UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

INHABITING BORDER COUNTRY: ACADEMIC AUTO/BIOGRAPHIES FROM A POST-1992 UNIVERSITY.

by

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<u>ABSTRACT</u>

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Irene Selway

All British universities have undergone rapid expansion and change in the period 1988 - 2008. There are a range of studies of how such expansion and change has affected universities and academic lives in general. However, there are few that have looked at individual academic identities in this context. This study looks at one post-1992 University in terms of at least 20 years of lived experience in that university. The sample is of five male academics in different roles and discipline areas. The focus is on the ways in which their academic identities have been constructed and reconstructed in the process of change.

The research design is a qualitative case study. It employs a phenomenological approach, exploring the meaning five academics placed on their experiences. Auto/biographical methods were used to gather data. The five academic life stories were recorded in a series of interviews. The resultant narratives were then analysed by constructing a plot portraying the academic life. Themes emerged from each individual academic life and these were used to make sense of that life in its university context.

Despite reactive, sometimes contradictory, standardising and controlling pressures inherent within U.K. higher education polices over the past 25 years, and continuing lack of clarity about the purpose of U.K higher education, the five academics illustrated lives and identities that were distinct and diverse, illustrating the power of human agency. The individual academics were able to construct and reconstruct unique identities in a variety of ways within their communities of practice, making meaning out of their lived experience. However, they have inhabited a border country; living through the transformation of British higher education from elite to mass that is not yet complete. The study therefore contributes to the historical record of living through, and making sense of, changing forms of academic work in the shift from elite to mass higher education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1.   INTRODUCTION

Academics working in higher education in the UK have experienced considerable changes in their roles and practices since the introduction of the 1988 Education Act. Roles are defined by the norms and structures of the higher education organisation. However, whilst roles can be adapted in specific contexts, identities have a much stronger personal meaning for individuals. Castells (1997:7) puts it like this: 'identities organise meaning, while roles organise functions'.

The term 'academic role' combines both role and identity. Roles enable academics to express and develop identity given appropriate contexts.

However, identities are in a permanent state of construction and reconstruction, and this study looks at how academics have constructed and reconstructed their identities over a 20 year period since the 1988 Education Act.   Brockemeier (2001:248) points out that:

> human identity construction can be viewed as the construction of a particular mode of time. I suggest calling it autobiographical time, the time of one's life. Narrative plays a crucial role in this process of construction.

This study seeks to illustrate, by way of auto/biographical accounts, the time of five academic lives as they practiced in a post-1992 university over a period of 20 years or more. The university concerned is henceforth described anonymously as Redpath University.

1.2. Focus and aims of the study

The study seeks to illustrate the time of academic lives through the method of auto/biography within a phenomenological frame of reference that explores the meaning of experiences for the academics.

1.2.1. Specific Focus

The study is focussed on the auto/biographies of five academic staff from a university on the South Coast. It is concerned to make a documented record of their academic lives and changing academic identities as they have lived through a period of turbulent change and expansion in higher education, spanning over twenty years; the change from a smaller more elite form of higher education to a mass system.

Such changes in identity concern changes in being (Heidegger,1962); or alterations in the patterns of relationships that an individual academic has within the academic world.

Identity work, in the context of higher education in the 21st century, is as Taylor (2008:27) recounts:

> work that is constituted by history and the conditions within which we live and work.....there is a prevailing negative climate within universities as workplaces, characterised by a view that former golden times have been lost; by a sense of personal loss on the part of individual academics and a perceived shift from a culture of science to a culture of research that demands that knowledge be capitalised to realise its value.

Whilst Taylor rejects the common myth that there has been a decline and fall of universities and academic work, he does concede that there has been intensification of academic work in the period under discussion, and with it a sense of loss. These issues will be explored in the course of this study.

1.2.2. Academic sample

Male academics have been selected because, as a former Polytechnic, Redpath University had predominantly male lecturers for much of its early history before the 1988 Education Reform Act, and many remained after it, although this predominance of males has now changed. It was common for this type of institution to be male dominated in its earlier form, first as a College of Advanced Technology (CAT) and in the early Polytechnic years. Latterly, since 1995 there has been a considerable shift in the balance of male and female academic staff in all universities. This wider trend, as Fazackerly and Hughes (2007) report illustrates a considerable shift in the balance of male and female academics:

> New figures from the Higher Education Funding Council for England reveal that almost half of all teaching academics are now female. The number of female academics in English universities is rising, as more men turn their backs on lecturing, new research indicates. A report on the university workforce in England, published this week (7th August 2007) by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, reveals that the proportion of female lecturers rose from 34 per cent in 1995-96 to 46 per cent in 2004-05. The proportion of women in top jobs also rose markedly during this period, although the numbers remain strikingly low. In 2004-05 28 per cent of senior lecturers and researchers were female, and 14 per cent of professors. Meanwhile, the number of male lecturers dropped dramatically from about 22,000 to below 18,000. HEFCE has found that the probability of a male lecturer leaving increases with age. His probability of getting a promotion decreases, as he gets older.

This does not of course mean female academics have achieved equality of position in higher education; but this issue is not the focus of this study.

The story that male academics can tell about their lives during this period of change in education is worthy of investigation. However, it is not solely concerned about gender and academic life. The study is intended to be an in depth historical record or document of the male academic experience in one higher education institution that was a

College of Advanced Technology, then a Polytechnic, and now a university.

1.2.3. <u>Related studies</u>

There have been studies involving *survey* methods of both genders seeking answers to particular questions about change in higher education, for example, Taylor, (1999), Martin, (1999), Trowler, (1998), and a Foucauldian account of women's lives in education (Tambouku, 2003). Bryson and Barnes (2000) explored academic perceptions of work in higher education using survey and questionnaire methods. One aspect of their study asked academics across discipline boundaries what aspects of employment as an academic were important. Evidence from this study will be discussed in relation to the analyses of the auto/biographies below in Chapter 5. Henkel's (2000) study is the closest in approach to this study at Redpath University, but Henkel looked at academic identity in a more general comparative way, across many different universities. She did not use the auto/biographical method.

Therefore, there appears to be a gap in detailed understanding about the effects of major higher education policies on males seeking to implement changes in this period. It is in this sense a study that embraces macro and micro processes. There is a need for a further study of actors' perspectives in the interplay between the macro and micro systems in which policy changes in higher education make an impact or are implemented. This has begun with Henkel's (2000) work. Henkel adopted a communitarian perspective in her study of academic identity. She argues that individual choices are to some extent shaped and structured by institutions and communities. However, this is not a passive one way process. Academic actors also shape the communities they are in, in an ongoing dialogue, in practices and through argument and theory.

This study of Redpath University illustrates this two-way dialogic process through the auto/biographical accounts reported in their stories. Reports on practices are included in the stories and the kinds of arguments and theories put forward to challenge or agree with change.

