[This] technical perspective offers a conception of management as a rationally designed and operationalised tool for the realisation of predominantly instrumental values concerned with the systematic coordination of social action on a massive scale...management constitutes the neutral social technology necessary to attain collective goals that are unrealisable without it.

Dominant, managerialist, accounts of management are thus dominated by mechanistic, politically neutral, technicist images in which the rise of management and the tasks allotted to this group of employees arise simply as a result of the 'needs' of industrialization. In this way the separation of managers and non-managers is naturalized. Many canonical writers such as Barnard (1936), Fayol (1949) and Drucker (1979) have asserted the role of the manager as one conditioned by the need for control and coordination in the face of needs arising from a complex division of labour, a theme which provides the dominant motif for management and which forms the first of the three sources to be considered here.

On this view, the rise of management, as distinct from the direct supervisory relationships that preceded it, and its separation from its 'Other', the employee, was simply a natural consequence of the rise of large-scale organization. In the face of the coordination problems faced by rapidly expanding industrial organizations, there arises a functional need for a separate cadre of employees, who are charged with the utilisation of the tools of an objective social science to plan, direct, control and otherwise manage organizations. Thus, we see a reliance on metaphors such as the 'visible hand' of Chandler (1977) in which previously autonomous markets are seen to be no longer able to allocate resources, making it necessary for managers to intervene, on the basis of some form of specialist knowledge. Above all, such accounts argue on the basis of rationality and objectivity, portraying managers as simply servants of all in the organization, carrying out a series of formulated tasks:

A means oriented conception of management which concentrates on the structural mechanisms that ensure order and secure effective coordination and control over social interaction, encourages the formation of an explanatory framework that treats organizations as social units that must fulfil certain functional imperatives imposed on them by their environment...[they] are committed to an explanatory logic that accounts for the existence and persistence of management structures in terms of the contribution they make to the survival of organizational systems as a whole.

(Reed 1989:4)

In this complex, management knowledge becomes codified as the methods and techniques of analysing the environmental contingencies placed upon organizations and ensuring the

that attempts to recover the progressive nature of Taylorist thought. Nevertheless, such a view appears to operate as at least an 'ideal type'.

methods of internal coordination and control are appropriate and/or adequate to the task. To the extent that ends figure at all, as in later versions of this approach, they are taken as functional imperatives within a unitary, systems perspective, such that the role of management is largely to identify those points of disequilibrium that arise from interaction with the organizational environment and correct such points of tension or strain (e.g. Lawrence and Lorsch 1967, Pugh and Hickson 1976).

Reed (1989) points to a contradiction in this latter point that is of some relevance to the present discussion. The existence and persistence of organizational structures is largely explained by a deterministic logic that assumes that institutionalised patterns of social relations impose themselves on all organizational actors, regardless of human volition and action. However, this view also argues for a degree of limited control over the process of structural design on the part of managers. Indeed, it is the equipping of managers with the means to carry out such diagnoses and adjustment that forms the basis of what we might call 'mainstream' management education and forms the basis of many popular management texts. This contradiction is largely ignored by theorists of a managerialist persuasion, but commonly rears its head in classroom discussion, and, within 'real' organizations. Despite this nod in the direction of volition on the part of managers, the image that is portrayed is one guided by cool rationality, such that the agenda of structural design is one shaped largely by what one might term distal and generalised diagnosis.

As Thomas (1993) notes, the managerialist agenda is one which has informed the bulk of management thought, management education and, importantly, forms the basis for a conception of management as a profession. He comments that the characterization of management as presented here conforms closely with the pervasive popular image of a profession, rooted as it is in both systematic expertise and a service ethic (Abbott 1988). Although there are few signs of the growth of general management as a fully developed profession, or indeed of a body of management knowledge (Reed and Anthony 1992), with managers typically bearing rather more of the hallmarks of the 'local' than the 'cosmopolitan', the image and ideal of management as an imaginary profession persists and pervades.

Grey (1997:706-707), developing this theme, notes that management has been capable of representing itself as a technical practice which dominates ever more, and more diverse, areas of social activity:

On this view there exists a body of scientifically validated knowledge that is applied by managers in different settings. A weaker version of such a view would be that, even if such a body of knowledge does not yet exist, it is in the process of emerging

and is retarded not by any barriers of principle, but only by those of time, resources and intellect.

The dominant characterization of managers is thus one which is imbued with the 'aura of science' (Alvesson and Willmott 1996:25).

Populism

Such a 'professional', rational, image is one which is also promulgated by a variety of texts that might be termed populist, and which are mirrored in popular media accounts of managers. Managerialist thought has become the staple fare of popular management texts; indeed, it might be argued that this is the way in which the images and ideals of modernist management have been most effectively expounded. Willmott (1984: 355), considering the work of two populist writers, notes:

Overall the image of managerial work that emerges from popular management books is that of the 'professional' who impartially carries out the universally and technically defined function of management...Of course it is recognized that organizations are imperfect. However, because the imperfections and employee recalcitrance are regarded as endemic features of all human organizations, the particular, historical failings of organizations are conveniently explained and excused by reference to this general, atemporal problem. The corresponding ideal is to minimize the inevitable dysfunctions by doing whatever is 'objectively' necessary to maintain and improve the functioning of existing structures.

The 'whatever is necessary' referred to here commonly becomes translated into an ever more eclectic set of recipes, fads and fashions, all of which offer themselves as the new way to keep the show on the road. In this they sit alongside 'academic' accounts of the images and ideals of management, forming a kind of counter-literature with which the management educator has to deal. These commonly form the butt of academic jokes and scorn (Collins 2000), but can be seen to be highly influential, if somewhat ambiguously so, in the lives of managers, coming as they do, or purport to do, from the 'real world' (Watson 1994). Through this point of origin they have an important feel of authenticity and thus gain currency.

However, as is commonly asserted by critics, what is missing from these populist accounts is an appreciation of the political nature of managerial work, a failing partly shared by a further source of managerialist ideals and images, empiricism.

Empirical studies of management

Alongside the founders of management and the populist accounts Willmott (1984), notes too the influence of empirical studies such as those of Mintzberg (1973), Kotter (1982) and

Stewart (1967). Here too we may discern important currents in the dominant images and ideals of managerial work, forming as they do central elements of taught courses of management and the pronouncements of populist writers. In the main such studies are critical of much of the foregoing work, arguing that such universal principles of management are simply armchair theorizing and that in 'reality' what managers do is rather more complex. In this they commonly argue that Fayol *et al* are simply not *managerial enough*. Typically, empirical studies have 'discovered' that 'real' managers do rather less of the activities suggested by the technicians, rather they spend a great deal of time engaged in ad hoc, 'seat of the pants' activities marked by brevity, variety and fragmentation. Further, such work commonly characterises managers' work as highly informal, unofficial and riven by politicking in the form of networking, instrumental socialising and the formation of cliques so as to defend turf and make personal advancement possible. Relying on notions of role and relationship, such studies, commonly rooted in observation and/or diary methodologies, draw attention to the complex social and 'political' milieu in which managers operate. Mintzberg, for example, identifies, on the basis of an observational study over five weeks; 'without preconceptions of the managers job' (1973:4), ten roles that encapsulate managerial work; what managers do.

Such work is commonly trumpeted as an advance over previous attempts to analyse managers work, rooted as it appears to be in the 'reality' of the management task, and indeed is commonly presented as such in management texts (e.g. Robbins 1998) and on courses of education. Notwithstanding a number of objections to its validity (Hales 1986, Carroll and Gillen 1987), Thomas (1993) regards such empirical accounts as partly corrosive of the established images of management, highlighting as they do the 'reality' that managers do not operate on the basis of scientifically established bodies of knowledge, nor do they necessarily operate in the interests of all, commonly pursuing sectional and personal agendas. However, as in all 'professions', such knowledge actually bolsters the image of the manager through showing their expertise is informed but not enslaved by the scientific conception of management:

...if managers do not make use of 'science' when managing, their behaviour is no less rational for that. Managers, or at least successful managers, use rich, contextual knowledge as a basis for their actions and this works in spite of, or even because of, its scientific character (Thomas 1993:57).

This points to an important theme that will be discussed later - a tension between scientific and commonsense conceptions of the management task, and the contradictory place of education in the development of managerial practice.

Other voices are rather more critical of the empiricist's claims. Willmott (1984), in summarising the dominant conceptual and empirical images and ideals presented here, draws attention to a number of issues inherent in the analyses presented. In moving away from the universalist character of the founder's prescriptions, empiricists such as Mintzberg have relied on an 'objective/impartial' account of the work of managers which is marked by a disregard for the interdependence of theory and data, such that Mintzberg, although claiming to offer 'conclusions that suggested themselves' (1973:264), can be seen to be deeply implicated in the promotion of a particular view of management:

The practical consequence of this is an unquestioning acceptance of received understandings and evaluations as rational, objective and unproblematic. Most conspicuous by its absence from prominent conceptual and empirical images of management work is any systematic appreciation of its institutional politics.

(Willmott 1984:363)

Importantly, in arriving at his position, Mintzberg allows that science is guided by interests but asserts that it is concerned to improve the world in a systematic way and therefore disregards the idea that science is a struggle towards truth, closing off debate on the moral choices involved in judging what truth might be. As Habermas (1972) suggested, this is only one version of what science might be, one guided by interests in control and mastery. There are others.

There is much discussion in contemporary management texts about politics and power but such texts discuss these issues in terms of interpersonal skills; getting things done through the agency of others. In this way the politics of managerial work are viewed as a universally valued, functional need for the operation of the effective organization. This particular theme is highly present in much management education where it commonly informs units concerned with developing individual skills, such as negotiating, coaching .

Clearly much management practice is political in this sense but it is also political in another sense. Writing from a modified political economy perspective Willmott (1984:363) argues:

[Managerial work] is also political in the way that it is involved in the production and reproduction of institutions that appease the conflict between labour and capital. To be in any position to exercise their political skills, managers must design and continuously renew (against resistance) sets of practices (i.e. institutions) that simultaneously contain and exploit the tensions, conflicts and inequalities associated with the contradictory forms of unity that characterise the structure of capitalist production relations.

For Willmott, and other critical theorists, this situation presents a major dilemma for managerial work. If the institutional politics of management work are acknowledged then

managers' major claim to legitimacy, their role as the objective technicians in the realization of agreed-about ends, is eroded. On the other hand without an appreciation and acknowledgement of the political dimensions of their work they remain potentially unable to devise and pursue strategies that will work in an always/already politicised situation. This tension, it will be argued later, forms an important aspect of manager's ambivalence to much that is imparted through programmes of management education. It will also be seen to provide the basis for a radical recasting of management education such that the insights of political economy may be brought to bear on managerial practices.

In relation to the issues at the heart of this research, it will be seen that the dominant managerial perspective naturalizes the separation of the manager from the non-manager, insisting upon the status of the former being that of someone who is 'prepared to submit himself (sic) to the inexorable logic of facts' (Urwick 1929:32), and is suspicious of his/her own emotions and experience, and those of others. In this characterization the social relations through which managerial work is accomplished and ultimately depends is both denied and decried, issues of sociality, passion and emotion being consigned to the pathological; recast as variables amenable to technical solutions.

Such systemic functionalism is the dominant linguistic code used by managers to understand and talk about, in public at least, their organizations and work. Such an approach is increasingly challenged by other approaches for its blindness and complicity, notably forms of poststructuralism, to which I now turn.

Language and its effects

It seems clear that early landmarks in poststructuralist thought were heavily imbued with Marxism and Weberian forms of thought. Lyotard (1984), for example, is heavily influenced by critical approaches when he writes of the dangers of commodification and the dehumanising impact that it brings. However, the importance he accords to language as constitutive of a fragmented social subject, together with a profound mistrust of prefigured forms of metanarrative, renders his work poststructuralist. His great assertion is that the events of the late twentieth century have produced a widespread de-legitimation of modernist grand narratives upon which contemporary life is founded. In their place, performativity, 'what works', becomes the dominant criterion of judgement. Such a situation renders 'management' ever more powerful. As the ideology of the performative since its inception, management becomes elevated to iconic status. As Peters M. (1992:134) notes:

...each of us lives at the intersection of many language games, the technocratic decision makers proceed on the assumption that there is commensurability and common ground among them and that the whole is determinable.

On this view organizations are understood to be a mass of language games. The plurality of these is denied by technocratic managerialism which works to subordinate and position other narratives in relation to its constructions of efficiency and accountability.

Such a poststructuralist framework forms the basis of a number of recent studies of work and managerial work. All, in differing ways, are concerned with exploring work in relation to its textuality, which might be understood as the point at which language and practice intersect.

Weil (1994:153) for instance, notes that:

Story telling lies at the heart of any institution and any significant change process...Managers may communicate policies, report decisions, assert what is right and what is misunderstood, but what is spoken about in a myriad of ways [are] the dramas, the feelings, the passions, the power, the pain, the values, the celebrated, the despised.

And yet,

What has gone very wrong in many institutions is that, for example, the funding council story, the managers story, is 'living the people'. The story becomes one of being 'done to' rather than making sense and doing with'. The spect-actors who have been required to carry through the changes are reduced to spectators. (1994:161)

Although Weil's advocacy of narrativity or storied-ness is ultimately subordinated, in a humanist fashion, to developing 'enlightened' managers capable of extending their control via the management of meaning, such an approach does at least show the ontological importance of textuality in the constitution of managerial work.

This emphasis on the colonization of managerial work is given a more critical treatment in Fairclough's (1992, 1993, 1995) critical discourse analysis. Fairclough's concern is with the constitutive effects of colonizing discourses, including those of marketing and management. His analysis points to the ways in which the identities of organizations and the identities that make them up are being reconstructed through changing discursive practices and that our ability to reflexively engage with them is rather limited. For example Fairclough (1993) asserts that the professional identities of academics are being moved to a more enterprising (self-promotional) basis, including a foregrounding of personal qualities.

In a similar fashion, although extending the analysis, Holmer-Nadesen (1996) addresses the ways in which the ubiquitous discourses of gender and class make up work, first by analysing the largely neglected 'service' aspects of many workplaces, and secondly by exploring resistance to managerial discourse, through the concept of 'space of action'. As others, Holmer-Nadesen asserts the importance of a plurality of discourses upon which people at work may draw. In this way she argues that there exists a 'surplus of meaning' that produces space for contingency and choice, and thus resistance. However, this choice is tempered by

the ways in which discourses overlap and support others. For example, Holmer-Nadesen shows how women workers in a university hall of residence resist their positioning in managerial discourse as 'service workers' by engaging in attempts to extend their control over their space and time at work. In doing so these workers draw upon a maternal discourse and positively articulating themselves as 'mother', 'sister' or 'housewife' in relation to 'their' students. This articulation, however, leads back to and is colonised by the dominant managerial discourse:

Most institutionalized understandings of mother, sister and housewife are articulated within the discourse of patriarchy where women are positioned in relation to dominant males. Reproduction of traditional familial relations within a male dominated bureaucracy, such as that found in this university, has the effect of overdetermining authoritarian, male power. Consequently, that service workers articulate self as mother need not be incommensurable with formal organizational discourse. (Holmer-Nadesen 1996:77-8)

Gendering the manager

Such work is among a growing number of works that broadly engage in a feminist critique of managerial work, while also drawing on elements of a poststructuralist orientation (Game 1991, Mumby and Stohl 1991). Such analyses illustrate and challenge the various ways in which managerial work is gendered. In general terms they seek to illustrate how, as in the case of Holmer-Nadesen's work, ubiquitous patriarchal discourses reproduce organization, and how this militates against equitable distribution of rewards and status and the limitations of formalized efforts such as equal opportunities initiatives.

Feminist accounts of work seek to explicate the processes which produce gender oppression and gendered divisions of labour. Such analyses have, unlike those discussed so far, also introduced notions of 'embodiment' (e.g. Roper 1996). Such work typically takes as its starting point the observation that women's 'emotionality' and 'physicality' are commonly placed in opposition and hierarchical relation to men's 'rationality'. Drawing too on poststructuralist notions that meaning is produced negatively through *differance* between dominant and subordinate terms such work shows how the very notion of managerial work relies on an interdependent series of oppositions between dominant and subordinate signifiers: knowledge work over service work; head/mind work over body/hand work; clean work over dirty work. Work thus comes to be organized through material structures of discursive chains that conflate 'knowledge-head-men-clean' and conflate it over 'service-body-women-dirty'. Drawing, ironically, on the structuralism of Mary Douglas, Game (1994)

thus suggests that women in 'knowledge-intensive' organizations are 'matter out of place', and thus a challenge to dominant meaning practices.

This form of analysis suggests that to become a manager involves reproducing, or disrupting, particular meaning practices. The advantage of such an approach is that it allows a non-subjective and non-subject-specific account of the agency of management and how it is reproduced through the unsaid practices of hegemonic heterosexual masculinity.

Discussion

The above review illustrates the principal strands that make up the critical literature on managerial work, along with a consideration of its principal target, managerialism. It is apparent that no unequivocal picture of managerial identity emerges from these approaches, with a strong tendency towards one or other pole of the action-structure duality. The move towards poststructural analysis is designed to avoid a strongly dualist and realist epistemology. This does not deny the importance of a political-economic reading of the reconstruction of managerial work. Rather, it asserts the need to read it in a different way from that presented in the orthodox Marxist approaches discussed here. Many managers in organizations *are* involved in a fundamental reconstruction of their work-worlds. Attempts *are* being made to intensify the effectiveness of their labour, to reduce costs and create leaner, meaner enterprises. Yet, to see this as a mechanical programme that can be read off from the prescriptions found in managerial texts would be a profound mistake. Such activity involves the reconstruction of identities and relations and thus must be thought of as embedded in the tensions and conflicts between and among particular knowledges and discursive practices.

These forms of discursive practice are in dynamic and changing relations to each other and may be understood to be qualitatively different in scope, variably conflicting and enacting of variably divergent identities, relations and forms of knowledge.

The key aspect in the constitution of the manager is tension surrounding the changing character of the relation to oneself, understood as a subject position found within these differing modes of discursive practice.

For example, competing forms of knowledge potentially constitute individual managers in conflicting ways. What I have described here as managerialist forms of management knowledge seek to constitute managers as rational, controlling and detached. Other, newer forms of management knowledge posit managers as strategically focused, customer orientated, and enterprising. Yet again professional knowledges constitute managers as having an allegiance to a wider set of orientations. My argument here is that through the intensified use of one or other discursive practices managers come to know themselves as

engaged in differing sets of activities, which may be in contrast to existing discursive practices where their relation to themselves are mediated by differing practices, in which they have a high level of investment.

Such tensions would seem to be at play in the practice of management education. Before turning to an analysis of that domain, I want to develop a more detailed picture of the framework presented briefly above.

Reading the manager

As has often been noted, the category of management has undergone a massive elaboration through the previous two centuries (Chandler 1977, Whitley 1989). It is just how 'management' is currently understood that is the issue here. In what follows I want to begin to set out the epistemological commitments and priorities of the analysis that will be presented later.

Language effects

In the first place it would seem vital to address issues of language, since it is through language that management is discussed at all. Management is here conceived as more than simply a matter of production techniques but rather as a set of knowledge practices which reconstruct problems and issues in ways which make management itself the answer, the necessary response. In an important elaboration of this idea Jacques (1996) shows how the term manager, and its other, the employee, only come into being in the context of specific conditions of possibility, in the aftermath of the Civil War in the United States. Such a repositioning of the relationship between two categories in the industrial enterprise was part of an active repositioning of that relationship and an avowedly political act, in the face of the collapse of social order:

The reigning mood during this period was one of terror. Whatever faults characterised Federalist reality, its boundaries were known. The rights, obligations, freedoms and constraints of citizenship were, if not just, at least relatively explicit and stable. As business activity overflowed the levees of social control, it washed away the channels through which meaning had flowed in comprehensible rhythms. Industrial reality began as a shapeless terror drowning the known world of Federalist reality. (Jacques 1996:60)

A second priority relates to the broad question of how we might capture the difference between management as a set of structuring practices and managers as agents. As noted earlier, conventional accounts assume the existence (the 'visible hand' of Chandler 1977) of the individual actor, the manager, who is set within an organization hierarchy, and involved

in and responsible for the planning, controlling and evaluation of others (Hales 1993). Shifting the focus to management though causes the individual manager as an actor to disappear, or to be construed as the embodiment of a regime attempting to realise the desired goods in response to changing conditions. While the commitment to the nature of knowing is retained, the priority as to what can be known, the nature of human being, is directed towards the manager as constituted by and reproductive of broad societal forces - the market, or patriarchy, or capitalism. In this structuralist account the manager is understood less as an actor and more as a node within systems of monitoring, performance management and so on. While this kind of structuralist account challenges an emphasis on the actor, it tends to retain a commitment to a particular form of knowing; the assumption that language can produce accurate representations of reality.