A further indication of the timeliness of this study can be drawn from Panton (2005) who is concerned about the contemporary instrumentalist attitude towards education and suggests we need to take an in depth look at the 'devaluation' of academics. Again, the auto/biographies illustrate some feelings of devaluation in their academic lives.

1.2.3.1 Authors involvement in Redpath University

The author worked in an academic development role with academic staff in Redpath University for a number of years beginning in 1992, as Academic Development Adviser, and was struck by the way in which Staff Development books and guidelines (see James (1995) tended to overlook the issue of changing academic identity when providing toolkits for changing practice. It seemed there were many recipes for dealing with change but none seemed to start where the academics were in their academic lives, nor seemed aware what sense they were making of these changes, which amounted in some instances to an assault on their developed identity.

There is therefore further justification for exploring the auto/biographies of those actors who have experienced such major shifts in university life.

Included in the study are comments on the particular role of the researcher as an insider who, having lived through some similar experiences in the time period, is able to recognise the descriptions

and meanings within an institutional or organisational context of Redpath University. Polkinghorne (1995:18) reminds us 'the storied finding of analytic enquiry is not a third-person objective representation or mirrored reflection of the... subject's life as it actually occurred; rather the finding is the outcome of a series of constructions.' Thus the researcher plays a constructionist role in aspects of auto/biographical enquiries of this kind, and this is acknowledged. The study came about because of the observations of the researcher. In putting together a story from the auto/biographical narratives the researcher has not just compiled a series of happenings in an individual's life but drawn them together in a systematic whole. (Hatch, (ed)1995) This is undertaken through the formation of a plot, which provided a systematic unity to the story or narrative. Plot is in the nature of narrative discourse; it is the organisational dynamic (Brockmeier, 2001:248). The plot outline is an intellectual construction on the part of the researcher in this study.

1.2.4.   The aims of the study

The primary aims of this research are to:

(i)   Explore the meaning of academic life and identity from the perspective of a group of five male academics who have at least 20 years service from one former polytechnic or new university, using the autobiographical method

(ii)   Examine the auto/biographies to identify themes, meanings, and dissonant perspectives on dealing with change and reconciling or reconstructing academic self-identity.

(iii)   locate the findings about self and identity within sociological theories that see the self as a social construct Burr (1995)

Related aim:

(iv)   Consider the above findings in relation to evidence about the

emerging contemporary *professional* role for academics in

mass higher education.

The span of academic lives spans 1988 to 2007 embracing a period of rapid change in higher education stemming from major expansion of the sector and shifts in the purposes of education at this level. This is often referred to as a shift from an elite system to a mass system of higher education (Scott,1995) and began in earnest following the U.K Education Reform Act (1988).

1.3.   Field notes

These are reflective practice notes that were kept over a long period but did not record individual names. In essence they were reflective commentaries on the various discourses in which the author was engaged in Redpath University.

The author of this study was Academic Development Adviser in Redpath University from 1992 – 1999. Prior to this the author was seconded part time to the Education Development Unit from 1990 -1 to develop Resource Based Learning. From 1990 a series of workshops were facilitated focussing on curriculum change and run over a period of 9 years until 1999. These were for academic staff offering guidance on redesigning degree programmes, and adapting pedagogy. The author also undertook research into how other universities were dealing with curriculum change. The Academic Development Adviser role therefore provided opportunities to witness and discuss informally the implications of change for a wide range of academic subjects and staff in Redpath University, and observe and comment upon change in other universities. Much time was spent

listening to academic staff concerns about change and often dealing with their resistance to it. Reflective practice or Field Notes were kept over a period of 15+ years from 1990 to 2005 and have formed the basis for the themes explored in Chapter 3: Discourse themes and Literature.

In particular, the Field Notes have provided prompts to explore in greater depth the issues that have been raised about changing identities and roles in higher education. Change in higher education, both at central government policy level, and at internal university organisation level, also features in the Chapter 3, illustrating the interplay between higher educational discourse and practice or structure and agency. The field note evidence was a means of capturing some of the ways in which academics had experienced these changes. They were made as part of the Academic Development Adviser role initially as a form of reflection on practice. However, more detail was needed. Using the auto/biographical approach to explore academic identity and how it had changed appeared to offer an opportunity to both chart historical change and show the meaning of academic life within it, in a selected period of time. It seemed to go to the heart of what Barnett (1994) sees as the open dialogue academics need to engage in to make meaning out of change in higher education.

1.4. Rationale for the study: research on responses to change in higher education

There are many commentators on higher education who claim that higher education is in a state of flux (Barnet, 1994, 1997, Shore and Roberts, 1995, Smyth, 1995). The various causes cited as influencing change in higher education include globalisation (Eggins, 2003) neo-liberal policies of national governments (Dearlove,1997) developments in information technology (Grumble, 2004) and the fragmentation of

work (Sennett, 2006). Each of these writers predicts different types of problems for higher education as a consequence. What is perhaps also important to note is Eggins (2003:15) comment about the process of growth and change in U.K. higher education. She points out:

> The metaphor of the 'tipping point' has long been employed in studies of social and institutional change. Slow initial take-up, requiring much external effort, may eventually enable a point to be reached at which resistance is so reduced that adoption accelerates rapidly, perhaps even to the point of becoming universal.

Whilst this study does not address these issues in detail, they do arise as part of a consideration of changing academic identities in the context of Redpath University institutional change. There is evidence in this study of slow initial take up, greater central direction to achieve change followed by cumulative acceptance of new policies and practices. There is also evidence in the field notes of the difficulties of coming to terms with the adaptation of identity as roles, relationships and responsibilities alter.

There are few empirical studies of higher education that focus on the academic role, particularly as it is changing over time (Blackmore and Blackwell, 2003) in a period of growth and change. There are some UK surveys, the most recent of which is that undertaken by Henkel, (2000) and some which have attempted to categorise academic responses to change using sociological groupings, notably Trowler, (1998). Trowler's research formulated certain typologies to categorise the ways in which academics responded to change in the earlier days following the 1988 Education Act, but his work was not looking at academic identities. Martin (1999) explored a number of conceptual themes concerning changing academic work, and undertook a series of surveys to explore these but again was not looking in detail at individual academic auto/biographies. A recent book by Barnett and DiNapoli (2008) looks at identities in higher education from UK,

Europe, North America and Australia. The book focuses on a range of identities that include academic, student, administrative/managerial and education developers and provides valuable contextual evidence for this study.

The Redpath University study is not a survey, it focuses solely on individual academic identities. The main purpose is to record individual academic lives as lived and their responses to change. In the concluding chapter, although it has been possible to compare different identity formation strategies between the participants, the purpose has not been to fit these lives into categories.