Recent work within poststructuralism has however challenged the epistemological commitments which produce such dualist accounts of human societies. In their different ways both Giddens (1984) and Bourdieu (1990), for example, have challenged such views. Others have turned to language and forms of knowledge, arguing that dualistic distinctions are themselves constituted through power-invested linguistic systems (Knights 1997). As a result it is rather more common to produce accounts of how these establish themselves and maintain their power. This postdualistic social theory adopts a radicalized understanding of the way language works. Rather than assuming an epistemology where language reflects reality, language is understood to be materializing reality, or that reality is textually constituted. On this view, the nature of material reality identity is undecidable, and can only be realized in discourse in some way.

This poststructural approach requires that we understand reality as 'realized' through language or knowledge practices. The shift here is away from an analysis which suggests that power relations, for example, are found in economic relations per se, and towards approaches that understand discourse as the mode by which economic relations and individual workers or consumers are mutually produced. In this approach, relations of power and identities are textually and discursively constituted through the ordering and organizing practices of particular discourses. Knowledge about some entity, such as that of 'the manager', can be said to be involved in actively bringing into existence that entity (du Gay 1996).

Such an approach foregrounds the constitutive role of language and highlights two important processes through which this is achieved. The first of these is what can be called the performance of managing through language practices such as storytelling (Boje 1995, Linstead *et al* 1996, Sosteric 1996). Here managing involves arguing persuasively for a landscape of possible actions upon which the positions of all those who must take part are clear (Shotter 1993).

The second way in which language may be said to be constitutive lies in the way language allows the ordering and structuring of conduct or practices. Townley's (1994) work on the language games of performance appraisal is an instance of such work. Following the 'governmental' line of the later Foucault, managing here involves 'techniques of notation, computation and calculation; procedures of examination and assessment...the standardization of systems of training and the inculcation of habits' (Miller and Rose 1990:8).

In relation to the first of these there is a clear metaphor of the 'dialogic' such that there is a focus on the conversations that organize work. Important here is the anthropological work of Gowler and Legge (1996) and their stress on management as the management of meaning through an oral tradition. The major difficulty with such a position is that attention to the practices of dialogue, stories and narratives, however 'situated', seems to offer little to the necessity for a postdualist social science. Dialogue, however structured it may be by various genres of discursive practice, struggles to contribute to an account of the relative permanence of particular power relations, the inequitable distribution of scarce resources and the relative permanence of capitalist wage-labour relations (Reed 1997, O'Doherty and Willmott 1999). In addressing these issues, the emphasis needs to be shifted away from language towards discourse, where the latter is to be understood as politically active knowledge practices and formations. Discourses are here seen as modes of ordering and organizing which realize and constitute the 'real'.

This prioritizing of discourse reads discourse as having folded within it power relations, discursive practices and actual embodied effects. In this way discourses are seen to provide ways of being (identities), ways of relating to others (relations) and ways of understanding the world (knowledges) (Fairclough 1992). The epistemological commitment here involves a shift from attempts to define the contours and features of a real organizational world, and towards an exploration of the way knowledge practices are constantly engaged in constituting the 'real'.

Identity and discourse

The politics of identity and identity representation may be the deepest and most repressed struggle in the workplace and hence the 'site' where domination and responsive agency are the most difficult to unravel (Deetz 1992:59)

In the previous section it was suggested that identities are embedded in, and effects of particular discourses. Yet they cannot be simply read off from such discourses for as the quote from Deetz suggests, this would deny the importance of struggle and tension between identities. It would also tend to close off the issue of agency which lies at the core of the discussion of managerial work. The question then becomes one of how to conceptualise

agency in the context of this shift to a postdualist way of knowing managerial work within 'critical' management studies. To reiterate, most accounts of managing tend to speak of management as either a role in a structure, or of the manager as an agentic actor. To the extent that management is linked to the historical development of industrial work organizations a structural reading suggests that management either functions in a system of relations, or 'stands for' the forces of capital in the commodification and realization of efficient relations between the potential of labour and actual labour.

In more agentic readings management is anthropomorphized as the manager who is motivated by various incentives or rewards, and who learn to act as managers through interaction with others. Organizations are here considered to be 'negotiated orders' and managers have the responsibility for achieving this negotiation. In such readings identity or subjectivity is assumed to exist and be reconstituted through social interaction with others. In a structuralist reading human subjectivity is the canvas on which structural processes work themselves out. A commitment to a poststructuralist epistemology problematizes both such accounts of identity. In order to illuminate this I turn below to perhaps the most influential body of work to take such a commitment seriously, that of The Manchester School.

The Manchester School

The 'agentic' manager suggests the 'self' is composed of various techniques of, for example, reflection, remembering, assessment and discussion, which give a sense of being. However, from a poststructural direction such 'sense' is not an ontological given but an effect of, for instance, management knowledges and practices. Such 'reflexivity' is not inherent in the individual but are learned techniques engaged in producing and refining a particular individual identity.

In relation to structuralist accounts, such as those of orthodox labour process theory (Thompson 1990), where the identity of management is derived from its functional role in a social system, or the structure of capitalist or patriarchal relations, the challenge is around issues of determinism, realism and positivism. The work of Knights, Willmott, and fellow travellers, collectively known⁴ as the Manchester School (Wray-Bliss 2002a) is particularly instructive here. These authors have, in a series of works since the mid-1980s, sought to delineate a postdualistic framework for understanding management. In relation to determinism they assert that managerial identities cannot be read off *directly* from capitalism or patriarchal structures, rather, existential conditions of world-openness, in the form of ontological insecurity, together with the underdetermination of identity by capitalist labour

⁴ Although not without some contention (see Collinson 2002).

relations, and modern forms of power, work to reinforce particular identities. In short, subjects are 'free', but the conditions and practices of this 'freedom' are circumscribed. For example, managers are often exhorted that they are 'free to manage', but this is constructed through the knowledge and practices of performance management, income targets and budgets. Such practices also 'worry' our generalized anxiety over how one is meant to be and act in the world, and by providing solutions to these worries their plausibility and legitimacy is enhanced. On this view, managerial knowledges and practices are thus embraced precisely because they offer positive ways of articulating and securing a sense of managerial identity. In relation to issues of realism and positivism, Knights (1997:4) argues that management knowledges often unreflectively privilege representational strategies to the point where 'distinctions are transformed from heuristic devices into reified ontological realities'. Thus representations of the manager as functioning in the social system, or as masculine hero, or as paternalistic benefactor, are not simply engaged in representing management, but in actively constituting managerial subjectivity. Thus, supposedly scientific accounts of management are political projects, engaged in 'knowledging' the manager into place. The 'objectivity' of such accounts is here exposed as a device to secure the legitimacy of management.

While these authors have drawn on a wide, not to say eclectic, range of theoretical resources, more recent work shows a familiar pattern - the utilization of elements of poststructuralist thought, in particular the work of Foucault. Moving away from matters of exploitation and domination to matters of subjectification this work provides a powerful resource for analysing the work of managers. Thus, while the manager might be understood from a structuralist position as attempting to cohere productive economic relations of production or patriarchal relations of domination over women, these efforts do not in themselves 'produce' the manager. The manager is here seen as an effect of particular knowledge practices, which may simultaneously produce such exploitative relations. In this way we may say that contemporary organizations, and by extension, management education are as much interested in producing the right kind of individual manager as in producing the right kind of product or service.

In the case of the manager, modern power works through various devices to attach a particular self to, or inscribe a particular self upon, a particular body - a self that is responsible and accountable for particular areas of activity. Managerial identity is a relation to a self produced, as Knights and Willmott (1989:554) note, 'through disciplinary mechanisms, techniques of surveillance and power-knowledge strategies'.

In arguing against the structuralist insistence on the separation of the personal and everyday from the political in the form of the marginalization of managers' subjectivity as bourgeois social science, these authors argue that the neglect of such subjectivity in favour of a

concentration on 'objective' matters of class, means that the analysis is unable to account for the continual reproduction of relations of domination and subordination. Further, it is only by concentrating on matters of subjectivity that we can appreciate how power relations are actually sustained within 'the micro-politics of interaction' (Willmott 1994:105). Such 'micro-politics' are only understandable through viewing them as both the product and the outcome of people's attempts to secure and sustain a stable sense of personal identity. In seeking such a sense of identity in conditions that increasingly threaten its erosion, people invest 'their subjectivity in familiar sets of practices'; this has the effect of 'inhibiting the potential for disruption by representing it as a threat to [managers'] identity/sense of reality' (Knights and Willmott 1989:554). The personal issue of a managers' identity, even their sense of their own sexuality (Collinson 1994) is intimately and unavoidably bound up with the reproduction and contestation of existing relations of power.

Relatedly, representatives of the Manchester School utilise Foucault's critique of 'sovereign subjectivity' to argue against the essentially humanist and romantic notion contained within much structuralist work - that of an inner creative essence which is blocked by capitalist work regimes. This construction of an essential subjectivity is regarded as a dangerous product of humanist/enlightenment thinking that serves the problematic effect of separating off people's subjectivity from the social context in which it/they are enacted. Rather than reproducing a humanist 'truth' of peoples' identities, Manchester School authors draw upon Foucault's writings to understand subjectivity as an ' "openness" to the possibilities of our relationship to nature and social life' (Knights and Willmott 1989:552). Drawing on this Foucauldian privileging of openness the authors represent people's constructions of their work identities as attempts at closure, as attempts to control and silence the existential angst that accompanies the ever-present alternative field of possibilities for expressing one's relationship to self and others.

Through such strategies the Manchester School may also be seen to be broadening the agenda of political agency to include matters that have been conventionally viewed as marginal and 'only' ethical or personal - as including micro, personal and local practices as potential and necessary source of political agency and challenge to oppressive work relations. Willmott (1994b:123) for example is explicit in his claim that to effectively challenge modern power relations, people need to engage in processes of 'de-subjection' that act to 'dissolve the sense of sovereignty upon which, through the media of anxiety, guilt and shame, the powers of domination, exploitation and subjection routinely feed'. Through such a focus on practices of the self, this may be understood as being engaged in a process of enriching and extending 'politics' in the study of work relations by introducing a historically problematized focus upon the politics of identity.

Methodologically, this entails a commitment to examine the construction of subjectivity, even subjectivity itself, within local social/political conditions (O'Doherty and Willmott 1998).

Such a programme has been carried over into empirical work ⁵ (Collinson 1994, Knights and Collinson 1987, Knights and McCabe 1997, 1998, 2000). Such work attempts to illuminate the processes by which local, everyday, micro-organizational processes act as important sites for workers engagement in political agency. As Knights (1997:6) points out:

It is not experts at a distance representing problems on a grand narrative scale that are needed, but workers actively participating in producing context related and localised responses to a set of political, ecological and social conditions with which they are confronted.

This endorsement to locate analysis and critique of oppression within local practices and an identity politics of de-subjection may be seen to resonate with a Foucauldian concern to broaden what is understood by politics to include that which has been marginalized.

Despite an avowed concern with emancipation and the 'freeing' of workers from oppressive work regimes, this programme once more draws upon Foucault to problematize all truth and authority claims. While it is clear that there are schisms within the camp as to how this should be entailed (see for example O'Doherty and Willmott 1999 and Knights 1997) there is a strong theme of 'cherishing impermanence' (Willmott 1994b) and of understanding subjectivity as simply an openness to the possibilities of our relationships with one another (Knights and Willmott 1989). This is of course strongly bound up with problematizing notions of sovereign subjectivity and of embracing practices of 'de-subjection' mentioned above. As we have seen it does give a hostage to fortune in relation to more orthodox readings of workers' oppression, such as those of more orthodox labour process theorists. For the latter authors (e.g. Martinez-Lucio and Stewart 1997, Rowlinson and Hassard 1994) the traditional focus of Labour Process Theory (LPT) has been precisely the privileging of 'class' struggle within the workplace over other forms of oppression and resistance. Similarly, the representation of the ways in which working class men resist the effects of the labour process through constructing themselves and their behaviours in ways that: a) are macho and sexist (Knights and Collinson 1987); b) result in the inhibition of 'real' resistance (Knights and Collinson 1987:465); and c) unwittingly result in their becoming collaborators in their own oppression, outside of their own knowledge of such effects (Knights and Collinson 1987), are a clear affront to those who carry a candle for an heroic working class. For such as Thompson

⁵ See Wray-Bliss (2002a, 2002b) for highly critical reviews of much of this work.

(1989), such a set of propositions and assumptions remove much of the Manchester School's output from the canon of LPT.

Such a critique suggests that the School's writings should not be seen as a form of Foucauldian 'permanent problematization' transgressing both the limits of workplace oppression and the normalizing boundaries and effects of nominally critical literatures that claim a new and problematic authority for their critiques, but should more properly be understood as merely another branch of 'uncritical' management theory or bourgeois sociology. (Wray-Bliss 2002a:17)

However, the school's authors themselves represent their work as clearly within the spirit of furthering an effective critique of oppressive and subordinating relations. As such they position themselves within the spirit of Marxist inspired critique of the labour process. As O'Doherty and Willmott (1999:18) comment:

The issue of how capitalism is reproduced and accomplished through practical and messy routines and interactions will not go away any more than a growing, reflexive concern with how we as academics, produce accounts of such processes is likely to disappear. Although these concerns can degenerate into narcissism and/or the preoccupations of bourgeois analysis, we have sought to show how an attentiveness to subjectivity can complement and enrich our understanding of the organization and dynamics of capitalist employment relations, and thereby open up space and scope for a radical emancipatory praxis of change.

Their chosen vehicle for doing so is a reading of poststructuralism:

We understand poststructuralism to provide a means of analysing human beings as under-determined, in the sense that between these domains of discursive constitution, what has traditionally been understood as 'structures' - class, gender, race - there is space for movement, interpretation and re-writing, often in untimely and unpredictable ways. Rather than reifying this under-determination and unpredictability as some essential freedom which is characteristic of individuals, a freedom which prompts resistance as it is oppressed when labour is granted only commodity status, poststructuralism offers a way of understanding the constructed, historical, and contingent nature of social relations which constitute the sense and meaning of this freedom. (ibid.:13)

In this poststructuralist turn the sense of the subject alluded to in chapter one is outlined. Here the modernist, humanist, notion of the subject who is self-directing is viewed as a culturally mediated historical product, which, in its formation, denies, represses or rationalizes facets of experience (the Other) which do not confirm this sense of identity. Drawing on early work by Coward and Ellis (1977:77) O'Doherty and Willmott assert the

contradictory character of the subject but also its necessity 'in order that any predication, and therefore communication, can take place'. Considering the work of Sosteric (1996) and Ezzy (1997), O'Doherty and Willmott show how they (O'Doherty and Willmott) are concerned to develop an understanding of LPT that allows for power relations that are complex, circuitous and commonly contradictory. In doing so they reveal how, for example, in Sosteric's analysis:

...employees became entranced by an idea of themselves as independent subjects - an idea that paradoxically enables and constrains their range of practices and their capacity to resist measures which they perceive to impugn their sense of identity. Mesmerised by a sense of autonomy that was formed prior to their employment...and subsequently reinforced within a regime of 'indulgency', employees remained ill-prepared and vulnerable when this sense of independence was challenged. Identity remains a powerful medium and outcome of power relations. The self-critical sensibility of poststructural developments offers an opportunity to expose and question identity and the self-defeating consequences of resistance which tries to preserve it. (1999:18-19)

What O'Doherty and Willmott are asserting here is a theory of the subject that goes beyond what they see as the flawed, humanist subject to which orthodox LPT is wedded. For them, an adequate theory of employment relations must reflect the co-implication of power relations, existential concerns with identity, and economic management, which always remain subject to the threat of conflict, resistance and disorder.

An earlier version of this thesis (Willmott 1997) focused particularly on the work of managers. In that work Willmott similarly argued that it is necessary but insufficient to focus on the 'objective' features of managers' actions and that to do so neglected the micro processes of enactment through which the macro structures of capitalism are reproduced and transformed:

Managers are not judgemental dopes who slavishly perform the functions of capital. The very positioning of managers within capitalist labour processes makes it possible, and indeed likely, that there will be departures from the performance of those functions attributed to managers by Marx. (1997:9)

For Willmott, the gains won by the labour process approach must be defended but complemented by an appreciation of the role of human agency in the reproduction and transformation of capitalist relations of production. In this he commends the methodological stratagem of orthodox LPT in breaking with managerial forms of analysis in which the consciousness of individuals is assumed to stand above, or outside, of the historical conditions in and through which self-understanding is forged and articulated. However, he

also asserts the importance of the role of human agency in these processes, recognising that the insertion of such agency without returning to 'bourgeois' forms of analysis is vital.

Identity and agency

The problem with such a conceptualization is that it, like its more panoptic cousin already discussed, appears to have eschewed, to a large extent, the issue of agency, in the form of resistance to imperializing powers. The displacement of the humanist subject appears to render important aspects of selfhood largely invisible. What of the sense of one's self as an object of knowledge, or of one's awareness of being an actor in a field of potential actions? In short, what of the issue of identity in relation to agency within this poststructuralist turn? There appear to be two ways out of this particular issue. For the first, Hall (1996), concerned that resistance is being overlooked, suggests in relation to agency that identity be read as linking psychoanalytic depth to discursive practices. What is required, he argues, is:

a theory of what the mechanisms are by which individuals as subjects identify, or not, with the positions which they are summoned; as well as how they fashion, stylise, produce and 'perform' these positionings. (Hall 1996:14)

Such a theory requires an account of the processes of articulation, understood as the contingent and non-intentional suturing of the unconscious and discursive positionings. Hall here asserts that Foucault's 'thin' ontology (his explicit rejection of interiority or the unconscious) leaves little space upon which to address this relation without recourse to some notion of intentionality, even though Foucault appears to have been moving towards some notion of the reflexively aware subject at the end of his life.

The second trajectory out of the issue of the identity/agency dilemma is provided by Rose (1996). For Rose agency is simply to be read as an outcome of the heterogeneity of discursive practices. In this he follows, and stresses, Foucault's apparent denial of the presence of interiority:

The human being, here, is not an entity with a history, but the target of a multiplicity of types of work, more like a latitude and longitude at which different vectors of different speeds intersect. The interiority which some may feel compelled to diagnose is not that of a psychological system, but of a discontinuous surface, a kind of infolding of exteriority. (Rose 1996:143)

The fundamental point here, as for all 'governmentalists', is that the way that human beings give meanings to experience has its own history. More specifically, giving meaning to experience involves practical technical devices of meaning production. This includes 'grids' of visualization, vocabularies, norms and systems of judgement. For Rose these produce

experience; experience does not produce them. Such devices with their embedded power relations can be described as making up the means by which 'human beings come to relate to themselves and others as subjects of a certain type' (Rose 1996:130-1). The problem for Rose is that in avoiding a recourse to a crude behaviourism, which leaves no space for contestation at all, he is forced to rely on a theory of agency that assumes human beings have the ability to translate the practices of one locale and apply these to others. In this latter position there would appear to be a commitment to a view of human beings whose interior worlds are formed through processes of subjectification. The earlier position however, seemed to assume a process of identification which by which a dynamic, desiring interior, or unconscious engages dynamically with discursive practices. In the end Rose is, perhaps reluctantly forced to admit the, limited, existence of some form of human intentionality. For his part Hall argues that the potency of political and psychoanalytic struggle over our insertion into particular subject positions is high. In a similar fashion du Gay (1995) accounts for forms of under-determination by drawing on psychoanalytic notions concerning the 'always already differentiated' (Cousins and Hussain 1984:256) nature of the human material upon which techniques of individuation operate:

The resistance and failure thrown up by the operation of these technologies can be seen to be related to the fact that the human material upon which they work is ineradicably 'split' (du Gay 1995:58)

While each of these explanations differ, they concur in the sense that they provide powerful ways to think about the processes by which we become tied to views of ourselves. The broad agreement that each of these processes is engaged in forming human subjectivity as a dynamic, multilayered, biographically infused depth from which various 'I's' can be spoken, and that the suffusion of new discourses (e.g. of enterprising management) is formed through the interdependence of discourses as they connect and overlap with biographically located and gendered subjectivity, has provided a number of schema by which such subjectivity can be analysed (e.g. Fiske 1993, du Gay 1996). In the next section I turn to an example of such work, in order to illuminate both the possibilities and problems entailed in this mode of analysis.

Making an example of Craig Prichard

Utilising some essential elements of the work of Fiske (1993), Prichard understand the construction of the subject through, on one hand, the notion of the 'power bloc', a precarious alliance of dominant interests articulated through imperializing knowledges and practices. On the other hand he talks of the 'people', who maintain localized and tactical forms of

knowledge practices which provide them with particular valued identities. These identities carry with them various social interests:

...while dominant social alliances could be said to exist in what Wetherell and Potter (1992) describe as established economic and social resources, the social interests themselves are dispersed through mobile forms of knowledges and practices which have the effect of attempting to extend or maintain such strategic interests. (Prichard 2000:39)

For Prichard, the utilization of a de Certeautian (1989) understanding of tactical politics allows him to configure identity as a tension between individuated identities produced by top-down processes of assessment and evaluation, and bottom up individualized identities embedded in localized relations and practices.