The study is a qualitative exploratory case study; a sociological account seeking to explore and illustrate how individual academic identities have been formed and/or changed in the context of living through and working in a rapidly expanding university using auto/biographical methods.

1.5. Contextual factors.

Taylor (2008:23) argues that 'academic identity is....a highly contested contextual notion, which deserves analysis within the specific environments that nourish them'. These environments or contexts are discussed below.

1.5.1. Growth and change in Higher Education

This study of academic autobiographies is located in one particular higher education institution, Redpath University, which has undergone a rapid rate of expansion of student numbers in the period 1991 - 2006. Student numbers in Redpath University have almost doubled in that period growing from 9442 in 1991 to 17,331 in 2006. It also changed from a Polytechnic to a (new) University in 1992. It was originally a College of Advanced Technology (CAT) located in the South of England and had a long tradition of providing technical

education in the immediate region. CAT's were established in 1956 but many had developed a more academic style to ape universities.

Politically in the 1960s there was already unease about containing the focus for CATs. Pratt (1997:109) tells us of the early concerns Tony Crosland, Education Minister expressed about this issue:

> For more that a century, colleges founded in the technical college traditions have gradually exchanged it for that of the universities. They have aspired to an increasing level of work, to a narrowing of student intake, to a rationalisation of course structure to more academic course content.

Crosland felt technical colleges *should* be differentiated from the existing universities. The introduction of Polytechnics was seen as the answer to maintaining that differentiation. There were therefore government proposals to develop institutions which catered for full time and part time students, those on sandwich courses and those seeking qualification below university level, and these were to become Polytechnics.

Economic performance worries were also behind such a development. By the 1960s Britain's economic performance was poor compared to other European countries. It was felt that there was a growing need to improve human capital by providing vocational, professional and industrially-based courses to enhance the competitiveness of the workforce and industry. It was argued we needed polytechnics to play a clear role in vocational education to achieve this. Other industrial training strategies at the time were introduced, such as Industrial Training Boards, designed to support the ailing apprenticeship schemes in British industry. It was very clear that polytechnics were seen as one strand of a strategy to improve the skill level of U.K. workers.

However, as Stevens (2004:33) argues, a further key point in this

discussion is that it heralded major changes in the purposes of higher education:

> What is clear is that it launched an alleged relationship (between higher education and the Gross Domestic Product) from that day to this and has been the catalyst for transforming the primary purposes of higher education from a liberal education for an elite to mass higher education, allegedly for the benefit of the economy.

By 1970-71 there were 236,000 students in universities (the independent sector) and 204,000 students in the polytechnics (or public sector). The goals for each of these sectors were seen as clearly different, with universities regarded as having a unique research role (Stevens, 2004:32).

However, many polytechnics did not fully accept their role as vocational trainers, just as the CATs had not. There was a trend for some polytechnics toward offering more and more academic, as distinct from vocational courses, and this trend is often referred to as *academic drift*. On becoming a Polytechnic, Redpath University developed, promoted and marketed itself as a `university like' Polytechnic, demanding relatively high A level grades for admission and developing a range of academic courses alongside its technical and vocational programmes. It gained a reputation and status as a university like Polytechnic. In fact Stevens (2004:52) singled out Redpath University in his book as one that was taking research seriously:

> The Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA), (which was the polytechnic degree awarding central body) became more willing to approve graduate degrees, particularly in polys like (Redpath) where research was though of as important.

Redpath University had previously offered degree level courses as a CAT, accredited externally by the University of London and this trend continued when it became a polytechnic with the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) as the validating body.

This was a part of a widespread trend Stevens (2004:53). As polytechnics grew they moved away from their original curriculum which was mainly engineering and teacher education, and some art schools. This could partly be explained by the decline in heavy industry in the case of engineering degrees. New degree courses emerged, such as Law at Manchester Polytechnic in 1966, and the trend spread rapidly to the curriculum of other polytechnics. By the 1980s Computing began to take off and grow, as did Business Studies, which by the 1990s was the largest subject in polytechnics. Modern Languages grew, but were often a part of business courses. In the mid 1970s Recreation and Leisure Studies were introduced and have now grown massively as part of the post 1992 university curriculum, together with Sports studies. The 1980s also saw the introduction of professions allied to medicine (PAMS) e.g. physiotherapy, occupational therapy, nursing and latterly dental nursing. These PAMS courses flourished in polytechnics fuelled by changes in the professional structure of medicine towards all graduate status.

Clearly the curriculum for polytechnics was changing. Redpath University curriculum reflects these trends. It has a large Business School, a Computing Department, and the Language School was one of the largest in Redpath University, but has now declined in size. There was a period when nursing was a growth area but less so in 2007, but professions allied to medicine have grown exponentially with a new large Dental School being a recent addition. There is also an Art School and a much reduced in size School of Education, which is the remains of a large College of Education incorporated into the polytechnic. The original technical departments remain as Faculties of Technology and Science. Recently a new Media Faculty has been developed.

In addition to curriculum changes, the way in which learning is

organised has also undergone a major shift. The American modular system of organising knowledge into discrete chunks or units, accredited as a number of 'credits' per unit, was introduced to British higher education. In Redpath University this was begun in 1992 and marked a major turning point in the culture of the organisation which will be discussed below.

There were other changes made to the way in which polytechnics were funded and regulated. The 1988 Education Reform Act severed the links between polytechnics and local authorities and set up a funding council specifically for polytechnics, the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC).

In the same time period universities were coming under scrutiny following the Croham Committee 1985 report which had argued that there were two major weaknesses in university funding. Firstly there should be greater public control over the use of block grants by universities and secondly that the University Grants Committee (UGC) should be given statutory status, reduced in size and have predominantly non academic members. All these changes were recommended on the basis of greater accountability of the universities to the public, to make them a public service. Eventually in 1987 the UGC was abolished and replaced with the University Funding Council (UFC) which effectively ensured that a central funding body controlled university finance. The UFC was directly accountable to ministers.

The 1988 Education Act abolished tenure for new appointees to universities and those promoted. This was in line with the view that universities could not rid themselves of poor teachers and non-performing researchers because of tenure rights.

John Griffith, a socialist academic at the London School of Economics at the time, compared the1988 Education Reform Act to the

dissolution of the monasteries. Stevens (2004:62) claims that 'Thatcher has done more than any other Prime Minister to destroy the Newman view of the university'. Thatcher possibly recognised the draconian nature of the some of the reforms when she said, in her memoirs (Thatcher, 1993:598-9):

> (critics) were genuinely concerned about the future autonomy and academic integrity of universities: I had to concede that these critics had a stronger case than I would have liked. It made me concerned that many distinguished academics thought that Thatcherism in education meant a philistine subordination of scholarship to the immediate requirements of vocational training.

Not only were the funding and tenure arrangements changed for universities, in 1988 the national system of salaries in universities were freed up. In 1990 the average professorial salary in higher education was higher in England than in the United States. However, the freeing up of professorial salaries could only be achieved by drawing on research funding; salaries for teaching were paid out of a *per capita* grant which meant the funding of teaching posts was capped and did not enjoy the flexibility afforded by the RAE. However, the brain drain, especially to the USA, accelerated for outstanding academics, whose UK salaries did not keep pace with those of the USA.

The 1988 Education Reform Act therefore brought into place major changes in the planned purpose and funding of universities and their status as independent organisations. In the case of the former polytechnics, their role widened and changed to offer more academic programmes with student numbers increasing massively, funded by a year on year reduction in the unit of resource.

The White Paper *The future of Higher Education* (DfES.2003) made it very clear the purpose and value of higher education was its

contribution to the economy, and the value of academic research should be focussed on economic prosperity and the creation of jobs. University qualifications are beneficial to individual students in terms of their capacity to enable them to earn higher salaries. The idea of knowledge for its own sake was not discussed and therefore we might assume the proper role of the academic as indicated in the White Paper is largely as a contributor to economic growth, and the university is not seen as a site of any critical intellectual public debate that has no clear economic 'pay off'.

Intensification of work has also been a feature of change. Staff-student ratios had gone from an average of 1:10 in 1983 to 1:18 in 2000 and in Redpath University there is an average of 1:25 on many programmes of study in 2007. This does however vary between courses.

Growth in student numbers has also been a major element of change. In 1954 there were around 82,000 students at English universities, 28,000 in teacher training colleges and 12,000 in full time further education largely in further education colleges. By 2004, 38 % of the eligible population were participating in some form of higher education. The Labour government has declared it is pursuing a goal of 50% by 2010 of all the eligible population participating in higher education. The era of mass higher education had arrived.

1.5.2 <u>Contextual themes</u>

There are many contextual themes that have relevance in this study, which can be grouped broadly into those pertaining to U.K. higher education policy, (Scott, 1995) and national and global economic changes (Eggins, (ed) 2003). These have had a significant effect on the UK higher education culture or life-world of work for academics in general, and for those academics who are the focus of this study. In addition there are factors relating to curriculum change which are

linked to the position of UK higher education in wider political, economic and cultural arenas.

In particular the role of higher education in preparing people for the world of work, or the human capital view of education, is of relevance here. Higher education in the UK, and particularly former Polytechnics, are increasingly called upon to fulfil a vocational human capital function, as their major purpose, and the significance of this trend on academic practices arises in relation to the academic identity formation in the auto/biographies. Polytechnics were originally tasked to perform the vocational human capital function, but this vocational function is now being reinforced, or reiterated in the context of *academic drift* and aspirations modelled on pre-1992 universities.

Nevertheless, despite clear evidence about the human capital purpose of higher education in policy discourse, there continues to be debate within academic literature and public commentary over the contested normative issue of what higher education as a whole sector *should be for* in the UK, either now, or in the near future. Questions persist about whether and how H.E. can play a central role in knowledge creation, and knowledge production, research functions, and higher education links to social and economic policy. Furthermore, issues concerning knowledge generated for its own sake as a purpose for H.E. rather than solely as a utility for another end continue to emerge. Debates also range around whether there should be largely teaching only institutions within the H.E sector. How universities should be managed in the light of change and expansion and the perceived need for greater quality control, is also the subject of disagreement. These are some of the questions Barnett (1994) initially addressed but they are repeated in different forms throughout this study by other writers.

Further themes and questions arose from the auto/biographical

stories and earlier field notes that were made while the author was a fellow academic, but not an immediate colleague, with the participants at Redpath university. These include organisational culture, marketisation, performativity, accountability, state regulation and standardisation of the curriculum and professional autonomy, within the context of rapid expansion or 'massification' of higher education.

They are not the only themes of relevance to higher education change, but are those which were raised in the course of various discourses with members of the case study university and are discussed below.

1.6. The university as an organisation.

Writers like Clark (1996) highlight the fact that the transition from elite to mass higher education; the changing relationship between governments and universities and the differentiation of the institutional fabric of national systems, have all been well researched. However, there are gaps. These gaps in our understanding are of how practitioners in universities are responding to the agenda for change. As Clark says "much of the essential *story* about the development of higher education is left out" (Clark, 1996:418) He draws attention to the need to research:

> the growing importance of internal university organisation. As they grow more complex, national systems generally find they must decentralise authority to individual institutions and then somehow create conditions that encourage the institutions to become pro-active, self-determining enterprises. Here we enter the realm of institutional flexibility and innovation, new organisational forms and environmental relations, reconciliation of newly-strengthened administrative values with traditional academic values, and niche-building in competitive supra-national orbits of universities. *We need to know much more about universities as organisational actors and how they go about changing their ways. (*Authors italics)

Whilst this study does not directly focus on organisational dynamics, the academic auto/biographies in this study do comment on internal university organisation and its impact upon their life-worlds. They

also refer to entrepreneurial values and approaches to academic work, as well as the 'newly strengthened' administrative powers. Therefore the study contributes to the need to research the 'story' of organisational actors in changing higher education contexts.

1.7. Organisational culture

Organisations are conceptualised in this study as being composed of the individuals within them, and this study seeks to chart the experiences of a small sample of participants in organisational life. It does not seek to analyse or evaluate the organisation of the university other than to conceptualise the organisation in narrative terms (Czarniawaska, 1997). The case study university is what the academics perceive and experience it to be.

Some writers, like Barnett (2005), point out that the UK higher education system has witnessed a major transformation of organisational culture characterised by a speed and incisiveness unmatched by any other country save perhaps Australia. To this extent it could be suggested there is an 'exceptionalist' quality to the UK higher education system that is worthy of an extensive exploration.

However, this study is *not* an extensive exploration of the whole higher education organisational system in the U.K. but focuses on one post-1992 University and five academic lives in one organisation. These academics have lived through a period of rapid change in higher education and their experiences have been explored using a phenomenological perspective (Van Manen, 1990). The broad questions explored are what meaning has been placed on the life lived through rapid change, and how academic identity been formed, changed, adapted in this context? The extent to which organisational

culture is mentioned in these questions arises from the auto/biographies.

1.8. Structure of the study

Chapter 1 has introduced the study and its aims and offered a rationale for the focus.

Chapter 2 is concerned with the Research Design; methodology and method, conceptual issues and theoretical location, and makes the case for a phenomenological enquiry of this kind using auto/biographical methods. As Van Manen (2005:7-8) explains, phenomenological inquiries are at pains to point out that no interpretation of the meaning of a life is ever final, and no insight is beyond challenge. However, writing about lives lived 'brings about an intensified awareness of phenomena that sometimes seems profound, and sometime trivial.' But it is in the construction of a narrative of the self and the reading of such texts that further awareness may be afforded. Auto/biographical writing encourages us to enter this interpretive reflexive space and make further sense of these academic lives in the light of our own personal understanding. In that sense the stories that will be told in this study are a social construction and could be subject to further interpretation.