For example, as we have seen, the position of the manager in work organizations has been formerly established through a succession of expert knowledges underpinned by a separation of ownership of property and control of resources. These knowledges position managers as experts at controlling organizations, in particular the profitable organization of human labour. In contemporary organizations the presence and legitimacy of managerial knowledges have been enhanced by the introduction of particular initiatives, such as cultural change programmes. Practices such as performance linked rewards seek to enrol managers by individuating them in relation to their work. The strategic aim is to enjoin them to constantly assess and evaluate themselves, using particular norms and measurements, as productive managers, responsible for their own productivity. These measures simultaneously evaluate the productive organization of managerial labour within organizations and across organizations. They thereby increase the pressure upon senior post-holders to assess and improve performance. In this way, organizations, individual departments and individuals are 'stationed' Fiske (1993:12), that is provided with individuated identities, as objects of knowledge that increasingly become the major focus of interaction and mutual surveillance (Thomas 1994, Willmott 1995).

However, each individuated subject, each stationed organization and manager, is also crucially embedded in localized cultures and communities of practice which produce other relations to the self. That is, individualized identities, capable of resisting and subverting managerially individuated identities. In this way the conflict between the formations means that the imperializing ambitions of a particular power bloc are constantly falling short of their objectives as they are resisted and challenged by the micro-organizing of 'locales' (Fiske 1993:12) i.e. individualised identities carved out by those concerned about their conditions of life. At the same time individuals may act to support or challenge a power bloc's extension.

The upshot here is that there is no guarantee that imperializing powers will overturn localized practices and identities. Indeed, localized practices are here not to be seen as purely defensive but as highly tactical and capable of strengthening control and defence over the conditions of life.

For Prichard the aim is to maintain a commitment to the potential of the tension of dualistic analysis, in an aim at political commitment, without recourse to dualism. In this way the two elements of the schema are not accorded an ontologically 'real' place, merely being seen as sensitizing devices:

Ontologically the priority is...to address the effectiveness of qualitatively different ordering practices within the broad epistemological commitment to a postdualist social science...The tensions between stations and locales, produced by historically contingent socially dominant imperializing practices and socially marginalized, defensive or subordinate localizing practices restores to a postdualist approach a sense of what Harvey (1993:63) described as the ability to distinguish between 'significant and insignificant differences'. (Prichard 2000:42)

By this means Prichard aims to restore some sense of political leverage to a postdualistic account. This might be thought to pose these categories as inherently oppositional, or as the power bloc being able to maintain control, but this is not his intention. Rather they are seen as heuristic devices which allow the partial specification of forces of activity.

Further, suggesting that 'people are agents', emphasises the various histories of identities and interests that are brought to disciplinary systems. These histories provide the tactics by which disciplinary practices are sometimes inverted, disrupted, opposed and evaded.

Prichard develops the framework to incorporate more fully issues of embodiment, in particular what he terms 'body surface' and 'body depth' (2000:43). Thereby addressing the inscription and enactment of such surface and depth by tactically and strategically orientated discursive practices. The addition of these 'topographic' terms are argued for in the following ways:

These two axes, surface and depth, provide a means of reading the body's physical, verbal and spatial placement, and its unstable sensual, desiring and emotional inscription. The first axis, surface, involves the mapping of the spatial, verbal and physical materiality of embodiment. Body depth, meanwhile understands the body as political matter which is inscribed, folded and reworked through the dynamic interplay of desire, signification and practices. The point at issue is that we do not experience our bodies in terms of their biological organization, but as patterns of sensation and intensities. These patterns seem to be 'natural' but in the framework

presented here they are understood as ‘organized’ in the interplay of social practices, knowledge and the desiring body. (Prichard 2000:44)

In his analysis Prichard uses these topographic notions to extend and complement the Fiskeian concepts already outlined. In doing so he seeks to show how body depth is capable of creating new patternings, and not simply inscribed and ordered by the patternings of stations and locales. Such an approach allows Prichard to elucidate the power blocs involved in the reconstruction of his chosen research domain, that of Further and Higher Education (FHE) management, showing, in a similar fashion to that of du Gay (1996), how programmes of neo-liberal governance were translated into discursive practices, which together served to re-write the terms in which colleges and universities were managed. Of primary importance in this nexus is the transition from the ‘accountable’ manager to the ‘enterprising manager’, although as Prichard shows, with some subtlety, the rational and accountable elements of the former are retained in the latter, although they remain largely tacit. This mirrors the managerial writing of Senge (1995) when he talks of the ‘learning organization’ having control, but not controlling (see Jackson 2000). Further, this notion of power blocs ‘stationing’ managers is developed to show how the suffusion of particular processes and forms of advice form lines of latitude and longitude (Rose 1996), whose intersection construct managerial stations, through which managers are claimed to come to see themselves in ways which are at odds with the knowledges and practices of previous stationings, such as those of the ‘good bureaucrat’ or the ‘professional’.

This framework also allows something of a delineation of the notion of locales, since Prichard recognises the somewhat deterministic nature of the stationing that he describes. He is here anxious to stress the somewhat precarious and unstable aspects of the dispersal of mechanisms of power, and the ability of actors to mediate the experience of being subjects of/subject to such power. In doing so he asserts that:

managers are not told or forced to take their place. They take their places by ‘playing’ the knowledges, discursive and embodied practices upon themselves. These form an unstable grid which signifies the manager or managing, but whose effectivity in relation to embedded locales is constantly problematic. (2000:72)

Imperializing knowledges, he argues, seek to totalize and refine the station so to minimize the gaps through which locales can be established and reproduced. In contradistinction to the orthodox views considered earlier who arguably overplay the coherency and power of such imperializing knowledges, the postdualist approach utilised here considers these to be highly fragmentary and incoherent. The manager is not just a ‘docile’ reproducer of top-down Taylorist practices but a site of contradictory positionings within various discursive practices. The compliance, commitment and effort in extending Taylorist practices, for instance, is not

forced upon managers through domination, or collected through some simple exchange relation. It is variably extracted to a large extent through practices which produce them and which tie them to particular identities. These identities encompass a wide range of contradictory dispositions, desires, perceptions, emotions, positionings, practices and knowledges which make up the flows of embodied life in organizations. On this view there is no 'organization' and 'individual' as such. There is a power bloc but this is largely the effect of the suffusion of particular practices and knowledges, which are located and reproduced in certain spaces. Mostly however these practices and knowledges are dispersed and embedded in the 'paper structures' (Prichard 2000:75) of organizing. These are reasonably durable and provide ways of making judgements and decisions. They provide guides for action and organize ways of responding to particular problems. The 'individual' identity is thus an effect of insertion into the subject positions available in certain knowledges. Yet one's insertion is variable depending on the resonance of such subject positions with patterns of desire collected biographically through engagement with other psychosocial processes, typically highly gendered. In this sense power may be seen to be diffuse and ingrained. It has material effects, but is mirage-like, being embedded in the seemingly synaptic responses of people who have been inscribed with a particular relation to the self through particular practices which project power and authority onto those groups. There is certainly a good deal of purchase offered in relation to my research concerns here, with Prichard acknowledging to some extent the anxiety-producing effects of these sets of dynamics. Talking of his research respondents in FHE, he notes:

There is fear and anxiety over how to be in relation with others and with oneself. There are the new discursive practices and knowledges of 'managing'. There is an intensifying emphasis on credentials (particularly educational credentials, MBAs and the like, or 'real' management experience) in order to shore-up the new identity...[and] of course there is the fear and anxiety for one's job...but this is more directly and powerfully read as anxiety over the identities one embodies, and which receive approval and support. (2000:77-78)

In Prichard's work we see an extended attempt to operationalise an ontological commitment to discursive and knowledge practices. In doing so he argues that such practices and knowledges are actively engaged in 'materializing' identities, relations and bodies. Against 'mainstream' poststructuralism, he argues that knowledge practices are not simply multiple and contradictory. Rather, he retains a post-Marxist commitment to explicating the variably dominant and subordinated social, political and economic alliances created by such practices. He further develops these ideas to incorporate notions of embodiment. In this way he is able to point up the existence of a 'state of hostilities' in his research domain, such that the

ascendant knowledge practices are engaged in a war of attrition with the already embedded and variably subordinated academic and administrative knowledge practices. To the extent that we may imagine that such a state of hostilities exists in the social world at large, to greater or lesser degrees, we may perhaps see some further clues to the issues that form the basis of the present work. At the very least one might imagine that manager/students enter the educative encounter with some degree of trepidation with regard to which subject position(s) they might take up. For, as Prichard shows, in the creation of the 'enterprising manager' station, existing forms of knowledge are, variably, colonized and/or eradicated:

The managerial station is variably threatened, in part because in many sites it is the reproduction of other identities and relations which have a crucial bearing on the relative success of the range of activities for which the senior post holder is constructed as having responsibility. Improved performance paradoxically relies, to varying degrees, on the knowledges and practices of the subordinated professional locales...yet...rather than being subordinated and displaced, *some* knowledge practices have been 'drawn in' and productively put to work to appease top-down pressures and to reproduce the managerial station. (Prichard 2000:198-199)

In line perhaps with his epistemological commitments Prichard makes relatively weak claims about the 'evidence' he presents, other than arguing that the 'hold' that managerial discursive practices have on senior managers in FHE is unstable rather than inevitable, and that this 'hold' is the result of 'the repeated inscription of managerial identities by the knowledge practices of the managerial station' (2000:200). What remains unexplored are the processes through which such inscriptions are mediated. At the most simple level Prichard's approach is incapable of theorizing differences in relation to the forces acting to produce particular identities, issues which would seem to be vitally important in any consideration of the creation of identities, such as is common in forms of education.

Into the interior

Despite the gains displayed, such a schema as Prichard's runs the risk of what Hollway and Jefferson (2000b:136) have termed 'discourse determinism', in which the benefits of the discursive turn are undermined by the tendency to read subjectivity only through discourse. Despite the talk of biographically located, embodied, and gendered subjectivity, such determinism lacks a way of talking about such things in depth. Mirroring Hollway and Jefferson, Craib (1998:9) comments on the poststructuralist position outlined above, that, although it edges close to an acceptance of the necessity of the 'I':

There is...a peculiar instrumentality and an almost mystical quality in the way these arguments are pursued. There is talk about 'technologies of the self' and power seems

to appear as a disembodied force which can have 'effects'. There is a sense of the social as a machine which grinds up and re-forms everything with which it comes into contact. There are a number of problems with this way of thinking about the world, not least in the denial of the subjectivity that is responsible for the argument. We have here a peculiarly complex way of thinking of the 'normotic' (Bollas 1987) personality - it has an inner life, but that inner life is a product of the outer life and does not do anything.

For Craib, and Hollway and Jefferson, what is at issue here are the limits of sociology, such that the categories of that enterprise are seen as simply incapable of grasping the necessary elements of a full explanation of such issues as the creation of identity, assuming that cognition dominates people's lives. Further, the poststructural turn to language serves only to complicate the issue, while not offering any greater insight, since it often appears to render all as amenable to textual deconstruction (e.g. Usher, Bryant and Johnston 1997) while there is in fact 'rather more going on'.

The 'rather more' to which Craib alludes is the notion of experience. For him there is a need to retain experience as a relatively autonomous area of the self as a necessary corollary of the interest in identity, the self and emotions; issues which lie at the heart of contemporary management, and which come into view in the educative encounter. On Craib's view the interpellation or enrolment of subjects must always suppose the existence of an existing subject and analysis must therefore entail the exploration of this 'inner space'.

Similarly, for Hollway and Jefferson the weaknesses of understanding subjectivity in other than a socially determinist fashion, as discursively produced, leads to a desire to question how such discursive positions are 'occupied' by subjects, but without simply collapsing back into forms of voluntarism whereby individual subjects choose their positionings. Their chosen method of doing so entails the use of a more complex understanding of subjective positioning - that of forms of psychoanalysis. Utilising the core notion of a dynamic unconsciousness that sees the conceptualization of people's actions as unconsciously, and consciously, invested and motivated, allows the psychic as well as the social side of the equation to be addressed. In this way, they argue, one may account for the complexities and contradictions that typify people's subjectivity.

Although all psychoanalytic models are based, more or less, on theories that see subjectivity as biographically formed, as achieving their meaning and influence with reference to the way a person's past is 'sedimented into unconscious, as well as conscious mental processes: a past which itself signifies through fantasies of those earlier events, both at the time and subsequently' (Hollway and Jefferson 2000b:137), the ways in which this is theorised differ. Identifying a particular distinction between Freudian and Kleinian theory, Hollway and

Jefferson show how the Kleinian approach locates motivations in object-seeking rather than in the pleasure-seeking described by Freud. In this way Hollway and Jefferson (2000b:137) argue, such theory posits an essentially relational subject shaped in infancy:

The struggle to survive in the real conditions which confront the infant (not just material but psychological) generates fantasies and defences against anxiety which, for Klein, are central in simultaneously structuring both the self and its relationship to outside objects. These defences are intersubjective in that they operate between people through splitting, projection and introjection, rather than within an individual.

For Hollway and Jefferson this permanent state of anxiety is the source of people's actions, lives and relations with themselves and others. In this they assert that although anxiety is a psychological characteristic, it is not reducible to psychology: anxiety and the defences it precipitates are seen as complex and mediated responses to events in the real world, past and present. For them, the notion of the defended, anxious subject is simultaneously psychic and social; social since it is formed through discourses which are socially produced, intersubjectively; and psychic since it is the product of a unique biography of anxiety-producing events and the manner in which they have been defended against.

Two essential issues arise from this. Firstly, all persons are seen to engage in splitting such that they split objects into good or bad, thereby adopting what Klein (1975) calls the 'paranoid-schizoid' position; a position to which we may all resort in the face of self-threatening occurrences because it permits us to believe in a good object on which we can rely, uncontaminated by 'bad' threats which are split off elsewhere. In contrast the 'depressive' position involves the acknowledgement that good and bad can be contained within the same object. Theoretically this model assumes that people will, at various times and in differing contexts, exhibit a tendency of one or other position as their 'typical' response. For Klein, to the extent that coherence of self is achieved, not a once and for all achievement, this is enabled by the depressive position, that is by the acknowledgement of good and bad in the same object; in the other and in the self.

The second essential issue here is that persons are seen to make investments in a particular subject position as a consequence of their basic positions. In this way there is incorporated a sense of dynamics into the ways in which identities are formed, and a sense of both vectors - the social and the psychical - in play. This approach thus provides a sustained theoretical account of defences against anxiety by which 'rationality' and 'irrationality' can be explained:

Within this approach rationality depends on a capacity to acknowledge the mixed good and bad characteristics of the external world without compromising reality by

internal defensive needs which distort it through splitting. (Hollway and Jefferson 2000a:23)

Armed with this conception of an anxious, defended subject it is possible to move beyond both text and multiplicity, such that the complex and contradictory relation to management education on the part of managers may be illuminated. In particular, such an approach offers the possibility to tackle the issue at the centre of this research - that of understanding the interaction of contemporary managerial identity and management education, and how that interaction acts to shape manager/students' encounter with education. Further, such an approach offers the possibility of informing forms of educative practice through a greater level of understanding of the dynamics at work in the classroom.

Summary

In the first part of this thesis I have been concerned to review the extant literature around contemporary management and develop a tentative framework for thinking about the ways in which managerial identities are constructed. In reviewing the literature it is clear that both managerial and forms of critical thought oscillate between the familiar sociological categories of structure and agency. Moves towards poststructural and discursive forms of understanding seek to dissolve such dualism, but in turn are constrained by forms of discourse determination, such that their promise is weakened and they are rendered incapable of theorising subjects' relations to 'real life', relations that are often, as here, complex, conflictual and contradictory. In attempting to overcome this I have here begun to sketch out a framework that foregrounds forms of experience as relatively autonomous areas of subjects' lives and that influence their relation to the world. In the second part of the work I wish to deploy this framework to examine the interaction of such identities with management education. My theme is how these two aspects come together, shape one another and lead to particular outcomes and experiences, notably those I outlined in the Prologue.

However, before drawing on my empirical study of manager/students in management education, I want to unpack what is meant when we talk about management education. In the next chapter, therefore, I begin by delineating the contours of management education, indicating the central, although ambiguous, importance of the domain.

Chapter Three: Management education; a contested terrain

The trite simplicities and positivistic homilies of the traditional MBA programme have come under increasing criticism for being simply too crude to deal with the complexities of the post-industrial, post-Cold war world. (*Time Higher Educational Supplement* 26.11.93: 13)

Introduction

Since the 1980s a series of reports have drawn attention to what they collectively describe as the parlous state of British management education (Mangham and Silver 1986, Constable and McCormick 1987, Handy 1987). There is a good deal of difference in these writings in terms of both the diagnosis and cure for the malaise, but all are premised on a concern about the relation between current forms of management education and the near future, a future which is seen to require a rethink of both the content and the form that management education takes. As Grey (1996: 9) notes:

On the one hand management education is somehow out of step with the modern world and (by implication) fails to produce the managers who can adequately manage. On the other hand this failure is a reflection of the intellectual inadequacy of the content of management education programmes.

Such reports may be read, in the spirit of Prichard's notion of 'stationings', as part of a governmental effort to recast management education within a more 'relevant' frame, such that it should be more tightly harnessed to economic performance, primarily in the light of increased international competition. On this view the panoply of reports and the initiatives that followed them may be seen to be actively involved in the discursive construction of management and the manager, through forms of management education. They thus form part of an on-going concern with issues of managerial effectiveness and economic performance. Their explicit terrain is largely that of matters of curriculum and pedagogic technique such that they propose new forms of teaching and qualification, but may also be regarded as constructing new ways to be for managers, and incidentally, for management educators. In this chapter I introduce these debates and map the terrain on which 'my' managers are encountered, and encounter me.

New times for management education

As I have previously noted, it has become commonplace to regard organization and management, specifically, as having entered a new era, variously characterised as post-industrial, post-bureaucratic, Post-Fordist or post-modern. Such a view can be found both

among theorists (Clegg 1990) and more practitioner-oriented writers (Handy 1987, 1994, Peters T. 1992). There are however at least two responses in terms of the meaning and implications of these new times for practising managers.

The first of these might be termed the 'technique and skill gap' response. On this view there is a need for new techniques and skills to deal with the new challenges managers face. A wide range of organizational responses can be subsumed under this heading, for example, forms of organizational flexibility such as Total Quality Management; Human Resource Management; the restructuring of organizations, and the use of information systems to 'flatten' work organizations or create virtual organizations. As a corollary of this response managers are 'invited' to change the ways they think about managing. Such an invitation comes in the form of techniques of, for example, creative thinking (Henry 1991), or of 'thriving on chaos' (Peters T. 1992). Importantly, such responses assume that although managing might have become more difficult, it is still, in principle, possible. Such a response has found its way into a good deal of management education such that courses typically contain units with titles such as 'managing change'; 'managing culture' and so on. These units are typified by both new analyses of the situation organizations face and by a range of 'new' skills, in which managers are exhorted to construe themselves in a variety of ways, typified perhaps by du Gay's notion of the entrepreneurial manager:

In opposition to the personally detached bureaucrat, 'entrepreneurial' new wave management is represented as calculatingly charismatic in essence. Managers are charged with 'leading' their subordinates to the promised land of individual liberty and self-fulfilment by helping them to acquire the status of business person. (du Gay 2000:66)

This language of leading and charisma strongly imply a very different role for managers, and by implication the courses of education and development that they undertake.

The second broad response has as its central characteristic the view that management is no longer a viable activity because we now live in a world of irredeemable turbulence, irrationality and ambiguity. In strong versions of such a view the promises of management have *always* been illusory because of the inherently uncontrollable nature of social relations. MacIntyre (1981:106-7), a central advocate of such a view, writes that the managers' claim to authority:

...is fatally undermined when we recognize that he (sic) possesses no sound stock of law-like generalizations and when we realise how weak the predictive power available to him is...the dominance of the manipulative mode in our culture is not and cannot be accompanied by very much actual success in manipulation...The notion of social control embodied in the notion of expertise is indeed a masquerade. Our social

order is in a very literal sense out of our, and indeed, anyone's control. No one is or could be in charge... The manager as *character* is other than he at first sight seems to be; the social world of everyday hard-headed practical pragmatic no-nonsense realism which is the environment of management is one which depends for its sustained existence on the systematic perpetuation of misunderstanding and of belief in fictions.

For MacIntyre this condemnation of the manager is bound up with his whole rebuttal of science, and social science in particular, since, on his account, they seek to replace God. In this he draws attention to what he sees as the hubristic claims of social science in denying 'the permanence of Fortuna', Machiavelli's 'bitch goddess of unpredictability' (1981:93). Despite MacIntyre's call for a return to what might be described as pre-modern values, principally rooted in Thomism, such ideas have been taken up enthusiastically by many associated with postmodernism (e.g. Cooper and Burrell 1988, Jeffcutt 1994), resonating as it does with the radical relativism that informs that position.