Themes relating to the context of higher education are explored in more detail in Chapter 3 which is a Literature Review and forms a large section of the study in order to fully represent the context for the auto/biographies. The literature review is presented as a narrative arising from a number of themes, which emerged from a series of field notes, kept by the researcher over a period of 15 years from 1992 to 2007 in the case study university. These were based on conversations with a wide range of academic staff, not only those whose autobiographies are the focus of this study. The field notes reflecting on these conversations have generated themes that have formed the

basis of the conceptual framework that is used to give shape to the investigation.

Chapter 4 proceeds to explore further theoretical and conceptual arguments around narrative and self identity. Storytelling and narrative theories provide the conceptual framework for the analysis of the data and are drawn upon where appropriate in making sense of the auto/biographies. Not all the concepts will be applicable in all the auto/biographies but are included to ensure a range of possible meanings can be attempted in the analyses.

Auto/biographies are not one story but many. They are social stories, interpersonal stories, economic stories and so on and they do not always blend together in a unified whole or overarching meaning (Kenyon and Randall. 1997). What has been emphasised in the academic auto/biographies is an academic life, but there are other stories within these accounts such as community and wider cultural stories or contexts. For example, the national higher education organisation, the wider academic professional community and the family, which have been discussed by some but not all of the participants.

Chapter 5 contains the stories of five individual academic lives, each constructed into a narrative that seeks to convey the essence of the life as lived in a higher education organisation. The individual stories were placed into plots, to structure events and give meaning to what at first can appear a random set of comments roaming back and forth over time.

Chapter 6. Revisits the aims of the study and looks at how far the evidence has enlightened the question of the formation and adaptation of academic identity in a period of change. It also explores common features across all the narratives by making comparisons and looking

at similarities and differences. Evidence is mapped onto various sociological theories concerning how actors form and maintain self-identity in work. The study indicates diversity of academic identities, stability of employment, but uncertainty about the occupational role for the future. Further concluding comments on individual meaning in the process of constructing an identity are discussed here.

A final speculative section considers what trends are likely in the future for higher education and the academics within it, drawing on contemporary commentaries from the field (Barnett and Di Napoli, 2008), whose recent book on changing identities in higher education offers a set of commentaries on the fragmentation of the university and the sub-communities developing in the academy.

CHAPTER 2.   **DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

This is an historical qualitative case study based in one university that was a former College of Advanced Technology (CAT), then a Polytechnic before being granted University status in 1992.   It covers the period 1988 -2007. The study employs a number of concepts concerning academic identity, academic role, academic professionality and academic work and these are clarified below. There is also reference to the theoretical location of the study.

2.1 Design of research

This case study is designed using phenomenological methodology, utilising auto/biographical methods to gather data. Meanings that emerge in the accounts of experience are both intuitively and imaginatively discovered.   A narrative and descriptive general structure of the experiential phenomenon is sought in this study (Van Manen. 1990.30). Phenomenology is explored in more detail in 2.1.5 below.

The study could be described as an insider study in the sense that the researcher is a fellow member of the university, but it is not ethnographic. The nature of the knowledge sought is that of the meaning of lives lived. Shared meaning systems are possible given the fact that the researcher is a fellow academic who has lived through the same time period in the university. Evidence was gathered from five male academics, using the auto/biographical method. The auto/biographies were recorded over a period of 18 months; 2004-2006. The focus for data analysis is qualitative and interpretive in character. The process of analysis is discussed further in Chapter 5.

Initially, participants were sought for the study by sending a series of emails to selected male staff known to have at least 20 years service. Twenty replies were received, some expressing real interest, others

only marginally so. Five participants were selected on the basis of being in different disciplines and/or different faculties. Not all faculties were represented. The sample is therefore a convenience sample. The five participants were drawn from different academic disciplines; Education, Art and Design, Engineering, History and Sociology. Each participant was at a different stage in their academic life, although all had at least 20 years service in the university and some over 30 years. Some were in the full throes of a current project, or a new post, or new areas of consultancy, whereas others had their eye on retirement. Their level of work ranged through Director, Head of Department, Reader, Principal Lecturer and Senior Lecturer.

The case study is not intended to include a representative sample of disciplines in the university. Instead it is a convenience sample, made up of volunteers for the project. In accounts of this nature, voluntary involvement is crucial as the data required is of a personal nature.

2.1.2 The development of the auto/biographical approach to the study

The author was seconded to the Academic Development Centre from the School of Education and Continuing Studies in the case study university for a period of 8 years from 1991 to 1999. The role was as Academic Development Adviser and was concerned with supporting curriculum change across the university with the advent of credit rated programmes of study, and credit accumulation and transfer (CATS) approaches to curriculum design. The rationale for the post was the provision of staff development for teaching, learning and curriculum development skills. With the shift at that time to university status and with it greater emphasis on research and research income, there were also tensions about whether all staff should be researchers or whether there should be teaching only posts. This debate continues. Many academic staff at that time had little

research experience, had come into the former Polytechnic with technical or other professional backgrounds which had no tradition of primary research, but put a great deal of their effort into their teaching approaches. Other staff, however, felt they had to compete in the research arena and to some extent neglected or did not prioritise their teaching skills. There was evidence of some confusion over their academic role and this led to the author becoming interested in ways of capturing this process through the use of auto/biographical methods.

2.1.3. Ethics

The study is sensitive in ethical terms. Sharing aspects of a working life is a very personal activity. All participants volunteered and agreed to take part in the study after it had been explained to them. The university and the participant's names have been rendered anonymous for the purpose of reporting the study for a PhD. All participants have agreed to have their comments cited where appropriate for the purposes of the PhD analysis. The tapes and original transcripts are kept in a locked filing cabinet and have not been shared with anyone other than the transcriber, who has assured confidentiality. Should the study be subsequently published then copyright for the stories remain with the participants and they will be consulted to enable them to decide whether any published form of the work should include citations from their stories and what those should be. This is standard ethical practice in auto/biographical research. Participants have agreed to have their comments cited within the PhD and have received a copy of the transcript relating to their auto/biographical interviews, and offered the opportunity to amend or delete any of that text.

2.1.4. Time-frame and research process

The study was undertaken over a four year period as part of a Ph.D. following the authors growing interest in auto/biographical methods

in sociological enquiry. It was begun in 2004 and completed in 2008.

Five auto/biographical life stories were recorded in a series of interviews in the period 2004 – 2006 and transcribed verbatim. This data forms the basis for the auto/biographies which are analysed and reported on below in Chapter 5.