My own position lies somewhere between these two possibilities. Regardless of whether one considers management to be irredeemably flawed and hubristic, or as capable of being reformed, the fact is that it remains an activity of central importance in modern societies, and that the management academy has a role in producing and reproducing the practices of management. What happens in management schools matters because of their link with the wider world. Thus, whether the pretensions of management to be able to manage the world are defensible, the consequences of the belief that they *are* remains a social fact. As has been noted, the current age is one of manufactured risk and uncertainty as a consequence of attempts to intervene in the world. On this account the fact that management and management education are socially important means that it is vital that they be subject to critical scrutiny.

Towards critical management education

The implication of the foregoing for management education would seem to be two-fold. If it is assumed that management education exists to provide managers with the knowledge and skills they need to operate effectively, then the first position outlined above clearly leads to the conclusion that managers need to be equipped with a very different type of education to that traditionally offered. There would seem to remain a place for learning the techniques of 'new age management' such as culture management, quality management and so on, but the emphasis shifts away from specific techniques towards matters of 'disposition', such that a greater emphasis is placed on human and analytical skills, 'learning to learn' and 'flexibility'. The second response suggests that there is little that management education can do to develop manager's abilities, education being 'wedded' to an instrumental, modernist, view of the

world. A less extreme version of such a view, and one which may be seen to inform my own teaching position, is that managers can and should be taught the limits of their influence through an appreciation of the limits of their rationality (Roberts 1996).

On the basis of what has been said so far, it is possible to identify two broad perspectives on contemporary management education. The first of these is that the content, and maybe the methods, of management education need to be changed in order to equip managers with the ability to work effectively in a complex and changing world. The second is that management is largely an illusory activity and that management education should abandon its pretensions to be able to provide managers with any skills or knowledges at all. As Grey and French (1996) note both these positions arise within the context of a set of assumptions, principally that management education stands in a more or less functional relationship to management practice. However, they argue, this assumption is one which can, and has been, subjected to critical scrutiny, typically by members and fellow travellers of the Manchester School (Willmott 1994b, Grey and Mitev 1995).

This assumption of functionality is built upon a model of professional practice in which there exists a body of knowledge which is understood to be central to effective practice. The archetype of this model is that of medical education, where the licence to practise is contingent on the acquisition and demonstration of a well-defined set of knowledges and skills. As Grey and French point out, management has never been strictly comparable to medicine, not least because it is possible to operate as a manager with no form of training or accreditation at all. To some extent there is a professionalization of management (Reed and Anthony 1992) but this is not well advanced in the UK. There is too the issue that the aims, purposes and methods of management are not well defined and remain highly contested, unlike the base assumptions of medicine. Connected to this is the fact that there is nothing much like a body of undisputed knowledge in management, such as that of anatomical structure in medicine.

By implication, these debates draw upon some extremely long-standing issues around the nature of education and its relation to society, notably the distinction between knowledge as a virtue in itself and knowledge as a utility. The 'liberal education' of Newman (1852) has historically formed the primary influence here and has resulted in British universities at least being relatively decoupled from direct economic utility. The issue for management education is that it is rather brutally torn between these two conceptions of education (Engwall 1992), not least because of its fragmented knowledge base and reputational structures. One way of reading the 'stationing' of managers in FHE, considered in the last chapter, is precisely to see it as a process of the changing emphasis towards a utilitarian conception of education. As

Grey and French illustrate, the position of management education in relation to education is complex. In the context of the triumph of neo-liberal politics:

...education is seen to be socially valuable to the extent to which it contributes to economic prosperity and international competitiveness...[and] education in an individualistic, consumerist culture is seen to be personally valuable to the extent to which it enhances the economic and career positions of individuals. This ideological terrain has tended to benefit management education, which can lay claim to validity on both of these criteria. However, this claim is contingent on the continuation of theoretically justified and supported functional links between management education, the effectiveness of management practices and the performance of individual managers. (Grey and French 1996: 5)

In this context too liberal alternatives (locales) find themselves in retreat and with a decreased ability to mount a defence against utility. Even from within, liberal notions of education find themselves under attack, the fragmentation of liberal thought in the face of the debate over the 'canon' of 'dead white males' and the related 'death of the subject' having served to undermine resistance to utilitarian forms of education. The problem that this leaves is that of how to mount a challenge to such forms. For Grey and French such a challenge entails a necessary admission of the provisionality and ambiguity of possible alternatives, the stress being on process rather than the working out of a distinct model. In addition, such an approach begins from a desire to stress the educative rather than the managerial with management largely conceived of as an activity and the education of those within it is premised on an appreciation of its social, political and moral practice dimensions, rather than as a set of techniques and skills to be learned and subsequently applied:

Students of management would not necessarily be or become managers themselves...The archetype for this view of management education might be political science...This de-coupling of management education and management practice implies more than a shift in the content of management education away from skills and towards analysis. It also implies a re-evaluation of the normative commitments of management education. When management education aspires to enhance managerial effectiveness it is implicitly or explicitly espousing the desirability of managerial effectiveness. The de-coupling of management education and management entails exposing management to wholesale critical scrutiny. (Grey and French 1996: 6)

For Grey and French, and Grey and Mitev (1995) before them, the adoption of a 'dialectical' style of pluralism within the management classroom, in which the managerialist position is presented, acknowledged, but then critiqued, is the preferred stance:

We would thus have moved to a situation where management education was no longer functionally related to management, but was a reflection of prevailing debates within management research. Paradoxically, however, we would have also come full circle to the challenge facing management as an activity, where many of the old certainties have been dissolved. Thus in distancing management education from management we would not only be doing intellectual justice to management research, but also might well be offering an education which was closer to the realities of management practice. (Grey and French 1996:10)

Commonsense and experience

There remains though the matter of commonsense. As Grey and Hatch (2000) note, management education is premised on a paradoxical conjunction of both relevance and rigour. For the first, relevance, there is an overriding, public, concern that management education should be of practical utility and value to the 'real world', a construct that is held as separate from and, in some ways superior to, the 'academic world'. For the second, rigour, there is a requirement that what is presented as knowledge is in some way underpinned by scientific veracity, a veracity that typically privileges the academy, and downplays practical knowledge. This conjunction manifests itself through a focus on equipping managers with the necessary skills and knowledges that they are considered to need, in order to manage in the workplace, but tempered by a view of such knowledge as being more than that which might be encountered in the workplace. For Grey and Mitev (1995), such a conjunction leads to what they term 'technicism', a commitment to utility and instrumental rationality. Importantly, such technicism calls upon a range of commonsense ideas in order to circumscribe and justify the domain and means of management intervention. But although such commonsensism is elevated above 'theoretical' or 'academic' thought, it cannot be equated with some kind of basic, pre-theoretical knowledge. On the contrary, commonsense implies a highly complex, albeit unarticulated, set of theoretical commitments. Commonsense is therefore something that is accomplished. As Anthony (1986:139) notes in answering the question why management education courses are not more demanding:

The ostensible explanation is that the managers would find such [courses] impractical, unreal, 'academic', [but] managers reject critical disciplines and concepts because they have been taught to reject them.

On this basis, commonsense is to be seen not as a given which has to be worked within, but as a limiting construct which must be worked away from.

As Grey and Mitev comment, the appeal of commonsense is considerable, arguing that the whole edifice of management is built upon the commonsense notion that management is a

necessary and desirable social activity that is morally and politically neutral, thus allowing its conceptualization as a technical activity. In attempting to explain this they argue that this commonsense will typically lead management students to be rather more comfortable when learning techniques which they see as practically orientated, useful and easily applicable; such comfort being seen as deriving from the fact that insofar as the learning of techniques re-enforces an existing commonsense view, students are not required to reflect critically upon themselves or the world around them. On this view then, and rather like Prichard, they claim it is the material, embodied reality of 'doing management' that reinforces and accomplishes commonsensism. There is though a paradox, since the self-same students can, at least occasionally, be heard to bemoan the lack of stimulation and tedium associated with the passive receipt of commodified knowledge. Such complaints are typically expressed through matters of style and presentation of teaching, and are typically addressed through such media, but they may be more symptomatic of a restricted understanding of the world which is entailed by a commitment to commonsense. 'Commonsense requires the unquestioned delimitation of the terrain of relevance from that of irrelevance' (Grey and Mitev 1995:79). This places management education in a paradoxical position; what is to be taught has to be practically orientated towards commonsensical understandings of the real world, otherwise it is 'only' theorising, but, it is so orientated, it is 'only' commonsense. In such a circumstance the default position of many management educators - that of the presentation of esoteric models, accompanied by 'real-world' examples becomes explicable. Teaching in this sense becomes more than commonsense, but never challenges commonsense. Like Reed and Anthony (1992), I regard this as self-defeating, since it fails to serve students well, by turns inflating, then deflating, their sense of hubris, as they discover that the models no longer apply, or that the case study material is rather unlike their own organizations. In the face of the uncontrollability of social relations (MacIntyre 1981), such 'education' is likely to be regarded by those who have experienced it as out of touch with real life, as 'impractical' and 'academic'; thus is the antagonism of management - vs - academy sustained.

Making an example of Grey and Hatch

In considering this important distinction between the real world and the academic world Grey and Hatch (2000), consider that it implies a hierarchical pairing of the real and the unreal, academia and not-academia. The articulation of such a distinction is typically made through a conflict between theory/theorising and practice/acting. However, such a distinction does not stand up to close examination since both managers and academics typically engage in elements of both activities:

This would seem to imply that the antagonism between academics and managers is not so much ontological (theory vs practice) but cultural and institutional (different kinds of theory and practice). The labels of theory and practice may be part of the language and resources that are drawn upon by the subcultures, without reflecting sustainable difference. To put it another way, it is not that managers are *really* atheoretical practitioners and academics are impractical theorists, but it may be that the identities of each are articulated and sustained that way. (Grey and Hatch 2000: 200)

This reference to subcultures illustrates Grey and Hatch's main line of attack. In accounting for this state of hostilities they point to the role of differentiated subcultures in developing and sustaining the protagonists in their world views, pointing to the differing sets of beliefs and values that underpin each. Of relevance to the present work, they point to an important distinction between what passes for 'heroics' in each of these 'small worlds'. In the case of the managerial camp, heroics are built around decisive action and results, commonly in the face of adversity:

...the managerial subculture values practicality in the sense of wanting people to relate everything they do to the efficiency and effectivity of the organizational systems the managers have responsibility for operating. The managerial subculture also values the ability to create economic success through innovation... Thus originality in the managerial subculture is based in action - being able to *do* something with knowledge and ideas. The quintessential act of courage for a manager is to take a big decision... People whose personal styles are assertive, commanding and rational have the best chance of achieving heroic status in the managerial subculture... (Grey and Hatch 2000:201)

The obverse of this is represented through the academic subculture:

[Their] beliefs and values manifest in orientations toward reflection, understanding and explanation, and enhance the heroic potential of those who are thoughtful, reasoned and logical. The quintessential act of courage for an academic is holding onto an unpopular or unappreciated idea until it is acknowledged by others. (ibid:202)

While defining the nature of the sacred within each camp, such features also serve to contribute to the boundaries between them. Grey and Hatch consider matters such as time, breadth and control as important markers here. Taken together they constitute mutual systems whereby the myths of each serve to sustain their sets of opposing associations. Through these and a host of other mutually dividing myths, assumptions and expectations, the boundary between academics and managers is marked and maintained and the theory/practice

dichotomy is granted face validity. In so doing the soil of antagonism is made fertile, and bears fruit in the form of derogatory stereotypes of ‘the other’. To this point the schema proposed by Grey and Hatch appears rather monolithic, but they are concerned to show that in fact there are subtle variations within and between the camps, such that typically there will be ‘border crossings’ between them. Indeed, their principal explanation of antagonism in the management classroom relies on the relative instability of the two subcultures, such that it is the slippage between them that antagonises the other. In developing this further they propose four pairings, two of which are antagonistic and two of which are harmonious (Table 1)

		FACULTY	
		MANAGERIAL	ACADEMIC
STUDENTS	MANAGERIAL	Harmonious, but students may see little added educational value	Antagonistic, but students may accept this as University culture
	ACADEMIC	Antagonistic, but students may accept this as MBA culture	Harmonious, but students may see little added practical value

Table 1 Subcultural pairings
Grey and Hatch (2000:221)

While this may be regarded as a fairly persuasive account of antagonism in management education there remain issues to be resolved. Grey and Hatch themselves note that while this antagonism is present, it is not overwhelming; business and management schools continue to thrive and students continue to enrol. This is testimony to the degree of harmony that is present but is also testimony to the degree of *rapprochement* that is effected. Drawing on Thomas’ (1997) typology of the history of management education, (Table 2 overleaf) we may

see the development of a variety of mediations of the essential tensions (Kuhn 1977) ⁶. In the contemporary moment what Thomas terms the ‘New Paradigm’ is paramount, such that the characterization of the manager is that which I described in the previous chapter as that of manager as scientist. Such a paradigm assumes that the place of the university in delivering management education is paramount, but that the nature of that knowledge is predominantly scientifically generated and is specifically about management as a domain. In this way a definite link between academic knowledge and managerial practice is claimed to exist. Thus antagonism is mediated by the fact that whilst academics are engaged in a scientific enterprise, mastery of this science by managers will yield something of practical use. It is of course precisely this consensus that is under attack, as I outlined in the previous chapter. Such developments are leading to what Thomas terms ‘Post-Paradigm’ management education. Here, the failure of scientific consensus is leading to an increasing belief in methodological pluralism, such that the focus of management education is to be on creativity, learning to learn, and problem solving. In the post-paradigm case we may imagine that antagonism is likely to be mediated by the fact that academics continue to provide the frameworks to address the circumstances that face managers in the contemporary moment, although to the extent that there is rather more rhetoric than reality in relation to new organizational forms and ways of working, this approach seems unlikely to be too convincing to managers. In this sense we may say that management education is currently operating on a cusp between the new and post paradigm. Such a situation may well be imagined to be a painful place for both sides of the divide.

Paradigm	Mode of education	Outcome of education	Role of academics	Role of manager	Requires/assumes
Pre	Informal	Experience	None	Training	Limited complexity
Old	Liberal	Ethos	Guardians of tradition	Neophytes	Social Consensus
New	Technical	Knowledge	Discover general laws	Apply laws	Epistemological consensus
Post	Developmental	Reflection	Facilitate learning	Adapt	Uniformly high complexity

Table 2 Management Education Paradigms

Adapted from Thomas (1997)

⁶ Importantly Thomas considers each of these paradigms to be in play at the present time, such that they continue to exert an influence on the forms of management education, even when they have been largely eclipsed. For example, he shows how the pre-paradigm notions of practical ‘on the job’ education continue to serve as something of an ideal, even in the post-paradigmatic moment.

Can't live with it: can't live without it

In accounting for the continued relationship between business and the academy, in the face of the perpetual antagonisms noted here Grey and Hatch point up an important dimension so far unconsidered here - that of status. As a number of historians of management have pointed out (e.g. Mant 1977), the public perception of management, for most of its life, at least in Europe, has been one of pretty lowly standing, to put it mildly. The search for status is what has led management into the embrace of universities; but at a price:

If we put together the idea that management lacked and wanted the status that universities could provide, with the notion that managerial subculture is hostile to and dismissive of academia (if not vice versa), then we can clearly see how antagonism is built into the fabric of management education. (Grey and Hatch 2000:210)

The interesting issue here is that this search for status is rarely acknowledged, at least in this form. Rather status has to emerge, as it were, 'accidentally', and is founded upon how difficult, worthwhile and trustworthy an occupation is. A status deliberately sought/bought, at least here, would seem to be no status at all. In this sense the whole enterprise is not only riven by an essential antagonism, as Grey and Hatch suggest, but is also founded on what might be called 'bad faith', such that it denies an important aspect of itself.

The continued existence of management education therefore relies on its ability to deliver on two fronts: that of the continued production, expression and delivery of a technical element of management practice that warrants university training; and a mechanism of socialization into certain forms of conduct and 'responsibilized' behaviour (Leavitt 1991, Grey 1997). Status is thus not spoken of directly but is indicated through forms of competence and conduct. Competence, the notion that management education will make people better managers than they might have been, lies at the heart of the idea of 'relevance', an idea that is primarily seen as having a commonsense character. This is perhaps the source of the often reported feeling that students appear to want to learn what they already know. It is also perhaps what lies at the heart of my own personal unease in the educative encounter. As seems clear what counts as relevance is essentially contested, depending on an interpretation of those issues such as time, breadth, depth and control that I noted earlier. Now it may be objected that the status of courses such as MBAs is only achieved to the extent that managerial performance is, in fact, enhanced. There is in fact no evidence that such a relationship exists, indeed there are claims that the opposite is true (Mintzberg 1989). Moreover the relationships here are largely circular, so that the highest status programmes, at least those ranked highest, attract the most competent and intelligent manager/students. In this sense MBAs often validate rather than produce competence. For this reason participants

seem rather likely to challenge the utility of the programme in terms of the production of competence.

This situation is exacerbated by the fact that the status of qualifications is largely governed by their rarity. The role of universities in regulating the supply of qualifications is commonly at the point of admission rather than at graduation, tending to belittle the education process that takes place between the two. In turn this tends to heighten the antagonism over relevance and shifts power for deciding what is relevant from the faculty to the manager/students. Such a situation seems to be a primary source of antagonism, such that the programme may appear to be an artificially erected hurdle which prevents students from getting the outcome they desire. This is not to suggest that all students decry the value of MBAs and are entirely credentialist, but it is to point to built-in antagonisms as a result of the conflation of issues of status with issues of competence, and relevance with profit seeking. This may be seen as an issue of the academic subculture speaking inadequately to the managerial subculture, but if such a subcultural distinction were dissolved the result would likely be something that students did not want and business schools could not sell.

Turning to the issue of conduct it would seem that all educational programmes are concerned with issues of socialization to some extent. In the case of management education this is complicated by the issues of antagonism that I have outlined here. There is for example little sense in which contemporary management educators act as 'elders' or mentors to manager/students. Despite this, management conduct may well be homogenized through management education, primarily through immersion in a linguistic community, and through the construction of networks. This would suggest that antagonism is necessary for reasons other than status. Management necessarily contains a tension between reflection and action, so the MBA might fruitfully be read as an institutional embodiment of working on this cusp. By projecting stereotypical conceptions of self and other onto the academic and managerial subcultures the tension becomes culturally managed and expressed. Management education is thus the battleground on which societal values and institutional meanings are fought over. On this account the antagonism that has been described here as endemic is also essential, the challenge thus becomes one of how to provoke, preserve and work within this essential antagonism.

Discussion

This brief review of the topography of contemporary management education shows that terrain to be highly fissured, with consensus and conflict co-existing through the establishment of various kinds of accommodations between what must, I suppose, be termed the warring parties. While such accounts provide compelling pictures of the broad processes

at work in the management education encounter, what remains to be explored is the lived experience of manager/students operating on this terrain, in particular the emotional and psychological components of such experience. Such matters would seem to be of considerable importance in trying to work within the essential antagonism described and celebrated by Grey and Hatch. As Reynolds (1999) shows in his consideration of critical management education (CME), that project seems to be weakened in its endeavour through the ways in which it is experienced by manager/students, within their context. Firstly, he argues that the possibilities of CME being taken up are limited by both resistance on the part of managers, and assimilation through dominant discourses of control and efficiency. The second limitation, the 'dark side', is that which Reynolds takes from the work of Brookfield (1994) whereby critical reflection of the kinds that CME provokes are seen to be deleterious in a number of ways, notably in respect of the psychological and emotional impact that it may have:

It is understandable that learning which entails the dismantling of ideas or assumptions which up until that point had seemed 'true' - or true enough to provide a basis for choosing and acting - should be troublesome... For some, critical reflection may involve replacing one set of certainties with another, but for others the disconfirmation which accompanies the fracturing of firmly-held beliefs may result in profound anxiety and a loss of the sense of identity which those earlier ideas had supported. (Reynolds 1999:178)

Simon (1992:81) describing attempts to encourage graduate students to 'open up and think through questions of how education might be understood as a moral and political practice as well as a technical one', observes that this process not only raises hope but provokes fear, as 'old investments' are questioned and either modified or discarded. By the same token it is not surprising that becoming more aware of the historical and contextual forces that have helped shape our circumstances may, by undermining assumptions of individual autonomy, induce a sense of powerlessness.

Further, learning is also a social activity such that it typically takes place in a social environment in which the adoption and open acknowledgement of 'doing differently' is likely to result in what Brookfield terms 'cultural suicide'. Similarly, participants who are thought not to have understood or been willing to accept a critical approach can of course become marginalized within the course itself. They may be seen as resistant, deluded or mystified (Buckingham 1996) and by not sharing with tutors and their peers in what Keddy (1971) calls 'a reciprocity of perspective', may be disadvantaged.

These issues would seem to be equally, if not more important, when one is engaged in forms of management education that do not offer a clear set of alternative perspectives, as would

seem to be increasingly indicated even within mainstream forms. In the absence of *any* perspective, other than one that suggests everything to that point has been wrong, is likely to be received with some degree of psychic discomfort, by many.

Taking up this issue of anxiety in education French (1997), drawing primarily on the work of Bion (1990), suggests that all teaching-learning encounters are relationship-based and therefore, potentially at least, a threat to the ego, and therefore anxiety provoking. On this view relationships, in the sense of simply being with others, are productive of primitive anxieties concerning one's standing in the eyes of others:

In the moment of learning, the ego stakes are even higher. A much more complex interaction occurs than the mere transmission of information from one to another... Although teaching-learning situations can of course involve minimal anxiety, any exposure to change represents, at a deep level, a potentially fundamental threat to the personality, variously described as the fear of breakdown, or of catastrophic change. (French 1997:485)

Such anxiety is commonly excluded from the lexicon of teaching, certainly, as I have shown above, from management education.⁷ Paradoxically, such anxiety is also necessary to the process of learning at all. This suggests that anxiety can be regarded as source of creativity and learning, but must be 'contained', in what Winnicott (1990:145) termed a 'good-enough' way. This suggests that the figure of the teacher is rather more akin to that of the analyst in the creation of a safe learning space in which anxiety is allowed to flourish, sufficient to promote creativity, but not to threaten.

In the circumstances of change that I have outlined so far, the possibilities for the creation, or even acknowledgement of, such a capacious view of management education would seem to be rather thin. Even those styled critical management educators seem to pay little attention to these elements in the educative encounter. Willmott (1994:130) does comment that the 'insights of critical management theory may simply fuel cynicism and/or guilt', but this is far as it goes.

Taken together, the fissured terrain of management education, in conjunction with the fissured terrain of management itself, as outlined in chapters one and two, suggest a need to explore just how these aspects are entwined and cash out in practice. Such an exploration would seem vital in relation to issues of educational design, and to discharge what Reynolds, and I, consider the responsibility that comes with the territory of education. The following chapters represent my attempt at such an exploration, undertaken with both these issues in mind, and within the epistemological commitments set out earlier.

⁷ A notable exception is that of Salzberger-Wittenberg *et al* (1983).

Chapter Four: Theory and method in psychosocial research

The notion...of historically self-conscious analysts reconstructing fully contextualized historical actors and representing them in a theoretically-sophisticated narrative that takes account of multiple causes and effects is at the heart of the historic turn (McDonald 1996:10)

Introduction

In this study I have been interested in exploring the ways in which the changes in the identity of management interact with the practices of management education. Despite a great deal of work in both areas, relatively little is known about the ways in which these two aspects interrelate. This is, perhaps, partly a consequence of the fact that the identity of management has been conceived of and explored in so many different ways, and partly a consequence of the great diversity of management education practice. But, as I have argued here, it would also seem to be a consequence of the limitations of the paradigms through which such issues have been viewed.

Several commentators (e.g. Watson 1994), have pointed out that despite the broad literature on the identity of management and managers, very little is known about the range of experiences of 'doing management' and the meanings they hold for individuals. The search for broad categories, or the 'truth' of management, has tended to eclipse any quest for understanding diversity or individual experiences, and there has been little attempt in either mainstream or more critical research to explain or theorise the processes involved in managers learning. There is a sense in which traditional work has 'naturalised' the process of becoming a manager and doing management, and has failed to see experiences of management, and their expression, as socially constructed or historically contingent. The main objective of my research has been to investigate the relationship between the contemporary experience of management, and management education discourses and practices (as linked and mutually dependent social and psychological phenomena), using a qualitative, narrative case study approach. In the theoretical framework the relationship between the identity of management and management education were conceived in dynamic, mutually constitutive terms. The research therefore set out, not only in pursuit of 'findings' but also to develop an appropriate theoretical and methodological framework for an interdisciplinary, psychosocial approach to management and management education. While extant research has illuminated certain aspects of these issues, it seems of little value in understanding individual experiences as a whole; these experiences remain

decontextualized in the research process and personal meanings are largely left out of the account. As in a good deal of other social research, the measurement of internal psychological states and the cataloguing of individual 'adjustments' to new forms of managerial identity construction, which tends to characterise the literature, largely rests upon a 'black box' view of the subject which, in turn, rests upon a limited view of the individual and renders the social largely peripheral. By contrast, the psychosocial approach drawn upon here seeks to overcome the individual-society dualism and to regard instead the human subject as irredeemably experiencing and social. This chapter demonstrates how a psychosocial approach resists the sociological/psychological disciplinary boundary, and employs concepts and methods that deliberately transgress such boundaries. Applying this approach to management identity implies a need to theorise the individual-society interrelationship. It also implies moving beyond the idea that issues of managerial identity are likely to affect management education in some causal manner. In this framework, management education processes and discourses are just as likely to affect managerial identity as vice versa, and the causal paradigm is abandoned in favour of a more interactive model which emphasises the mutual constitution of individual feelings, cultural discourses and social structures. A psychosocial approach thus involves recognising the ways in which discourses of management provide frameworks within which manager/students think, feel and act, and make sense of their experience. In common with other developments in social science more generally, this implies a recognition of the interrelationship of human agency and social structure, and a commitment to understanding the ways in which human subjects act to negotiate, resist and/or reproduce broader social structures. Crucially, management education depends on human subjects engaging with it and, from a psychosocial view, human activities are seen ultimately to depend upon how the subject constructs meaning in the context of his/her immediate circumstances and life history. Such a view necessarily accords a major and critical significance to language, notably in its constitutive effects and the sense in which language is seen to reflect something of the unconscious processes of individuals (Hollway 1989).

Methodological implications

One immediate consequence of according priority to language is a need to be clear about the nature of the research encounter. Traditionally, the interview in social scientific research has been as a means to collect data (Kvale 1996). This study draws upon an evolving approach in that the aim has been to facilitate subjects in talking about their own experiences in their own words and articulating their own concerns, as far as possible, rather than providing responses to parameters provided by me. The main focus of interest was in how subjects themselves

told about their experiences of management and management education, and in what discourses they invoked, and in what ways, in giving accounts. As has been argued in recent years (e.g. Silverman 2000), traditional research interviewing styles can lead respondents into giving particular kinds of responses, which may have more to do with interviewees' perceptions of the research and the needs of the researcher than the ways they would otherwise articulate their experiences. Such responses may, or may not, tell us a great deal about the subject's world of meanings. This is not argue that there is a free-floating 'objective' way of talking about oneself, that can be accessed by others in some non-social way, to argue thus is simply to repeat the errors of the past, but is to foreground the need to elicit rich material that does justice to the complexities, ambivalences and contradictions that are presumed to be part of people's experiences.

As Hollway and Jefferson (2000c) argue, the postmodern insight that subjectivity is discursively produced, and is not some inner essence, is a reminder for all biographers that the biographical 'I' is always the product of a set of mediations. The first of these is the theoretical assumption that research subjects are knowledgeable agents, willing and able to tell one what life is like. On this basis 'good' interviewers are those who facilitate the emergence of the interviewees own 'authentic' voice. The assumptions behind the psychosocial approach to research assume the opposite - that subjects are precisely motivated *not* to know certain aspects of themselves and that the production of biographical accounts are typically constructed to avoid such knowledge. Further, all biographical accounts draw on conventions for representing the self. Such conventions necessarily have effects on the biographical subject that is produced. The most obvious of these is that the researcher and researched will search for a coherent 'thread' in the account. However, if the assumptions of the psychosocial approach are to be honoured, with 'irrationality' and contradiction being the stuff from which identities are formed, and the concomitant reliance on interpretation, then what is significant in accounts is different.

For Hollway and Jefferson, such mediations point to a reliance on narrative methods, such that these invite respondents to tell stories rather than explain their actions and feelings. From this they develop a number of axioms that have shaped my research. Firstly, the research strategy is one that seeks to 'get behind' subjects' defences. Free association is the method adopted for this. A second assumption that, while defended subjects are knowledgeable about the events of their lives, they may remain unclear about the complete meaning of such events. On this basis biographical meanings are the constructed products of theoretically driven readings of the stories people tell. Lastly, data analysis is never free of their intersubjective provenance, the figure of the subject maintains a powerful presence in the analysis of data.

The narrative turn

Feminist researchers have developed perhaps the most comprehensive range of approaches which ‘allow’ the priorities of the research respondent to emerge. These are predominantly based upon forms of personal narrative elicitation. Mishler (1986) for example, asserts that, given the chance, people will commonly use a research encounter to ‘tell their story’, and indeed that traditional question and answer formats actually suppress story telling. A recent emphasis on the importance of narrative methodologies in the social sciences (Chamberlayne *et al* 2000) can be seen as an attempt to redress some of the limitations in more traditional approaches for studying the complexity of lives and selves. In social science, narrative knowing - the storying of events into order and meaning (Sandelowski 1991) – is increasingly seen as a viable alternative to a discredited objectified knowledge. The ‘impulse to narrate’, noted by a variety of thinkers as central to being human (Bruner 1987, Sarbin 1986, Polkinghorne 1988) is now widely seen as a methodological tactic such that its elicitation and analysis is seen as central to understanding the development of the self through narrative (Day Sclater 1998). Further, ‘narrations are rich in indexical statements’ (Bauer 1996:3) so that narrations are commonly held to make high degrees of reference to concrete events in place and time, thus indicating the interplay between self and actual life events. For Plummer (1995:16) personal narratives are not merely texts; rather they are spoken by ‘breathing, passionate people in the full stream of social life’. In this way he further indicates the ways in which the stories people tell about themselves are rooted both in the material circumstances of their lives and their psychological lives, and related to their biographies, passions, and desires:

In taking up discursive positions, living, breathing, desiring, embodied subjects align themselves with cultural signifiers which both facilitate and constrain actions, thoughts and feelings. Narratives thus mediate between embodied subjects and situations, and are reducible to neither. (Day Sclater 1999:118)

Interview narratives

However, the narratives with which I am concerned here are not simply the products of persons alone, but are formed in interaction with me, through the interview encounter. As Hollway and Jefferson (1997, 2000a) note, the concepts of transference and countertransference, as invisible unconscious dynamics, are likely to be in play in such encounters. Such issues are not easily side-stepped and regardless of one’s stance they shape the encounter in important ways. Within narrative studies, and in particular those influenced, as here, by forms of psychoanalytical thought, such issues form part of the material to be worked with:

The common ground...is a recognition of the operation of unconscious dynamics, the existence of 'emotional subtexts' in research interviews, in the absence of which a particular story would not have been told in the way it was...signification is not just a linguistic process; it is also a social, intersubjective and psychological one too. (Day Sclater 1999:119-120)

Such a set of recognitions demands a particularly rigorous stance to be taken to the ways in which material is elicited and analysed. Specifically, the elicitation of narratives that, as far as possible, do not impose any particular concerns or categories on responses, while recognising the crucial role of the researcher in the co-production of those narratives, and the psychodynamic nature of the interview.

As Prichard (2001), points out in relation to his work, research methods are necessarily discursive practices, actively engaged in constituting power/knowledge relations which invariably provide and may help constitute particular subject positions, and hence subjectivities. Since I was known to all the respondents in a relationship in which I had relatively more power than they, this necessarily shaped the way in which they constructed their narratives. Although this was potentially offset by the fact that the interviews were conducted off the business school premises for the most part, and some time after the course under discussion had finished, I must treat the statements made by my respondents as being created *in part* by the discursive practice of the interview. Since Foucault, it has become common to be highly suspicious of interviews, with their connotations of 'the confession'. In this research a number of practices were adopted to try to reduce the 'need' to 'confess' in particular ways. I denied any position of authority, presenting myself only as a seeker after truth, a collector of MBA stories, for a somewhat indeterminate purpose.

I recognize of course that matters of biography, vocabulary, forms of dress and so on *necessarily* impact upon the texts elicited. Nevertheless, by tactically attempting to reduce this, I was able to open up the discussion to those positionings in which the respondents were embedded. This was important since one of the key questions upon which the study turns is precisely that of which subject positions manager/students take up, how this is done, and the sense that might be made of this.

The ways in which I was positioned myself may indicate something of the success of the tactics employed here. In most cases people spoke as though I were a confidant, speaking remarkably candidly about aspects of the programme they had undertaken.

Clearly, the discursive practices adopted here have advantages and disadvantages. For the former, it is a highly open space, in which people seemed to feel they could 'be themselves'. With the exception of one (Abel), the respondents reported it to be a harmless, even vaguely pleasurable experience. It is though, inevitably, a contrived space. People do not regularly, if

at all, consider their experiences in the form of a life story. Further, talking about management education is not *doing* management education. This is likely perhaps to people overplaying their positionings. As Prichard (2000:208-9) remarks:

Thus while the interview could be said to provide a space via which the tensions around...competing subject positions can be explored, it is important that this not be taken as evidence that such tensions are invariably articulated at points when the...subject is engaged through particular practices. After all one of the ontological assumptions...is that 'human being' is fragmented and an effect of discursive practices. One's investment in and allegiance to particular practices in the midst of others cannot be guaranteed. Of course one's commitment to a relatively coherent narrative of self across diverse practices might guarantee some sense of coherency, and this is just the kind of assumption that the questions suggest, yet it is important to hear narrative practices as just that - practices - whose content is constantly developing and changing.

Moving beyond this, Walkerdine *et al* (2002) problematize the subjectivity of the researcher, arguing that the turn to psychoanalysis, particularly in its postmodern variants (e.g. Elliott and Spezzano 1999, Frosh 2001), highlights this subjectivity in new ways. They argue that the ritual, reflexive nod in the direction of the researchers subjectivity that has become part of contemporary research accounts do not absolve the researcher from offering an account of the *construction* of their own subjectivity:

However reflexive researchers might be about their complex relation to the Other, trying to tell a story about themselves as part of the research, in order to avoid speaking for the Other, nevertheless, issues of subjectivity do not disappear... However, subjectivity is not simply about being the sum total of positions in discourse since birth, but rather a complex understanding both of discursive constitution and the ways in which the relations between positionings are held together by and for the subject in ways that can be quite contradictory and conflictual. This works for both the researcher in the unsteady tasks of uncovering discourses and narratives and for the research subject and indeed for the dance between them which produces the stories told within the research. (Walkerdine *et al* 2002:179-180)

On this view the understandings that one reaches demand an understanding of emotions, not in the search for a depth psychology, but because subject positions are held to be fictions unlinked by rationality, but by fantasy and defences. This applies to *both* researcher and research subject. With this in mind I have been mindful of my own emotions in the research encounter.

Methodology and data analysis

In order to remain faithful to the theoretical and ontological stances outlined above, I adopted a variety of techniques that represented a fusion of methods described by Hollway and Jefferson (2000a), Wengraf (2001), Plummer (1983, 1995) and Mishler (1986), although it should be noted that each of these draw upon extant models that have long pedigrees, notably in forms of psychoanalytic practice and hermeneutic enquiry.

The central form of material collection was through the elicitation of narratives from four manager/students, each of which had attended the same MBA programme at a 'new' university in the South of England. They were chosen primarily on the basis of purposive sampling: they had attended a programme of study that I was interested in and had taught research methodology on, they were, broadly speaking middle managers, and, perhaps most importantly, they were people whom I suspected would have something to say. A potential pool was developed through discussion with one of the cohort, and the final four were arrived at largely through snowballing (See Appendix One for pen pictures). The gender balance of the respondents mirrored that of their cohort. All the respondents I approached were receptive to being interviewed by me, and all were happy with the arrangements made with regard to confidentiality, which involved personal and organizational anonymity.

Each respondent was encountered once, each encounter lasting around 90 minutes, they chose the venues and time to meet. Largely following the framework developed by Wengraf (2001) they were invited to tell their 'MBA story' through one initiating question which invited such a telling through the metaphor of a life story. No further intervention was made by me until they had agreed that they had finished. Again following Wengraf, I then asked for 'more story' about the topics they had raised in their initial narration. All interviews were tape-recorded and written notes taken throughout. Crucially, the 'principle of deliberate vagueness which allows and requires the interviewee to impose their own system of relevancy on a fuzzy possibility' (Wengraf 2001: 122), was adhered to.⁸

Clearly, the sample was in no sense random and I do not make any claims about its representativeness of the sort that are appropriate in quantitative studies where validity depends largely on the sampling techniques employed. In qualitative work such as this 'theoretical' sampling is preferred. The cases show a range of MBA experiences, where individual narrators provide what might be seen as constructed windows on the worlds they

⁸ In a typically robust fashion Ray Pahl describes something of the same process thus: The interviews I carried out... would be termed unstructured interviews in a textbook. However I would prefer to call them restructured interviews, since the purpose for which the data was used was reformulated during and after they were collected. It is arguably the case that my research material is all the more powerful and robust since neither interviewer nor respondents was completely clear about how the interviews would be used.' (1995:199-200)

occupy. Issues of generalizability are here thought of as different in kind from other forms of research, specifically, the argument pursued here is that the bringing together into conversation of different cases will permit shared realities to be constructed out of individual perspectives. In this way both the unique trajectories, and the common experiences that are shared by individuals will be brought into view. The approach illuminates the nuances, the contradictions, and the complexities of the lives of manager/students, and also allows something to be said about the social structuring of these experiences.

The analysis is largely based on a narrative approach in which I focused on the form and the content of participant's accounts. Following the psychosocial line on the nature of experience and emotion, I was interested in identifying the social discourses that traversed the narratives; and to this end utilised forms of discourse analysis (Wetherell *et al* (2002)). In this aspect I drew particularly on Davies and Harre's (1990) work on discursive positioning; paying particular attention to the ways in which participants invoked different discourses in telling their stories, and how they attempted to resolve the tensions between them. I was particularly interested in how they drew on, and positioned themselves in relation to, the discourses of learning and not-knowing.

Following Hollway and Jefferson (1997, 2000) I took the view that the particularly psychological aspects of subjective experience and meaning would tend to disappear from the narrative encounter, these were not, after all, psychotherapeutic interviews. On this view narrative analysis is likely to yield little of value. In order to reclaim some aspect of this I have considered the common themes among each case and attempted to identify the common frames that seemed to underpin different discursive positionings, principally through the use of concepts from Kleinian theory. Such theory provides some purchase on the linking of narrative forms, story forms and discursive positionings to psychological processes.

Summary

The theoretical underpinnings of the study and the methodology adopted are closely linked. I begin from a view that neither language or language use, exist in a vacuum. Language is organised in discourses, some of which are dominant at some time or other. However, our engagements with such discourses are underpinned by emotional, and other, investments. In management, the discourse of instrumental rationality dominates. Such a discourse casts a large shadow over many aspects of what it means to be a manager, portraying a way of being that leaves little room for the psychology or emotion of organizing. However, an alternative set of discourses suggests a rather different way of being for managers, the way of passion and engagement. However, these alternatives demand a choice of investment that may contradict earlier investments.

These discourses act as a culturally available framework for understanding; in this study, I wanted to see how people drew upon them in making sense of their educational experiences. I was also interested in exploring the range of narratives that manager/students employed in recounting their experiences, and to understand how these shaped, and were shaped by, discursive imperatives.

However, making sense of experience is not just about choosing from a range of available narratives. When one talks about one's experiences, one does so in the context of one's own biography, and in so doing, reveals something about one's habitual ways of thinking about experience. In this study I envisaged that the accounts people gave of their educational experiences would reflect something about themselves, as social actors with a personal history and an inner world. As I wished to understand the complex relationship between my respondents and their worlds, it was vital that the method employed, should, as far as possible, encourage the articulation of their own accounts. To this end the elicitation of narrative was initiated through the single question trigger, and the largely free association that this encouraged.

The notion of subject positionings from Davies and Harre (1990) was used as the device by which the connection between the inner and outer worlds was made, and has proved useful in trying to grasp why people tell the kinds of stories they do, and the emotional investments they make in doing so.

I was also interested in saying something about the commonalities of experience and thus to go beyond a simple vignette approach. Following Rosenwald (1988), I brought the individual cases 'into conversation' with one another, and thus constructed some genres into which the individual narratives could be categorised, considering the range of discourses in the stories and theorising the psychological frames that underlie narrative choices.

The narrative accounts reveal a number of interesting tensions and contradictions and support Watson's (1994) contention that management and its encounter with education is best seen as an interpretive process, in which the manager/student seeks to resolve ambivalence and construct a sense of self. Given the premium that is currently placed on managers to deliver the goods ever more effectively and efficiently, the narrative of management to which privileged status accrues is one of instrumental rationality. As we shall see the participants in this study both reflect and challenge such conceptions in important ways. The next chapter discusses the knowledge claims that I construct from my analysis.