2.1.5. Phenomenological approaches to knowledge

Phenomenology is defined by Van Manen (1990:38) as 'the descriptive study of lived experience' and hermeneutic because 'it is the interpretive study of the expressions...of lived experience in the attempt to determine the meaning embodied in them'. Van Manen goes on to explain that exploring the meaning of human experience is only possible because we have language. Ricoeur (1981) says that human experiences can be seen as a form of text and of course the idea of a text implies there could be all kinds of interpretations, on the part of the reader or audience. In this study, the author interprets the words or text of the auto/biographies in order to analyse meaning and illustrates how each life, in the form of their narrative, has been socially constructed. Van Manen (1990:39) tells us that a:

> good quality description that constitutes the essence of something is construed so that the structure of the lived experience is revealed to us in such a fashion that we are now able to grasp the nature and significance of this experience in a hitherto unseen way.

Van Manen sees this descriptive process as a creative one. It has been undertaken in this study through a series of stages or procedures that have sought to evoke the uniqueness of an individual life or their way of being in the world. These stages and processes are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Facts are discussed in this process, but as Van Manen (1997:40) goes on to argue 'phenomenology is not concerned primarily with...factual aspects or some state of affairs; rather it always asks what is the

nature of the phenomenon as meaningfully experienced?' It is this approach that has been adopted in this study. Possible interpretations of the lives lived have been constructed by the author.

The study does not have a precisely worded research question, there is no hypothesis, rather the area of focus looking at lived academic lives is highlighted as worthy of deeper investigation in terms of meaning. It is concerned with what it was like to be an academic in the time period outlined, an illuminative approach in a period of transition in higher education, or metaphorically speaking *border country.*

This raises a number of methodological debates. The research seeks to capture the experiences of people whose particular story has not yet been heard. It has produced a series of narratives that offer insight into localised life worlds of a small number of academics. It is non-participatory, in the sense that the academics had no hand in writing up their stories, but the interviews discussed below attempted to capture their stories in a meaningful way. Goodley et.al (2004:58) outlines the stages of this approach and explains that in a non-participatory study the participants do not play a role in putting together the story.

Phenomenology does not have a prescribed methodology. Rather the unity of phenomenology is located in the way the method is conceived; *a close enough relationship to the subject matter to enable the researcher to identify meaningful experience.* Clearly the researcher has this, as an insider researching fellow academics in a shared context; a close enough relationship to make it possible to identify meaningful experience. Most of the participants have known the researcher for many years in the context of the role of Academic Development Adviser.

Initially the guiding question concerning the lived experience of academics was how have they made sense of, and construed their academic identity, over a period of at least 20 years in a new university, given the great flux of change in policy, organisation and purpose that has been documented in the period? The anthropologist Ruth Behar (1990:225) points out how the inclusion of social and cultural contexts facilitates a richer and more complex telling of a life:

> Rather than looking at social and cultural systems solely as they impinge on a life, shape it, and turn it into an object, a life history should allow one to see how an actor makes culturally meaningful history...a life history narrative should allow one to see the subjective mapping of experience, the working out of a culture and a social system that is often obscured by a typified account.

The culturally meaningful history of an academic life through narrative can thus highlight the nature of the culture and social system of their time.

The assumptions the researcher has about this group have been revealed in the way in which change has been documented in the literature review. The selection of literature, the credence given to that literature, and the general themes that have emerged as a result are in fact the social and cultural framework in which the academics experiences will be interpreted.

However, phenomenology does not prejudice the freshness of the whole cloth of lived experience by deciding understanding in advance using preconceived categories to structure the stories. There are aspects of the academics *natural attitude* (Heidegger,1962), held in common and which encompass both the practical and intellectual domain. These involve constructs such as professional, practice, autonomy, control, bureaucracy, time, workload and surveillance among others. These constructs have to some extent been created by the very policies they have lived through. The academics in this study

have become aware of or *noticed* them. They are thus part of the context of their lived experience.

The purpose of phenomenological understanding is not to categorise experience in order to explain it. Rather it is to thematise or structure meanings, through descriptive methods, to gain insight into what it means to have been an academic in that period of time, in this type of university, in their respective disciplines. It is an historical account of the meaning of lived experience.

However, the themes once identified can be interpreted using hermeneutic approaches. Hermeneutic phenomenology is not just an inquiry into the life world of this group of academics; it is the disclosure of meanings that are uncovered in the light of the phenomenological life history. Memories, though largely clouded by the passage of time can be recalled and rearticulated through autobiographical reflections. Phenomenology leads to the necessary concept of *intentionality* or orientation towards the world. Van Manen, (1990:181) points out that all researchers of lived experience conjure an idea of the structure of the person-in-the-world "that indicates the inseparable connectedness of the human being in the world".

That is not to say there are no alternative or relevant theoretical frameworks, or different perspectives, that could be used in a study of this type. It is merely to say that the above statements are the theoretical preconceptions, assumptions and beliefs of the researcher.

Life history research interviews are a *dialogic event*. The researcher is a peer of those being researched, is a member of the same university, and has lived through the same period of time in the university. Therefore, the research interview involves the researcher and researched engaging in a discussion that is two way, so the researchers framework needs to be made clarified and explained, as it

will influence the ways in which the stories told are interpreted.

2.1.6 Interviews

Initially informal interviews were held to ensure participants were clear about the study and their role in it, and to assure them of anonymity. No ethical concerns were identified in these initial interviews and participants were asked if they would agree to the use of tape recording. They were offered the opportunity to correct the transcript once made and delete any items they did not wish to remain. They were also asked to sign a consent form giving permission to cite comments they had made in their auto/biographical stories.

However, it is recognised that this kind of study is sensitive as revealing aspects of lives lived could be potentially emotionally problematic. The researcher is skilled in interviewing and the participants did not appear to experience any emotional upset. Indeed some expressed pleasure at having the time and space to reflect upon their professional lives at this juncture in their life.

What is being emphasised in this study is the importance of the sense making process for the participants in constructing a self. The mixture of certainty and anxiety that individuals have when attempting to read their cultural working life, the difficulties of identifying the flow and texture of social action, are difficult to recall without considerable reflexivity or capacity to stand outside oneself and view ones own action. It is much easier to recall chronological events or facts, but chronology tells us nothing of the meaning of actions. Thus the role of the interviewer in this study was in part to record academic life events, but more importantly to encourage reflexivity on those life events. The interviews were therefore semi-structured, and not totally open-ended.