Chapter Five: Experiences, Stories and Genres of Management Education

Introduction

This chapter presents and uses a small number of management education narratives to explore the interaction of managerial identity and the experiences of management education. In doing so I use the approach developed in the previous chapters to offer a perspective on the meanings of experiences and feelings. However, management education is not a private experience which depends only on internal processes, conscious and unconscious. Rather, the stories that people tell to organize and make sense of their experiences bear also the hallmarks of culture: here I show how the narrative genres which participants choose to provide frameworks for their stories, and the forms and structures of the accounts they give of their concerns, dilemmas and actions, both reflect and support their strategies, at the same time as they draw on wider cultural discourses and repertoires. Thus, I link the psychological processes involved in learning to the culturally available 'scripts' for management and management education. Throughout, and consistent with the epistemological commitments identified earlier, I highlight the complex web of interactions among underlying psychological processes, the discourses participants invoke in making sense of those experiences, and the stories they tell of those experiences. The narrative accounts, both individually, and when brought 'into conversation' (Rosenwald 1988) with each other, show some of the tensions and ambivalences of management and management education, and the analytic perspective adopted here enables the examination of these.

The view that is developed here is one of seeing management education as a profoundly identity changing process, as one of its central aspects (one that makes it simultaneously traumatic *and* positive) is a process of self-reconstruction. I have come to think, over the duration of this research, that management education is a highly interpretive process, in which individuals narrate experiences as a way of making sense of what has happened to them, and as way of reconstructing the past and self identity.

That telling one's story matters and is an important part of human life, is a premise that is rooted in therapeutic practice (Craib 1989, 1994), and which is gaining acceptance in social scientific thought more generally. Meaning-making is an essential and continuous human activity which assumes a greater significance in the context of biographical dislocation that contemporary management brings. As noted earlier, personal meanings are constructed, revised and negotiated in the process of narrative accounting. How people reinterpret the past has a bearing on how they deal with present concerns and how they prepare themselves for the future. As will be seen below, narrative accounting also has a bearing on how people negotiate the ambivalences of management and management education.

Experiencing management education

As discussed earlier, extant accounts of management education are largely passion-free zones, or, where the existence of emotion is acknowledged, it is largely discussed in somewhat pathological terms. However, the narratives collected here show a rather more complex and ambivalent set of experiences. Among the stories of personal growth, of meeting the challenge, and so on, it is possible to discern, signs of a distinctly emotional encounter, one that threatened a sense of selfhood. In order to explore this further, I turn to one of the narratives, that of Abel, perhaps the most fearful of flying among my respondents.

Abel's story

I knew from previous experience that Abel had found the management education encounter somewhat problematic, and there had been talk of him dropping out at the final stage. I was actually surprised that he agreed to be interviewed, although we had developed a reasonable relationship during the latter stages of the course. He was, however, the only one who insisted that we meet at his workplace. When we did meet it seemed clear that he wanted to retain control over the interview to some extent, positioning himself behind a large, very tidy desk - the very opposite of our meetings together at the university. I felt rather daunted by this and the whole thing began with a sense of unease.

Abel illustrates the complexities of the psychosocial processes involved in management education, in particular the co-existence of contradictory states of mind and fluctuating emotions. He also illustrates the interrelationship between feelings, survival strategies and management discourses. A particularly difficult issue for Abel was that of the level of independence that was expected at the third stage, illustrated here through his opening remarks:

The overall experience was a positive one, I wouldn't say I thoroughly enjoyed the whole session but on the whole it was very enjoyable, I think made enjoyable by the course members I was with, they were a good group of people, on the most part willing to take their share of the work um I think the course itself was interesting in the sense that perhaps naively I hadn't anticipated being cut loose quite so quickly in the third year. We went from year one where we were kind of led and controlled through our various activities, year two was very similar and then year three felt completely as though a) the goalposts had been removed and nobody had told us and b) they wouldn't give us any clues as to where they had hidden them, and I think that was quite a culture shock for me and I feel that although we may have been told that was what was going to happen I don't think any of us actually appreciated that until

much later into the third year, and by that time for me it was almost irrecoverable, not quite cos I obviously got through it, but I did realise far too late that the responsibility shift had been placed completely with us and no-one else. And I felt there was very little guidance on that so I felt very isolated, I also felt very hurt and I thought it was very unjust the way particularly, the way I was reacting to it I felt as though it was very unjust the way it had been dealt with um I think if it had been much clearer right from the beginning that this is what we do in the third year than I think I would have been much more able to cope with it, in consequence I think the third year was a bit of a traumatic experience for me, I have to say and it was only, it sounds good on the tape doesn't it, it was only really when I had dealings with yourself that I started to get back to where I think should have been, but by then I think it was almost too late So, I think I've got to accept some responsibility for the position I found myself in but I do actually feel that the course managers should have been able to make it much clearer, this is what they were doing, they were cutting you adrift but certainly that was an impression that I got, I felt completely as though the goalposts had been taken away, hidden and if you asked the right questions we might answer them and tell you where the goal posts are, so that was a bit of a learning curve for me.

Recounting this proved to be such a traumatic experience for Abel, that despite my attempts at 'restarting' him (Wengraf 2001), he finished his narrative in a very short time and was clearly not in a position to be probed much further. I found it hard not to be exasperated at this and I can be heard sighing on the tape when he ground to a halt on a number of occasions. I was sure that he was somehow holding out on me and that I was being manipulated. This was difficult since I have a lot of sympathy for what I take to be his position. Here I feel is a rather sensitive soul who has come up against a rather insensitive situation, in which there is an element of crude evolutionism, such that the 'wimps go to the wall' and the strong survive.

On the face of it his complaint seems to be one about the course structure and management but may also be read as an indictment of the philosophical stance that informs the course. In this his use of the words 'hurt' and 'unjust' tell of the conflicting emotions and visions of management that are entailed here. On one hand lies the assumption of rationality and control, over self and others, and on the other hand the emotional life entailed in being human. Here Abel positions himself as an emotional human, within a learning discourse, such that the course let him down. Interestingly, his research dissertation was concerned with the challenge to 'professionalism' mounted by forms of new public management. This is a rare example of an MBA dissertation outside of a work-based, problem-solving mentality, and this suggests that Abel has other agendas as a learner, ones which he clearly feels were

not served by the programme. However, these agendas are seen, even by Abel, as somehow inferior. At one point in the narrative he talks of a newspaper article he had read concerning motivations to do the MBA:

They said the most ideal person would be a person who's qualified about three years ago in his (sic) degree course, is working in junior management and wants to make the next step up. And then there are the others, who are 45 and over who see it as a challenge to get their masters degree so I thought, well I'd better stick myself in the latter category then and think that I've done a reasonable job

There is however, an apparent contradiction, if Abel were 'truly' an emotional human and learner then one might anticipate he would welcome being 'cut loose', but this he does not do, rather, he sits in judgement on the programme, his narrative being almost entirely concerned with recounting each element of the programme and describing, judgementally, what happened.

Abel does recount an example of how being 'cast adrift' in the final year actually served his purpose. In this year students are invited to choose between carrying out a piece of consultancy or developing an entrepreneurial project. Abel's choice of the latter seems significant:

I think in the final year the best part of the year was the entrepreneurial section I dealt with and the reason I chose that was because I have a distinct fear of the entrepreneurial aspect of business in the sense that to actually go out and do something, to set it up right from scratch on your own with nothing else seems completely scary and this was an opportunity to, I think I've said before I'm an experiential learner, to actually try this out and feel what it's like in a very safe environment and um it was probably one of the best aspects that I've done and I'm really glad I chose to do that rather than the safe consultancy route which I could very easily have done and it was one of the most satisfying experiences I've had and it has made me realise that um entrepreneurialism, setting up your own business, whatever else you want to call it, isn't quite as scary as perhaps it was once the way that I thought about it

This talk of safe environments echoes my earlier mention of Winnicott and it seems indicative of Abel's self-positioning that he should want such an environment in which he feels he can 'fly safely'. He relates it to notions of learning style but in the context of his critique of the programme, and his positioning of himself as the older learner, it can be seen as indicative of his emotional needs as a learner, needs which were largely unmet, and, on his account, discounted.

Abel's story reveals something of the difficulties that can arise as a result of positioning within a learner discourse. Such a discourse can be seen as a framework for understanding upon which people may draw in making sense of their experience. It is one which prioritises the needs of the learner as a human being first, and which sees education in primarily personal developmental terms. In Abel's case, the focus on his needs as a learner seemed to de-legitimise the anger and hurt he felt, and served as a barrier towards his expression of it. He sees the result of this as jeopardising his educative career. However, through taking a chance by confronting his fear of entrepreneurship, we see Abel as recovering and repairing his battered sense of self. For Abel, and perhaps for many, positioning within the learner discourse is emotionally problematic since he wants contradictory things: both to be a developed and developing person, and to be a good manager, the one seemingly crowding out the other, at least on the programme of education being discussed here:

I needed a challenge, I wanted to develop my management skills but I also wanted to challenge myself, the job that I do I'd been doing for quite some time and so in a sense the mechanics of the job were quite straight forward, very little challenge in that sense, and so I needed something to kickstart me and get my brain working again, so this seemed an ideal way.

This vacillation between these two images may reflect a deeper ambivalence, with psychological roots. While his investment in the learner discourse enables him to see himself as the primary subject of the learning, it threatens his image of the rational and competent manager. However, the learner discourse may also provide a repository where his own vulnerabilities are located; in psychoanalytic terms, a culturally acceptable site for him to expel or project his own vulnerability, which is then perceived to belong to the programme, rather than him. Abel's positioning of himself in relation to the learner discourse seems therefore to reflect his ambivalent needs to see himself as both in control, but also controlled; to be both strong and vulnerable. There are considerable tensions between the text of what Abel says and the emotional subtexts he constructs in his talk. Abel's story illustrates the way in which the acknowledgement of anger can ward off symptoms of despair, being angry provided him with a means of resisting such despair, however, the learner discourse seems to pose a barrier to the success of his survival strategy: he vacillates in his acceptance of the learner discourse which perhaps, in turn, affects the efficacy of his coping strategy, evidenced by his obvious discomfort during the interview.

Few people are wholly at home with their own angry feelings all of the time. In psychoanalytic terms, ambivalence implies a 'depressive' position (Hinshelwood 1991:138), in which positive and negative can co-exist in an integrated manner. Inability to tolerate ambivalence is a feature of the 'paranoid-schizoid' (Hinshelwood 1991:156) position in

which parts of the self which experience painful emotions are split off and expelled outside the self. In Abel's case, however, we have seen how his anger is strategically useful to him, psychological speaking; it remains connected to something real and is not wholly split off, as it would be if he allowed doubts to creep in. As I consider below, a return to paranoid-schizoid states is common in the face of the experience of such as that involved in the breakdown of an established identity. The important point here, which has emerged through an examination of Abel's story, is that the expression of feelings can serve positive functions in constructing and maintaining strategies for psychological survival. However, as I have shown, the expression of feelings is largely ruled out within the dominant discourses of management education. Looked at from a psychological point of view, management education practices, insofar as they fashion the telling of management stories, participate, for better or worse, in the shaping of the self; for better or worse they affect psychological coping strategies as well as being affected by them. The prevalent image of management in our society continues to be a rational one; managers thus have few resources available to them to be able to construct learner stories or learner selves. This point is discussed further in the next section, where the focus turns to narrative forms.

Narrative genres in management stories

While the notion of 'genre' has a multitude of meanings, it here refers to a means of classifying story types according to their structures (Day Sclater 1999). The narrative structure organizes events and stories into a signifying field according to familiar conventions of story and characterization. The narrative structures available in a culture provide the outline story which people draw upon to make sense of their experiences. These 'scripts' provide social templates for organizing and mapping experience, but there are also psychological aspects to genre.

On one hand there is a range of cultural discourses upon which people draw in giving accounts of their experiences. In management narratives, discourses of rationality, common sense, and control are commonly invoked. These discourses imply a variety of subject positions (Davies and Harre 1990) for tellers to take up, negotiate or actively challenge and resist. In this way, discourses may be said to have psychological effects insofar as they provide frameworks for the structuring of subjectivities in the narrative act. Positioning in this sense seems to both predispose and presuppose particular psychological constellations. So, for example the discourse of control positions the non-manager, as well as the environment, as 'uncontrolled', and as such provides a repository for the projected vulnerabilities of managers, while the discourse of rationality operates to de-legitimise the expression of conflict and emotion, thus facilitating psychological denial.

On the other hand, people bring their own biographies, their ways of coping, their passions, desires and aspirations to their stories.

The narratives shape and are shaped by both cultural and psychological factors; they reflect both cultural preoccupations and psychological constellations and impact reflexively on both culture and psychology. As Plummer (1995) comments, the stories people tell each other are, or can become, part of a culture's stock of narratives which others may draw upon to make sense of their lives. Management and management education narratives therefore embody both culture and psychology, and a study of narrative form and content can transcend the traditional boundaries that separate the individual from society, the subject from culture.

In this study, one main genre of stories was evident: that of 'war' stories. Most commonly these are stories of 'heroics' which place the participant on a trajectory through a long struggle with adversity, but with final victory. These stories are underpinned by an implicit appeal to an encounter that challenged but did not defeat the hero. The element of heroics is not always present and some war stories challenge the notion of an encounter with adversity, but they are nevertheless productive of hero positionings for the subject. There is also some variation among the war stories according to whether the subject construes him/herself as the hero engaged with an external adversary or with themselves. Such stories seem to be commonly produced in relation to other possible stories which are hinted at, such as those of 'learner' stories.

While my participants' narratives fell, at a broad level, within this genre, it is important to note that they took several forms and appear not to be fixed. Based upon the same set of actual events, participants may, at one stage, story their experience in one genre, only later to tell it in another way. Meanings can alter as new biographical constructions are made; a participant once positioned as a learner can be, perhaps more optimistically, placed as a hero in a new biographical construction. Below, I consider the narrative data to illuminate this discussion of the complex relation between story genre and psychological processes.

Adam's story

If we consider Adam's story, we can see him expressing a range of contradictory views about his management education experiences; he seems to fluctuate in acting out his feelings as he recounts his experiences. Parts of Adam's story are clearly of the hero genre as he tells of overcoming hurdles such as assignment deadlines, but this is tinged with a sense of guilt as he talks of finding shortcuts, not doing all that is asked and so on. This part of the story is much more closely aligned to a 'learner' script, one which is able to admit of personal change and development. Perhaps what Adam is doing in this story is repositioning himself as a learner, someone different from the rest. Importantly, however, Adam needed to

acknowledge his complicity in this in order to position himself in this new way, but found there were barriers to sustaining it. The obstacles came from two sources. First, the rationality discourse which provides for an equation between a rational manager, organizational efficiency and 'getting an MBA'. Adam's own stance seemed somewhat at odds with this. He talked about his needs to get through the programme, with the least possible pain and disruption to his life, but there is an emotional subtext to his words, a subtext that speaks of the desire to do the best, and to do things 'properly':

so the first thing I did was I bought myself a book of economics, it was in one of the reading lists, and um decided now I was going to spend every lunchtime, read a bit of this, the different books, get a bit of knowledge so that I understand these terms should they come up again and I think it was the second day I was reading through this book and this colleague of mine from the second year walked into the office and asked me what I was doing and I explained to him what I was doing, he said I wouldn't bother with that because there's no way that you are going to be able to read absolutely base ground on everything, you simply won't do it. What you need to do is concentrate on the assignments you are given and work back from that um which I thought was a bit of a skive way of doing it sort of thing, but his logic was there's two sides to any course, do you want to get the qualification at the end of it, is one of your primary goals because although you know you have learnt something you have no way of demonstrating that you've learnt that so that, although it shouldn't be, is your primary goal, second goal is obviously to take an interest in something, so that changed my initial outset so I thought OK I can't afford to mess up, although I may know a whole load of stuff if I fail the assignment you know I don't get round two so to speak.

Despite this emotional component, when pressed, Adam preferred to position himself within the rational discourse, thereby side-stepping the issues:

Paul: You talked a little bit about guilt and about, I'll come back to that in a minute, one of the particular episodes you talked about was this change of tack between reading everything and then taking a different view that your colleague suggested, what was the source of that guilt for you there do you think?

Adam: Do you mean when I was reading that book? That wasn't guilt, it wasn't an issue of guilt there, I had never undertaken, he had done a degree a masters in chemical engineering so he'd been through the process, I had spent my life, at school I was never particularly interested in school I thought it was very uninteresting er and it was far too constrained for someone like me so I'd never been through the process of studying hard for an exam I passed most of them I did and it was always, the

interest in it was trying to do as little as possible and get the desired result at the end cos I was never going to use any of that information and I wasn't particularly interested I thought it was punishment you know a passage of rites or a rite of passage I should say um and that's all I took school as, of course when I came to do the MBA now I wanted to do this and now I saw the value of school it teaches you how to get through that process, of course hindsight's a wonderful thing so I thought well I am going to have to do my background reading and learn about these things I thought lets start to read some of these things this guy is talking about as opposed to sitting there, looking around the class and everyone nodding their heads and I think I haven't got a clue about what this guy's on about, what is this baseline or these different things he's talking about, how many of those other people actually really knew I don't know I didn't nod my head I sort of withdrew again cos I thought these people are all got former degrees and are all highly intelligent, as time went on I also knew a lot of them were far from it but that's where that came from, and time to read then but then he put it in perspective – you've got to pass the module to succeed further so that is an achievement you have to get so deal with that deal with the assignment first, focus on that, and then if you have the time read round but don't read round and think that's going to pass you know you'll learn enough to get that but that wasn't going to happen

Secondly, and relatedly, Adam was not able to claim 'hero' status for himself until the education process was complete, the process itself presented an obstacle to the complete movement from learner to hero genre:

the MBA identified that I don't know what its like to work for a company that does things the right way to see if a lot of these things I've learnt on the MBA do actually work or maybe there is some other third way if you like out there yet to be discovered [inaudible] my intention now is to take the MBA and myself and to make a major life change which again is something else that I decided in year two er I have really no idea exactly how I'm going to do it or where I'm going to do it but the MBA has given me a tremendous amount of confidence as well as my position it would be unfair to say that it was just the MBA [inaudible] so when we are going to make a move I've done the MBA got through the MBA or whatever, when I look back I wasn't sure if I was going to succeed when I started, I'm not even sure I thought about that a great deal which seems a very odd thing to say really when you're starting I got to...mentally I got to a point where it was like diving for the bottom of the pool you know it's very deep but you can see what you want and you get to the point where you just hold your breath and go for it and you just keep going and you

can feel your lungs burning but you keep heading down and in the back of your mind you think, shit I don't know if I can do this, but you know that by turning back it's going to be equally as difficult in a strange sort of way because you've got to go back up and you've got to suffer that much time anyway and you sort of keep going down it's a weird.. it's a ...I don't know if that's a good analogy of it...

In this brief extract we can see Adam positioning himself as 'hero' in a complex scenario in which he is struggling to claim such a status. Reading the account of the 'dive' one senses the very real struggle that took place, indeed, writing and reading it now I realise that I am holding my breath! An important point here is that the relative positions of learner and hero seem interdependent and relative, they are never final and complete, but have meaning in relation to each other and the narrative as a whole. Adam's story is an account of someone trying to manage a process within limits set externally, in terms of necessities and material circumstances. Adam may be a 'hero' but we know already that he is a 'learner'; the point here is that he cannot consistently tell a story in the learner genre at the same time as he positions himself in the rationality discourse (which proscribes emotion and not-knowing) or is unable to exert much control over his destiny. Interestingly, the whole period of my research encounter with Adam was an important time in his life since he was working towards getting out of his, much disliked, organization, and was seeking to emigrate. An important aspect of that plan was the gaining of the MBA, so that he could more easily negotiate entry to Australia, interestingly in the category of what the immigration department term the 'professional manager'. Such a situation suggests that he was instrumental in gaining control over his destiny, thereby perhaps becoming more able to position himself as a learner. Such a positioning was also more available to him as an anxious defended subject since the much disliked organization was able to act as a container for the split-off bad parts of life, thereby providing a resource for a good reading of the MBA programme and what he had made of it.

Cain's story

Cain's is another example of a management education story in the 'hero' genre. In his case, the initial impetus is rather different from that of Adam. Here is an apparently much more self-assured person whose hero story takes place in a much less constrained environment. For Cain there is a sense of unfinished business in the sense that he had previously completed an HND and attended personal development workshops run by the Dale Carnegie organization. It is also seen as a personal hero story:

...how I got into this company from the very outset I always had dealings with this company since '83 um I knew the original MD when I was 13 years old, I got into the

company through I'd finished an HND in computer studies went to and said look Tim I understand you need some software work done so I went and joined him and er worked through there, after, in 1987 I realised that er this wasn't to be and that I wanted some more of the action and so I set up my own company and he helped out to a certain extent with that and we ran that quite successfully for ten years, um so when I went back into the company I carried a lot of baggage people because I'd been dealing with the company people knew me um they knew my humour and also what my humour was when I was 23, er and this MD also sort of still to this day sees me as a 13 year old so I think really it's one of the reasons why I've got to an MBA as well, you know it's a certificate I can wave in front of myself and actually say yes you are actually now 41 it's now time to move on you know it's a sort of self-esteem thing.

Later, he uses the same certificate-waving imagery, although this time it was waved at significant others:

Paul: connected to all that you talked about the MD seeing you as a thirteen year old and you made a connection with the MBA in the light of that

Cain: OK yeah, bear in mind that I was at school at 13 obviously and I would go and play badminton at a local club in the evening you see and he used to attend that and three years, no, longer than that cos it was '83 when I went to work in his company, so, maybe this is my own, part of my baggage again, and this is my baggage rather than his baggage, in that I perceive that he still sees me and puts the same values on as a school leaver and sort of sees me in that way, you have, there are certain little bits of evidence that you believe that are there and you maybe hype out of all proportion but...

Paul: What's the MBA got to do with it?

Cain: You can't be thirteen and have an MBA, [laughs] I suppose is the statement I was making, but he's now moved on, but that is all linked with baggage and I think that baggage idea is 'look I have changed, I have an MBA now, and that's how I've changed' you can't put the same values on me so it's one way of trying to say look that baggage is not there [quickly] but I've done another thing as well which is say 'I'm moving on now', why have I done that? I don't know I don't know why I've done that, why have I done two things and not just one?

Cain's positioning of himself as hero seems partly sustained by his desire to escape his positioning by others, and was accompanied by some struggling towards that. In a similar fashion to that of Adam he has a container for his split-off bad, although in this case it is the figure of the MD. Interestingly, Cain uses the word 'baggage' when talking of these issues, a word which is highly connotative of a container:

Paul: what else have we got? Baggage.

Cain: baggage, yes interesting word, I could talk for hours about baggage, what do I mean by baggage? I suppose it is part of the psychological contract, my baggage is the previous MD, um from 1983, baggage from the guy who I used to go to French lessons in secondary school with, um, what other baggage have I got there? Um, other people who are within the business who I've known for a long while, and so you get, as you change they don't see you change and so they put the same values as you were when you were back at school so their psychological contract is one that 'well this is what motivates [self] this is what happens here, and this is what [self] is doing' you know people do change and people grow up and you know things do eventually happen in different ways and I don't think that people recognise that, they are so sort of focused in this is where the business is going or this is what I'm doing that they don't take time out to reflect on what's happening in, especially in small companies, so much time is spent on coal-face stuff that HR just goes out the window, so baggage is what people see me as, which I think is wrong now

Paul: cos you've changed?

Cain: yes, and so have they, and so has the world around it and everything else and so the MD and I spent a long while talking about baggage and its not only the baggage that people see you as its what baggage you believe you may have as well, so you, I may wrongly think that part of this is, someone sees me as this and may be totally wrong cos they don't see me like that and without opening it up and its not the sort of thing that you open up generally in front of people, it would be very difficult to...

It seems clear that Cain's investment in his hero story is driven by a need to portray himself as a grown adult, and that he sees such a portrayal within a very proscribed, masculine, picture. In the subsequent sentence to the above he notes:

Paul: Why?

Cain: It's not a macho thing is it? Er it's not seen as a macho thing especially within...and that's probably part of the baggage as well...but that's sort of something I would see that would come out mainly within NVQ type of environments, a practical thing rather than a MBA type of environment, that's my impression anyway, rightly or wrongly

Paul: What would come out in an NVQ environment?

Cain: An NVQ is more about practical things and looking at and maybe dealing with that sort of thing, dealing with your baggage and presenting that sort of, it's a Dale Carnegie type of thing, I would class those as the same thing

Paul: And you don't think that's what MBA's are about, or should be about?

Cain: That is, no it isn't, as we were saying in the unpacking session the other week it's about – this is a company, this is what's wrong with it, this is how it needs to go ahead, this is about the values within the company – it's not, an MBA's not really about you yourself, I think that comes out in working with your peers and er if you're lucky you may end up with a group that may approach that subject with, I mean it would be very difficult to approach that subject and everyone take it seriously within the sort of group, cos the groupthink would be 'what are you on about here' you know? this, and everyone, and all the macho element would come out again

Paul: Is that your experience?

Cain: Yeah, I think it is, I don't think you'll ever reach into those sort of things, you get, you start to go down that avenue but I think you, I mean if [female lecturer A] or [female lecturer B] stood up and said 'right guys, what I want you to do today is to go and look at yourselves and talk about that amongst yourselves' everyone would go 'yeeeah' you know, and it would just be very difficult to do, I think egos would be too big on that one, very difficult to put that over, but it's a self development thing

Paul: Would you see any value in it?

Cain: For me it would, yes, someone like [student S] no, cos he wouldn't, he wouldn't go to that depth, um but he has been to a certain extent, he's got his own independent goals and sees where his faults are, and he'll share them, but he'll cut off if you go past the barrier, so it's largely an individual thing and I think people have to be very big to admit that anyway you know, 'that this is something that's hindering me and I need to explore it' cos that's what we are talking about here is just exploring it, putting it out in the open and then sort of going forwards with it, how you'd sell it as well is another thing cos you are now into Dale Carnegie land you know and er then you end up with staff turnover issues

This is a complicated and seemingly contradictory set of claims and discussions. On the one hand Cain acknowledges the value of investing in a learning positioning, although he quickly turns it to why student S (the popular butt of a variety of critiques among all my respondents, but who refused to be interviewed by me) wouldn't do so, rather than an examination of why *he* would. On the other hand he consigns such activity to a relatively low-level training and highly practical purpose. Also, Cain seems to link the hero discourse to issues of gender. For example he identifies the learning discourse with not being 'macho', and when he speaks of tutors potentially initiating such activity they are two female tutors, imaginarily addressing 'guys'. This chaining of managerial discourses to male imagery is perhaps to be anticipated, as is the opposite tactic of chaining learning to female imagery. For Cain, this appears to be

an uncomfortable place to be so that he quickly turns the conversation from himself to comment on the reception of such ideas by S, who is perhaps a rather more obviously, no nonsense, practical, male figure, at least from my experience of him.

Eve's story

A similar, but different, picture can be drawn from Eve's story. In her account she also presented herself as someone who is making up for lost time;

I suppose if I'm honest with myself I was always annoyed that I did an HND and didn't do a degree the first time round because it was sort of the early 80s when they were sort of selling HNDs as the future, I guess as they're selling GNVQs to kids at school nowadays, I had good A-levels I could have done a degree but I thought this is the new thing go and do an HND so...you know although I blame someone else for um being on the MBA I think in the back of my mind it was kind of oh you know a chance to prove myself you know sort of twenty years later [laughs] as it were

She too tells a strong war story in which she overcame adversity, primarily external forces in the shape of the university, to triumph. Beneath this however, appears a somewhat reluctant learner story in which she acknowledges some learning, but positions herself in relation to it in a way that largely discounts it, in individual terms:

I can't actually say what things I learned, it's more of a sort of an attitude maybe or a, it's not direct learning it's something just you can't put your finger on it, it's experiences I suppose, um, so that's why I couldn't have done an Open University degree or MBA or anything like that, um, from the point of view of the choice of university and status and all things like that, I didn't even know when I came to [University X] perhaps it wasn't the place to be or anything like that, I mean for me it was I'd have never done it if I had to travel somewhere, so it had to be somewhere convenient, had to fit in, reasonably priced, I asked the business for money obviously to sponsor me and had they said no I probably would have still gone ahead or whatever, but price is a consideration, obviously I wasn't [pause] I was probably in the minority being naïve about you know you should go via [Business School A] or [Business School B] I didn't even know these places existed so I must admit when I got to the first lecture and people were going on about 'why did you choose [University X]' I thought well because it's nearest home and it's convenient to work and things but other people were going on about all these other places and the reputation, that it was better to have an MBA from here or there, um, that didn't influence me at all, if you stick MBA down on the CV my experiences to date is that my employer doesn't really know what an MBA is, I don't know what other

employers do but, so if they don't really know what an MBA is, where it comes from probably, unless you're after some high-flying job probably, it did its job for me, that was enough

Apropos of this issue, on meeting Eve for the research interview, her first comment to me was that nothing had changed, that she was in just the same situation as she was when we had last met, a year before. This was delivered with a laugh, although it was hard not to miss the hollowness of it.

These brief illustrations from the research interviews illustrate something of the complexities involved in imposing generic categories on management narratives, and reveal the fluidity of positions such as 'learner' and 'hero', as well as the different psychological constellations that such stories can produce, sustain and support. In order to further develop the argument about the relations between story genre and psychological processes, I now turn to consider the question of student strategies and how these are reflected in narrative. The argument now develops to show how particular stories can be said to reflect particular strategies which help participants to engage with management education.

Strategies for Learning

Personal narratives of management education, whether of war or learning, exhibit consistent tensions, the resolution (or attempted resolution), of which provide the motor for the story. Firstly, these are before and after narratives, where the after, the 'success' of the programme, is known and the meaning of the before is interpreted in the light of the already known conclusion; in this way before and after are construed as being in tension with each other. Secondly, a further polarization occurs between 'self' and 'other'; as we have seen above manager/students commonly narratively construct a subjectivity that is everything the other (typically 'the academic') is not. It seems useful to think of these tensions as indicative of strategies to manage the painful process of learning, which can be theorised in psychological terms, using Klein's idea of splitting. To recap, on this view subjects routinely, as a matter of defence, attempt to introduce order and tolerability into a world otherwise felt as chaotic and intolerable, by imposing polarised perceptions on reality.

A consistent theme in the participants' narratives was that of looking back over the educative encounter, of trying to make sense of what had gone on, and of trying to piece together a plausible account which rendered the participants' experiences and feelings comprehensible, and their actions justifiable to themselves and the listener.

As Freeman (1993) notes in relation to autobiography in general, the past is constantly being reconstructed from the vantage point of the present. In these accounts, a crucial division occurred between the past and the present; the ending of the story of the education is already

known, and in each case had ended in a successful conclusion. Through narration, the participants confronted the ways in which, and explored the ways in which, their education had 'worked', but commonly did so in ways that contrasted the 'learner' genre with the 'hero' genre, typically valuing the latter over the former. The learner is, in some ways at least, the antithesis of the hero, is negatively valued by comparison, and this cultural fact is reflected in these accounts.

When polarizations occur, similar antitheses, with differential valuations are set up. Thus participants would commonly denigrate the past of their education, or question their previously positive perceptions of learning whilst, even in the face of obstacles, they idealized their present position. Such a view can be seen in Eve's account where she was concerned to evaluate the quality of the lecturing staff in a very candid fashion considering to whom she was talking:

I think [pause] I haven't experienced being in college or university for a long time, but I would say that something that surprised me was the quality of the lecturing and I wasn't, I mean in the sense that I thought it would be better, there was a huge range of diversity of quality and I was really surprised by things like how the university operates, I always consider [work organization] to be fairly antiquated and bureaucratic compared to other places I've worked or experienced elsewhere, but when you experience, or are on the receiving end of the bureaucracy of a university I was very surprised how unprofessional the whole set-up is and how status orientated it is, pecking orders and...that was one thing that surprised me immensely cos I thought, well if you're teaching an MBA and you're talking about the cream of business and you know, I did think that that I believed it was going to be demonstrated to me as well and that isn't the case so that was a surprise really um so that's what I would say about the university

For Eve the disappointment she clearly felt in relation to the programme, perhaps as a result of her lack of promotion, results in the idealization of 'the university', such that the reality is set up as falling short of this ideal. Of course, it might well have done so in reality, but the ways in which this is expressed by Eve strongly suggests to me that she was concerned that her heroic struggle should be seen, in part at least, as overcoming 'the system'.

The opposite was also in play in some ways too, with some talk of present idealization, talking in terms of transformation and happy to acknowledge the 'learner self'. Adam was a particular example of this in his expression of worries about taking shortcuts.

The same processes of polarization seem present in both examples, both representing strategies for survival which assist in making sense of the present. From a psychological point of view this revisiting of the past through narration plays an important part in the

construction of self which education renders necessary. Educated people not only have to construct a vision of the future, but also a new vision of the past, as the meaning of the past, potentially at least, alters in the light of the educative process. Without a past it is hard to maintain a sense of self. There is an important need to make sense of oneself as an educated person while still maintaining overall integrity as an adult human being, for whom the positioning of not-knowing is psychologically difficult to acknowledge.

The participants in this study did not narrate their histories from a neutral position, rather their stories are suffused with psychosocial investments and are driven by the need to go on. Making new sense of the past goes on against the backdrop of the strategies employed and the need to construct a coherent sense of self.

Splitting as a defensive manoeuvre is also to be seen in management education stories as a polarization between self and other, as problematical parts of the self are expelled and perceived as belonging to the other. These psychological manoeuvres manifest themselves in those aspects of the 'hero' stories where the hero has struggled and overcome, not with themselves, but with the 'system' in the form of the course leader, or assignments, or the university bureaucracy. This may take the form of complaints that the marking systems are obscure, unfair, impossible to achieve, or that they are overly 'academic' and thus 'irrelevant'. It seems likely that it is these forms of strategy that underlie the apparent refusal to learn with which I began this work.

However, it may be premature to regard such processes as wholly negative, for some it may provide precisely the necessary impetus to succeed, both within the educational encounter and outside it. In this way the expression of opposition may be necessary to retain a sense of self that pre-existed education, but also to allow the passage through to hero status. For example, Eve, perhaps most overtly critical of the four, when discussing her experience, drew attention to what she saw as the 'social side of things', something she saw as vitally important:

I couldn't do distant (sic) learning, I would, it just wouldn't be for me, I like the interaction, with the people um to be honest, if I'm honest, in the, well all the way through, I've learned more from the people on the course than I actually learned doing the MBA cos that, I wouldn't say it's academically taxing I think if you've only got a reasonable intelligence, the ability to put a few words together I think most people, you can survive, but I think for me the survival side of things was the other was the comradeship, the laughs, the things that make the downsides lighter you know, definitely that, and um I think amongst the girls, I don't think be the only one to say it, because we were a minority there was a kind of stick together attitude not

sort of feminist or anything like that but a bit more about 'hang on, we don't want one of us to drop out, we wanna prove that we can do this' you know

Cain too was explicit in his focus on the 'social side'. Here too we may see evidence of an oppositional stance which he sees as having contributed to his development :

Something we did get out of it was when we started with 70 pupils? when we started out here three years ago and we've ended up with 20, now that says something to you, it sort of gives you a bit of confidence that yeah you can succeed, you can move forwards, it's a self confidence thing it's got nothing to do with the company or whatever, the company obviously helps but the very fact that you've succeeded all the way through and got through some fairly horrendous hoops and faced [lecturer Z] on various bits and pieces as well, you know it does sort of fill you with a lot of confidence I think, it's a lot of money to pay to fill you with a lot of confidence

This is a fairly blunt war story which seems to indicate a positive view of having survived, but at the expense of others. Interestingly, Eve also commented on the 'attrition' that had occurred on the programme, but in her case in the context of the perceived quality of the programme:

The, um, something that was, probably something I remember as well is having to take the marks of all the group, cos that doesn't appear until the third year does it? I can't remember but it's quite late on to begin with it's er, you're just feeling your feet, the assignments aren't very hard, the lecturers weren't of a very high standard and you started questioning, I think that's probably why you have a high drop out rate thinking about it, cos in the first year really you need the best quality lecturers, the most interesting subjects, um, you need it to be good in the first year and my experience is that everything is a disaster you know, what did we have? Two lecturers that didn't last, subjects that you think 'are you teaching me to suck eggs?' it was so insulting in terms of level and you just think some of the time 'they're behind the times, a lot of that doesn't happen at work any more' a lot of it was outdated in the first year and poor quality and it's bad, but really that's when you have such a high drop out people don't want to go on to the second year, in a way you could do with the most stimulating stuff at the beginning, cos what did we go from, 88 to 25 or something and that, once people got beyond the first year, if you were part way through the second you start thinking 'well I can't give it up now if only got..' you know you can get people past that pain barrier and as long as they meet your criteria at the end of the second year I wouldn't have thought they were not going to go on unless they're not very good at the end bit, the writing, but that first year was real, I was, I thought 'God is this the standard of education that people get these days' I was

really really surprised and for the money your business is paying I wanted to tell them they're not getting value for money here, I honestly thought I wouldn't have paid £50 let alone whatever it was, um, so I would say from the university's point of view they haven't got the psychology right of how it all happens, cos you tend to get, gets a bit better as you go along, that is if you last which is a shame really, cos it obviously put people off or people let for their own reasons but I would say that's probably an influencing factor on people going, yeah, [pause]

Taking our cue from Klein we may anticipate an idealization of one's work organization, with negative feelings and destructive impulses projected onto the course, at least in the early stages. This seems to be the case with Eve, and in her case appears to continue, at least in her account. It is perhaps related to her opening comment about not having changed her work status in the year following the course. Once more, this appears to be an important source of the refusal to learn with which I am concerned.

Adam, on the other hand, seems less ready to polarise in relation to the course, but appears happier with himself and less in need of doing so, his own organization serving as his other, an other that increasingly came to be seen negatively, and judged by the standards he saw manifested on the course. In doing so he increasingly came to see himself as hero, but in the sense of having the right prescription, as opposed to his senior managers:

it was very difficult to continue or be a part of things that were going on at work that you knew simply weren't right ethically, morally and it wouldn't work um and I found that quite difficult as I went through the MBA and saw more I was disinclined to grow in a management position there [inaudible] aspired to taking on the role of operations director to take over the bakeries and extrusion factories and the whole lot I am in a senior management position in terms of the milling operation but especially the HR side of things I really wanted less and less to do with decision making in the company because I knew I couldn't there was no way that they were ever going to see things the way I saw them the way they should, well what I believe they should be you know the modern way they were still stuck in the almost workhouse ethic I had a problem then the MBA had taught me to think well I felt the MBA had taught me to think and look at things but I never assumed or considered the fact that what happens if it teaches you to look at things and you look and what you saw was quite a good thing and all of a sudden it's not, it's quite the opposite has this course now benefited you because you are now more unhappy because previously you did it as a sort of leverage to climb up the organization and now you've done it and you despise the organization and you feel embarrassed to almost identify with it and that's been difficult you know and I made almost a conscious decision very very early on this is

not an organization that I want to spend my time with and the more I went down the MBA track and saw these different things the more convinced I became of that which made it quite hard for some of the assignments and also started to skew my objectivity when writing some of the papers again by writing things I did do something on retention plans one of the HR papers and writing about the implicit and explicit offer of employment what you actually get from it and is there and how much of that is for retention and so on and so forth and the different things that could be offered that wouldn't necessarily cost the company directly and I found myself being very subjective in that paper very bitter about the way they did it because the more I read in the text the more subjective I got because the worse I saw the company behaving so to speak, that was a big issue to deal with um also from the point of view of making it known that I was doing an MBA I kept it pretty quiet because I did feel somewhat guilty because the company was financing it and the MBA had now changed from the mode of building myself up in the company and benefiting the company to a ticket to get the hell out and I did feel quite guilty about that but then again I saw it as well if I wasn't doing the MBA what would I do, I would have left because the only reason I'm here is the MBA

This brief discussion of Adam's encounter illustrates how the idealization of education, supported by positioning in discourses of personal change, perhaps serves a psychological function in containing a fear of conflict and the destructive emotion that might be unleashed. Adam's narrative illustrates the complexities and mutualities of the interactions among psychological states, learning strategies, management discourses and educational practices. It also illustrates the complexities of the relationship between management education and the workplace from whence the manager/student comes. Management education continues in the shadow of the workplace. Adam's narrative also illustrates the way in which there is an element of unconscious phantasy involved in imagining that the two occupy separate poles; how management education is perceived, and the meaning attributed to it, derive, at last partly, from the inner world of the participant, at the same time as positioning in management discourses constrain the participant's activities and the personal meanings they produce. As internal conflicts are expressed and resolved management discourses serve different psychological functions. Management education is thus connected to psychology in important ways that go beyond the mere 'effect' that psychological issues may have on the capacity to learn. Rather, learning itself is anchored in psychological processes, but participants deal with them in ways which reflect their strategies and the available discourses, which in turn, constrain their psychological possibilities.