2.1.7 Reflexivity

It is important to clarify the issue of reflexivity as used in this study at this point in the research design. The self is not conceptualised as a fixed entity; rather it is discussed as a social construction. According to Giddens (1991) the relationship between self, society and reflexivity is a dynamic one. Elliott (2003:40) argues that the idea that the relationship between the self and society being a fluid one, involving negotiation, change and development, needs careful consideration. Critics say that it fits too neatly into (liberal) individualism – the idea that the individual is sovereign at the heart of society. Elliott (20003.42) points out Giddens arguments are useful in situating the self in a reflexive monitoring way but 'downplay the degree to which emotion, memory and desire can limit or conflict with our conscious attempts to order our lives and make sense of the world in more reflexive terms.'

This social construction of the self and identity is an ongoing process throughout academic life and could be likened to the work of a *bricoleur* (Levi-Strauss, 1966). Individuals put together an identity from material to hand. Not all academics had access to the same material, either by choice or circumstance, in their lived time within higher education.

The essence of Giddens (1991) conception of the self is the concept of reflexivity. Reflexivity in these terms is explained as a self defining process. This involves the monitoring of and reflection upon psychological and social information about possible trajectories of life. The concept of reflexivity is used here sociologically, as Giddens (1991) defines it. The reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character.

2.1.8.   Further Conceptual issues

It is important to clarify some of the concepts used in this study. In particular the term 'academic' needs further clarification.

2.1.8.1   What is an academic?

The term academic is a contested one. Not all contemporary commentators on higher education have the same conception of the role.

The academics are not categorised as a profession in this study as it is evident that they do not have all the characteristics that signify such a status. Blackmore and Blackwell (2003:20) put it like this:

> The academic community has a weak claim to being a profession. It has no control over entry or exit or requirement for registration. The most common preparation route, the PhD, is geared towards research but not to other duties. It can be argued that the academic community's grip on its own standards of practice is loose, and amateur in the worst sense. No professional code exists. Standards, either of an ethical or an academic kind (for practice) are largely implicit rather than codified. There is no requirement for professional updating in any area of expertise, other than those of external professional bodies.

In recent years there have been many strategies put in place to professionalise teaching and learning in higher education, for example the Institute of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTH) has been introduced to offer guidance on teaching standards, but teaching is only one strand of the academic role, and such a strategy does not constitute the formation of the academic role into a profession.

In fact, many academics locate their identity within their subject disciplines, (Becher and Trowler, 2001) and regard this arena as the major source of professional values and ideology rather than their

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teaching role. Henkel,2000:21), for example, highlights the role of the subject discipline in the development of a generic professional identity. In terms of common values, each subject discipline has distinct sets of values and ideology. Nevertheless, this does not constitute a claim for common professional values across the academic role.

In any event academics in both pre and post 1992 universities have been required to adopt a range of new and diverse roles in the period covered by this study, including entrepreneurial, administrative, information technology, quality assurance and management, illustrating that the role is in some cases amorphous and difficult to classify in terms of a profession. As Blackmore and Blackwell (20003:19) go on to say:

> New roles outside the academic structure have been established to support academic work. A university cannot now function without substantial information technology support, whilst quality assurance and enhancement, learning resources, research exploitation, international recruitment, press and public relations and many other areas have grown substantially. Very few of these new posts have academic status, even though many of them include academic activity.

Kogan, Moses and El Khawas (1994) have suggested that the academic profession is relatively fragmented, which again works against the development of a generic professional identity. Perkin (1987) argued 30 years ago that UK Higher Education had found it particularly difficult to develop a strong unified academic profession. This has not altered significantly.

There are also commentators who argue that academics are not now a profession in the conventional sense but may *once* have been. Dearlove (1997) for example discusses this issue in relation to loss of collegiality in academic life and claims academics are becoming

proletarian in terms of the character of their work and loss of autonomy over work practices. On the other hand, Beck and Young (2001) *assume* academics are a profession and discuss how their professionalism is being eroded by recent policies and practices in higher education emanating from changes in wider society, notably the fragmentation of work.

Most of these debates, however, are focused on the pre-1992 universities and their values and practices. This makes an analysis of the academic role and identity in a post-1992 university more complex but timely.

Henkel's (2000:21) study does embrace pre and post 1992 universities and highlights the role of the subject discipline in the development of a generic professional identity. There are many distinct disciplines within higher education, some of which are in active conflict with each other concerning epistemological matters or the nature of their kind of knowledge and its status. Whether or not there are common norms and values that bind across disciplines, which are an important aspect of a recognisable professional, is also open to debate. Possibly institutional contexts play a significant part.

However, Henkel, 2000:264) found in her study that:

> A number of senior academics considered that the last two decades of the 20th century had seen a professionalisation of the academic profession. ... (Their) comments had broadly two different reference points. The first was that of the structures within which the foundations of specialist knowledge were established and the knowledge and skills required by recruits to the academic profession were determined and managed. Second...most believed that there had been little change as far as the academic values of independence, integrity, intellectual rigour, enthusiasm for their job and commitment to the discipline were concerned, despite the decline in the status, power and economic rewards of the profession.

Henkel regarded this as a positive theme. However, other writers regard the professionalisation of academic life as a negative process, which has disabled their contribution to intellectual life. Panton (2005:141) for example says academics now have a:

> Diminishment of intellectual autonomy that occurs with the movement of the intellectual into the university; a retreat from broader social debates into academic specialisms in their search for career advancement and the loss of intellectual freedom to speak as one finds, to the dictates of the curricular, governing bodies and research funding.

The argument here is that intellectuals have become 'academicised' by being drawn into universities and their academic specialisms, which act as *retreats* from public intellectual debate and do not therefore give academics the status of intellectuals. Academic engagement with the social, economic and political issues of society is located within specialist circles and not widely debated in the community.

This wide ranging discussion of whether academics are professionals, or intellectuals, indicates some confusion about how to describe academics in an unambiguous way. The term *academic role* seems a clearer way to describe participants in this study. Academic could be used as a term depicting an *occupational group*, rather than as a profession or group of intellectuals. However, groups are often defined purely in terms of their difference from other groups in this context. Therefore the term academic group is not sufficiently robust or informative. However, the term *academic role* 'referring to rights, responsibilities, and relationships to other groupings' (Blackmore and Blackwell, 2003:18) is more transparent and useful in clarifying the focus for the study. Roles fluctuate over time in any occupation grouping. However, identities have greater meaning to individuals. The term academic role embraces academic identity. The focus here could then be seen as how the fluctuating role of the academic influences

academic self-identity. Identities are always under construction, and this process is linked to the desire for personal meaning.

The purpose of this discussion of some literature on the academic role was to consider whether or not it is a profession, and highlight the fact that the role of the academic is diverse, dynamic, changing and contested. The role of academic originated from a very disparate, somewhat unspecified original role that differed markedly both between higher education institutions, and also between pre and post 1992 universities. Despite not being a profession, certainly the academic role can be performed professionally, but this is a separate issue and made complex and confusing by the lack of a clear professional framework.