The psychosociality of management education

Engagement with management education is a complex process of interactions between a personal biography, a management biography, educational provisions and cultural scripts. Although, as I discussed earlier, this engagement is typically seen in rather superficial terms, this work presents a rather different picture. As I have shown, ‘allowing’ participants to tell their experiences in their own words, and to construct narrative accounts in forms of their own choosing, reveals management education as a set of processes characterised by ambivalence, complexity and contradiction. It does involve learning, but it involves more than that; it involves too the partial reconstruction of self, and these processes take place in a context, over time, in which the matrices of the internal and external worlds collide and intersect in the stories people tell about their lives. Management discourses provide a powerful backdrop against which participants strategies take shape, but neither they, nor the psychological processes are determining. It is the interactions which are important, and the unique ways in which each individual accepts, rejects, or negotiates, positionings. Experience in adult life, particularly that which threatens change, is apt to provide what Klein (1975) referred to as ‘depressive anxiety’, involving an unconscious anxiety that one has failed oneself, reminding one of earlier experiences of loving and losing. These early experiences are closely linked in the unconscious mind with one’s own hatred, destructiveness and greed, and the phantasy that it is one’s own destructive attacks that have threatened, harmed, or driven away that which is loved. Perhaps for the majority of manager/students, depressive anxiety is not easy to tolerate; toleration of these feelings depends on an ability to acknowledge and to accept one’s own unconsciousness limits, a capacity that seems increasingly tested in contemporary management and management education. Few people seem able to maintain the ways of being and relating which characterise what Klein calls the depressive position. These people are the few who can tolerate the admixture of guilt, sadness, weakness and the other burdens associated with change, the few that can tolerate the deep ambivalences involved in recognising that the person one was, and was possibly wrong in important aspects of their behaviour, is the same person that one may become. In the face of the problems involved in acknowledging such change, it is perhaps not surprising that people resort to a variety of strategies in an attempt to ward off the pain. There appear to be two main strategies in play here. Firstly, the individual may respond to resorting to what Klein described as the ‘paranoid-schizoid’ way of relating and organizing their experience. Here the integration of both love-object and self breaks down and fragments into polarized ‘good’ and ‘bad’, acceptable and unacceptable. As noted above Klein referred to this as splitting and saw it as a ‘primitive’

means of being able to retain a sense of oneself as good by splitting off and projecting out the bad parts of oneself, which are then seen as characteristics of the other, whether that be the organization, the course of education, or individuals associated with it.

A second line of defence available to the troubled individual is that of 'manic defence'. This incorporates aspects of both the depressive and paranoid-schizoid positions and involves the radical denial of one's dependence on others, which is commonly shown by a phantasy of omnipotent control over the object. It protects against the anxiety of being abandoned. As Ogden (1992) notes, these are part of the repertoires of all individuals and are thus 'normal' and not psycho-pathological. The challenge is how to work with such processes in the educative encounter.

The structures of the management narratives that I have collected here exhibit themes that mirror these psychological processes. I have shown, for example, the ways in which contemporary management and management education seem, at times, to present a threat to selves, and how coping strategies can depend upon disowning aspects of ourselves, blaming the other, and projecting the subsequent difficulties this poses onto others. Management narratives are evaluative stories, they are stories that typically adopt a moral stance, and whose rhetoric persuades the listener that the subjects feelings are comprehensible, their actions and interpretations justified. Acrimony in the classroom seems unsurprising where paranoid-schizoid ways of coping predominate, or when manic defences are employed, compromising (or even negating) peoples capacities for growth, in an attempt simply to survive.

A return to paranoid-schizoid ways of relating and perceiving seems a common survival strategy in the face of the anxieties provoked by management education. For this reason management education is a process that has an inherently conflictual dimension. Splitting, especially in relation to past/present and self/other, is a stance that aims to facilitate psychological survival and may be a necessary means of reconstructing the self that management education and contemporary management rhetoric threatens. However, it is clear that such strategies are ultimately self-defeating since they sit at odds with the dominant discourses that stress rationality and control, and they sit uneasily with management education practices that seek to focus on the future and bury the past. Most importantly however, they sit uneasily with the profound neglect of emotional processes in both management and management education.

The personal narratives of manager/students are at once stories of change and challenge, and stories of reconstruction and survival. They represent sites for the revisiting of the past, its creative appropriation in the services of building new visions of the manager-self and of the future. The narratives are both social and psychological, structured by the discourses people

invoke, at the same time as they interpret, negotiate, challenge and appropriate them for their own ends. In the narratives people make transitions between different subject positions, crossing and re-crossing the territory between the learner and the hero. These border crossings embody both cultural imperatives and psychological needs, sometimes in competition with each other. The internal demands of psychological strategies, splitting the world into different camps, containing anxiety by disowning feelings and separating good from bad, are managed in the narratives, sometimes in conflict with the external demands of management in a new key. The transformations of learners into heroes involves the interpretive activities of subjects who are commonly faced with some fundamental issues of 'how to be' and can countenance ways of living with them. Women perhaps make these transitions more easily and completely than men, partly because there is a less of a cultural premium for them on hiding or displacing vulnerability, and the pursuit of heroism is a challenge they face with rather more to gain.

For men vulnerability in the form of not-knowing is rather more difficult to hold and contain and hero status is achieved at the cost of displacement and denial. Becoming a 'true' hero is perhaps only achieved through a willingness and ability to resist the demands of the dominant discourse.

Chapter Six: Some Conclusions

This research suggests that contemporary management education represents a process of, at least potentially, the dismantling of the manager-self. When entering the domain important anchors are strained and the manager/student is cast adrift; continuity is threatened, of the world and of the biographical self. Who they are and what they are about is revealed as contingent. They can no longer unproblematically look to the recent past as a guide, it has changed and has to be read in new ways. Established biographical patterns are dislocated and called into doubt and people have to reconstruct new meanings for the past, a new sense of self and a new vision for the future. These tasks have to be undertaken against the backdrop of both material circumstances and the emotional and psychological investments they have made in their present lives, investments that to some degree hark back to their earliest experiences in infancy and which live on in the unconscious mind. In the endeavour to reconstruct their manager-selves, manager/students are faced with a culture replete with, on the one hand, images of bureaucratic organizations and their managements as fatally, even morally flawed, and on the other hand idealised images of post-bureaucratic organizations. It would seem that neither of these pictures bears much relation to the perceptions and lived experiences of managers.

Education in this sense strikes at the roots of identity. This is what makes it such a difficult experience, but of course its purpose is to contribute to the process of positively doing so through providing new ways to be. Negotiating management education is about overcoming the sense of failure to pursue new developmental pathways, meeting challenges and finding ways of coping with future adversity. 'Coming through' education involves the creation of new meanings to replace the old. In this final chapter I want to pull together some of the threads of the argument and consider some of the factors that might facilitate a satisfactory negotiation of management education, and some of those that might militate against it.

I have stressed the notion of management education as an interpretive process, one of meaning-making with both social and psychological aspects. Social discourses and narratives about management and management education pervade our culture, providing resources to draw upon in constructing one's life story. Such social scripts provide resources and maps for efforts at meaning making but they can be both constricting and facilitating. The dominant images of rationality and control persist, but alongside these exist contradictory idealised images of post-bureaucratic organizations, constructed in discourses of commitment, representing a variation on the theme of the 'happy ever after' of fairy tales. Psychosocial theory helps us to understand how our personal and social ambivalences, which are rooted in our earlier experiences, manifest themselves in the signifying power we accord to

'organization', such that its potential restructuring carries with it overtones of threats and anxiety. Managers seem to manage this by splitting: rationality and control is 'good', while change is 'bad'. Casting change in this light is what enables them to maintain the sense that organization represents all that is good.

But, as I showed earlier, organizations are changing, whether we like it or not, and at an increasing rate. There are perhaps new moves afoot to normalize such changes, creating the possibility for more positive narratives of the new organization to emerge, but traditional investments show considerable persistence. As I often remind my students, we live in interesting times; 'organization' has changed, but the old values that sustained it in its former guise remain. In such a context it seems that many split organization and change, putting them on opposite of a value-laden divide, and also do the same with management education, characterizing it as 'good' and 'bad'. This dual process of idealization and denigration, occurring at a social level, mirrors a psychological defence for coping with anxiety.

'Bad' management education is characterized as that which challenges the manager- self but remains practically irrelevant, which fails to deliver a clear set of recipes and levers to be pulled. 'Good' management education is the opposite - it enables change.

As I have shown, discourses of change are invoked by people in telling their management education stories, however, these are not accepted unquestioningly. Rather they are interpreted and reinterpreted, negotiated, challenged and resisted as people struggle to reform their managerial lives. But the prescriptions of the discourse of change and the positions they provide, can conflict with such strategies and present obstacles to the reform process. The ideals of change can sit uneasily with the psychological needs to 'go on' and with the practical demands that living through organizational transition can create. Encouragement to focus on the future sits uneasily with the need to revisit and reinterpret the past that is essential for biographical repair and the integration of experience. Thus, although the discourse of change, may, for some, mark the possibility for more positive images of management to emerge, managers do not seem to find them particularly helpful, and they may mitigate against the efficacy of commonly employed ways of coping.

One of the main obstacles to the construction of positive management education stories seems to be the dearth of alternative narratives available. For some perhaps there exists the possibility of embracing change totally, but at a cost, perhaps the cost of losing their job. This position is partly illustrated by Adam, who seemed to have been able to embrace change since he had already psychologically disengaged to some extent from his organization. A further cost is one which I have not had space to explore here, and that is that management education takes place in group setting such that the embrace of change may put oneself in an invidious position with others who do not. In such a situation the basic assumptions of groups

(Bion 1976) may have a serious bearing on the degree to which one can publicly embrace change. A further obstacle seems to be that of gender, such that men and women appear to construct different accounts of management and management education. For example, women may well be more self-malleable in relation to 'new model' management, and have less investment in 'heroic' status, but may be inhibited from doing so, fearing that they will reinforce their perceived poor image as managers, a poor image that typically derives from their 'softness' and lack of rationality. To some degree feminist discourses may provide a resource, but these too are only possible to be adopted at a cost.

For men too alternative genres are available from within the 'new mens' movement, but these are severely curtailed by extant images of 'men behaving managerially' such that their adoption seems unlikely.

Management Education reconsidered

Such matters lead onto issues from within management education itself. Typically, the expression of the emotions and concerns that change invokes is not encouraged. Learners, while being exhorted to consider such issues within their organizations, are rarely offered the opportunity to explore such within themselves - the discourse of rationality and the shadow of the workplace conspiring to limit such activity, other than through the kinds of emotional discharge with which I began this study. However, the suppression of such emotion is not necessarily to be considered to be a healthy response; it can pose barriers to the acceptance and integration of painful feelings. If one is unable to 'own' such feelings, we must not assume that they will go away. Rather they will be dealt with through splitting and projection, thereby possibly maintaining a holier-than-thou image of ourselves, or through causing pain to others. 'Good' management education has no place for emotions and because of this may encourage projection and so impede the building of a new, integrated sense of self.

The deployment of the discourse of change in practice may also do the non-manager a disservice insofar as it facilitates the projection of manager's vulnerabilities onto others. If changing managers cannot be allowed to own their own feelings, it comes as no surprise to find these projected onto others, typically through the pathologising of the other as recalcitrant. The emotive language that many managers use to describe 'their' workforces is perhaps indicative of the profound vulnerabilities of their own which they are obliged to hide. Management education practices will remain ill-suited to the needs of changing managers if we continue to pathologise the associated emotions, on the one hand, or minimise and sanitise them on the other. To return to the work of Craib (1998), he argues that there is a tendency in our culture either to pathologise powerful emotions or to trivialise them as

everyday experiences. Both are opposite sides of the same coin and that coin signals our contemporary inability to cope with powerful, ambivalent or ambiguous emotions at the social level. For Craib, the task that faces us, as a society, is one of learning to tolerate the multiple the multiple ambiguities and ambivalences that being human presents us with. In the case of management education, this means a better acceptance of the associated emotional processes. This would mean lifting the taboo on the expression of feeling to discourage denial, unhealthy projections and acting out. It means creating space for the revisiting and reinterpretation of the past, the polarisation of the past and present, self and other, as necessary psychological processes without which it is impossible to establish and maintain the sense of self that is important in learning. It means creating the conditions for the construction of positive stories that can provide the starting points for the construction of re-formed identities that are different from those that existed in the past. Such moves radically problematize the rather sanitised talk of change management techniques that form the diet of many programmes of management education. It suggests that if change is viewed in such a fashion, at the expense of a denial of destructiveness, the tasks of psychological resolution may be impaired. Ogden (1992) suggests that 'splitting' can serve positive psychological functions, arguing that it is an inability to employ such defensive processes that lead to psychopathology. If the primary anxiety of the 'paranoid-schizoid' position is the annihilation of the self and one's valued objects, it is splitting that protects the individual by safeguarding their needs to both love and hate; by the act of splitting one remains able to love and hate safely. According to Ogden, such an ability is the precondition for an integrated and continuous sense of self. This is since the relief from anxiety that such a split achieves enables one to move towards the more integrated, depressive, position. Craib (1994) too, in writing of the ways in which we manage grief, argues that is the unbearability of the feelings of panic involved in loss that leads us to imagine that grief is a predictable and controllable process, that it involves the expression and resolution of a particular series of emotions, through which bereaved persons pass on their road to recovery. However, for Craib the experience of loss always goes deeper than our social formulae allow, it will depend on our individual histories and learned coping strategies. In this way Craib asserts that the social theories and rituals we have about loss represent an effort which reflect difficulties in our acceptance of ambivalences about loss as well as the fact of our mortality. Thus we pathologise grief by placing it in the hands of experts, a process that permits us to maintain the fantasy that our feelings can be managed. For Craib, such things are what we have to learn to live with; experiencing disappointment is part and parcel of being human. His argument is one which seeks to de-pathologise grief whilst not denying the depth of ambivalent and painful emotion which accompanies it.

There would seem to be clear parallels in management education. The whole tenor of the discourses within it seek to minimise the messy and contradictory emotions associated with management. It seems likely that the talk of outcomes and so on cannot deal with the messiness of managing any better than the older methods could but could be seen as a way, typical of late modernity, of imposing prescriptions for behaviours which foreground the rational at the expense of emotions. Certainly there is talk of emotions, but it is precisely that *talk* of emotions rather than issues of the emotions themselves. The discourse of 'good' management education serves to sever the chaotic and problematic from the rational, with the former driven underground. In the process, the natural disappointments that attend life are sanitised and denied expression, except through the kinds of activity with which I began the prologue. Insofar as the dominant discourses embody behavioural prescriptions, their ways of working are through bringing pressure to bear, of inducing guilt and inadequacy in those who have difficulty in managing the darker side of themselves. Typical of such initiatives in management education is the trend towards the use of personal development journals and the like, all of which 'invite' the participant to evaluate themselves - to see how far they fall short of some ideal or another. Some participants in this study experienced exhortations to such 'self-knowledge' less as encouragement towards ways of working, but as persecution. In this context my exhortations to fly take on an altogether darker character, and resistance to such exhortations becomes easier to understand. It is ironic that the psychological hold that these dominant discourses have over us have their roots in a fantasy that our emotional lives can be rendered smooth and predictable, that the pain of learning can be minimised, if not obliterated altogether. As long as such fantasies are idealised, it seems unlikely that the painful emotions that underlay learning can be properly owned.

The themes of polarisation which seem to characterise my participants' narratives is what underlies management education as a psychosocial process. This narrative theme reflects a deeper splitting which seems best understood by variants of object relations theory. The narratives I collected were primarily stories of selves precipitated by external threats into anxious behaviours that have the effect of putting difficult emotions at arms length. At this point it would seem that the dominant discourse of 'good' management education, may be largely detrimental to manager/students, and by implication, their employing organizations. Adherence to a pain-free education may stand in the way of development as a mature, functioning human being. The psychological processes of management may impact on management education but this is a two-way street. In the interaction the dominant discourses are read and re-read in the light of the demands of emotional expression and the integrity of selfhood. In so doing, the dominant discourses acquire new meanings that are played out in different ways. At the same time such discourses pose constraints upon survival strategies,

rendering some conduct deplorable, some feelings unmanageable, except through forms of acting out.

Management education reconfigured

These findings would seem to indicate a number of issues of importance for the management education community. They each present a challenge to the management educator. First, management education can be emotionally difficult, but the coping strategies that people adopt to manage such storms often involve a splitting at a psychological level, a defence strategy which places learner and educator on the opposite sides of divide and which provides the basis for non-learning.

Secondly, despite the emotional difficulty which management education can bring, the story is not a wholly pessimistic one; rather contemporary management education is not just about coming to terms with a world that is lost, but it is also about the positive rebuilding of a new sense of self. This rebuilding process, however, involves a revisiting and reinterpretation of the past from the vantage point of the present; this making sense is a pre-requisite for letting go and moving on.

Thirdly, it would seem appropriate to work towards a recognition of management and management education in less idealised terms. A recognition of the darker side of human nature, with its destructive and contradictory aspects, which co-exist with its 'rational' parts, would seem essential if progress is to be made. Following Craib (1994), this is an argument for overcoming our fears about emotional expression, to learn to tolerate life's ambivalences and ambiguities and to own aspects of ourselves that our social scripts push us to deny.

Manager/students pay a high price for the premium that we put on rationality; the task facing those of us who construct and deliver management education is one of permitting people to own and express their feelings, however intolerable they may be.

Management education can serve as a forum for the 'containment' of some of the emotions generated in the activity of management (French 1997). Such emotions can lose some of their destructive power when worked on in a contained setting. As Bion (1976) argues containment facilitates the transition from emotional experience into thought-full experience, as emotional comprehension enables thought to begin. In such a context, the acting out of unprocessed emotions can be replaced by the creative production of new stories that facilitate the construction of new sense of self. This is not to argue that management education should be regarded as therapy but is to recognise that there are therapeutic aspects to its practice. This acknowledgement of emotional complexity does not imply the need for therapeutic intervention, but merely implies that management education could, and in my view should, become rather more responsive to the vicissitudes and complexities of human experience.

Education necessarily implies, at least to some degree, authority and such authority could more effectively be put in the service of 'containment' without compromising its integrity as management education. There is a sense in which it might be said that management education is already showing signs of such moves. The issue is that the reforms that are becoming more commonplace are largely predicated on a vision of the new model manager, who is, nonetheless, still 'emotionally anorexic' (Fineman 1993:10).

It seems important to move away from models of management and management education that regard emotion, contradiction and disappointment as problems, but equally important that these issues are dealt with in genuine ways, avoiding the sanitization or domestication of such issues (Craib 1998). Despite the utilization of psychoanalytics to illuminate aspects of the issues in this research, this should not be read as a plea for more therapy; poor substitute as it is for the genuine confronting of issues that lie at the heart of the human condition. As Rustin (1991) asserts, psychoanalysis is rooted in therapeutic practice, but is also a way of thinking about politics, culture and our contemporary ways of thinking about organizing society and managing people. The crucial aspect here is that it points to the necessity for the inculcation of tolerance of paradox, ambiguity, contradiction and conflict. The denial of these dimensions in management education may be read as a retrograde and defensive step. The potential for such developments are of course severely circumscribed, potentially refuting the dominant discourses of late modernity in their entirety, however working towards them would seem a vital activity.

You can't go home again: a brief reflection

Overall the approach utilised here was highly productive of valuable material that illuminated many of the issues that I was interested in. It seems to me to have vindicated some of the approaches in which I already engage in the classroom, and to have suggested new ones. If I began again now I would change the process in two ways. Firstly, I would incorporate much more classroom observation and diary material in an attempt to illuminate some of the doing of contemporary management education. This would, I think, have served to add a considerable richness to the work, and would have provided rather more points of entry for subsequent interview work. The second aspect would have been to be more directive in my interviewing, rather than relying on the single initiating question method adopted from Wengraf. This has two aspects, firstly, the single question method demanded a great deal of work in a very short time, which may have worked better if I had been a full-time researcher, secondly, the lack of engagement on my part left aspects of interest rather unsaid, with intersubjective understandings in rather short supply. Walkerdine *et al* (2002) suggest such detachment can be read as defence. Looking back, my own attraction to such a stance

certainly had elements of defence about it, and marked a separation from the subjects. Like many critical of contemporary management I have an ambiguous relation to managers, swinging from being broadly sympathetic to their plight, to a mild disdain for their activities. Such a situation perhaps propelled me towards a rather stand-offish methodology, playing at the therapist perhaps? In defence (!) however, such a stance has enabled a good deal of purchase on the issues under consideration.

Appendix one: pen pictures

These pen pictures are largely taken from respondents own descriptions of themselves. I have added aspects that seem of relevance for 'reading them' in the research.

Adam is a 42 year old production manager at a local food manufacturing company, which has a notoriously bad industrial relations record, and an international profile. Adam has been employed there for five years. He has a flour milling background and spent a good deal of his early life in countries other than England, notably Zimbabwe and Ireland. At the time of his interview he was negotiating to emigrate to Australia, with his young children. As a pointer perhaps to some of the background dynamics Adam's research dissertation was 'demanded' by his company, and was basically a kind of cultural audit, to enable cuts to be made. He submitted it, but by then the organization had lost interest in the project.

Eve is a 38 year old public relations and communications worker for a national and international mail carrier. She has worked there for seven years and describes herself as very committed to the organization. Eve was very clearly the 'social secretary' of her cohort, and strikes one as very self-assured. For her dissertation she chose to evaluate an aspect of the training provision of her organization. This produced some rather controversial findings that she happily presented to the organization.

Cain is a 38 year old general manager for a local electronics manufacturer. He is very confident of himself and presents as very much in control. Rather like Adam, although for different reasons, Cain is someone who seems rather 'between things' at the time of the interviews.

Abel is a 46 year old senior environmental health officer for a local authority. He has been professionally qualified for twelve years. As mentioned in the text he chose a controversial and problematic topic for his research work, which, in my view, never really got to the heart of the issues, rather skirting the issues of politics. He and I share an interest in contemporary music, although an often mooted jam has not yet happened. Abel is a rather 'dapper' person who is always immaculately turned out.

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