Therefore given the contested debate and despite the recent development of Higher Education Role Analysis (HERA), which is much more of a specification of skills and competences, this study does not assume academics are a unified profession and therefore does not draw upon contemporary models of professional formation and professional development. Instead it describes academics in a range of roles that have shaped their sense of self and self identity.

2.1.9   Academic professionality and orientation

Given the above trends and arguments, the author became interested in 1994 about how different academic staff *conceptualised* their role, including its professionality. Some research work in this field was undertaken in 1995, by the author, interviewing all Heads of Department (who were all male at that time) in Redpath University to establish whether they saw their role as either mainly a manager of a department or a professor providing largely academic leadership. This question was not directly proposed; instead the interviews were focussed around their current work role and professional training required, but their responses led to clear evidence that there was such

a demarcation of role within their perspectives. An unpublished conference paper was given (Selway,1996) on this topic at the Society for Research in Higher Education December conference, University College, Wales. Essentially two distinct views emerged. Some heads conceived their roles as business managers and stressed their need for management training. Their orientation as professionals was towards the university as a business organisation. Other heads perceived their role as academic leaders or professors and their orientation as a professional was towards the national and international subject and research community to which they belonged. Becher, (1989) identified clear academic *tribes* or disciplines in higher education which formed key orientation points or significant others in his study. The academics in Becher's study saw the organisation in which they worked as a kind of vehicle for their research role. Their main concerns seemed to be their professional standing in their subject community rather than in the organisation, or as an organisation man. At the time of the Selway (1996) study in Redpath University there was no detailed job description for a Head of Department so it was possible to choose which role to play within the organisation provided the department remained solvent within the budgetary constraints each subject area faced. These interviews also revealed the very different ways in which academic staff placed meaning on their practices and academic identity.

What was also of significance for the Selway (1996) Head of Department case study was the sense of isolation and lack of shared meaning concerning their role that some reported. This may have been been linked to the lack of a clear Head of Department identity. There were other lessons learned in undertaking this Head of Department Case study. The interviews lasted much longer than the original hour allotted as the Heads asked if they could continue to talk about their roles in a great deal of detail. They rarely, if ever, had such an opportunity and many felt isolated. There was a real danger of the

interviews becoming almost 'therapeutic' which was not intended on the part of the author. What this indicated was a group of staff under a great deal of pressure to bring about change, respond to new demands under quite considerable financial constraint, whilst all the time retaining a sense of professional integrity. The role of Head of Department was not seen as a happy one for some of them. In fact, one or two claimed they had been placed in the role in the absence of anyone else applying for the job. It was clear some did not feel able to tell anyone 'in authority' so to speak of their difficulties and welcomed this rare chance to talk to a colleague who understood and empathised with their dilemma. Instead of sharing their concerns with fellow colleagues they undertook the tasks, talked the talk, and seemingly adopted the new values of mass higher education whilst all the while feeling they were betraying their own professional values. Some feared a blame culture, which they claimed existed in the Redpath University at this time, where if things went wrong there were always scapegoats and victims. None of the Heads of Department interviewed in 1996 have been re-interviewed for this study as most have retired, and some have been promoted. An interesting aspect of the Heads at that time was their age, which ranged from 40 – 65, which meant they had joined higher education in a period when it was certainly smaller in size and promotion hierarchies were different. Henkel's (20002:64) study showed that senior (older) academics were concerned with cultural change in the form of rationalisation, performance measurement and explicit instrumentalism, whereas younger academics were thought to have a more sophisticated understanding of an academic career and their progression within it. Younger academics used their knowledge of these contemporary cultural factors in Higher Education to their advantage rather than mourning any aspects of past practice. Henkel (2000:64) mentions this:

> Young academics were ambitious, determined and focused. They were well aware of the insecurity of their status...and were much less likely than their seniors to have an exceptionalist view of their profession, in terms of what they ought to expect from society and vice versa. They took accountability for granted and, with it, the evaluation of performance against output criteria...(and) they were more likely than their seniors to have incorporated theory and practices from pedagogy into their approach to teaching.

It is evident from Henkel's study that the academic role (or developing profession) is adapting within a system in transition. Older academics such as those in this Redpath University study have indeed mourned aspects of past practice. Younger academics had a very different perception of their roles in contemporary higher education, and did not anticipate remaining in the same organisation for the duration of their academic career. However, the perspectives of younger academics are not the focus of this study.

2.1.9.1 Academic identity

Epstein (1978.101) sees identity as essentially a concept of synthesis, integration and action:

> It represents the process by which the person seeks to integrate his (sic) various statuses and roles, as well as his diverse experiences, *into a coherent image of self.*

In the current conditions of change, lack of clarity about the purposes of higher education, and uncertainty about the appropriate contemporary role of academics in new universities, academic identity emerges out of what Bernstein (1996) refers to as retrospective and prospective identities. The retrospective identities use as a resource narratives of the past that provide exemplars and criteria for the present and for the future. Alternatively, prospective identities are essentially future oriented. As Bernstein (1996:79) suggests "prospective identities change the basis for collective recognition and relation". Future identities for older academics are bound up with the

past and the as yet uncertain future purposes of higher education, the public debates about an appropriate curriculum and the role of research.

Academic identity is therefore not a fixed thing; it is negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous, the result of culturally available meanings and the open-ended, power-laden enactment of those meanings in everyday situations (Kondo,1990:24)

Wenger (1998:149) identifies five dimensions of identity which have proved useful as a tool to chart some of the stories of experience from the professional autobiographies. These are:

I)   identity as negotiated experiences where we define who we are by the ways we experience our selves through participation as well as the way we and other reify our selves.
II)   identity as community membership where we identify who we are by the familiar and the unfamiliar.
III) identity as a learning trajectory where we define who we are by where we have been and where we are going.
IV)   identity as a nexus of multi membership where we define who we are by the ways in which we reconcile our various forms of identity into one identity and;
V)   identity as a relation between the local and the global where we define who we are by negotiating local ways of belonging to broader constellations and manifesting broader styles and discourses.

As Wenger says (1998:149) "there is a profound connection between identity and practice. Developing a practice requires the formation of a community whose members can engage with one another and thus acknowledge each other as participants."

Although academic roles are the main means of describing what the academics in this study have been doing in their lives in the university, their identities relate to their own character and agency.

However, identity here is not seen as intrinsic to an individual, but as

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a way of publicly characterising a person in a given context.

Being a member of an academic discipline involves, as Becher (1989:20) comments, identification with that discipline. The academic has to work with two sets of rules; the academic discipline and public rules for academics. Taylor (1999:42) says these rules are centred on two values; academic autonomy and academic freedom, or disinterested enquiry and sovereignty over education matters. It seems according to Taylor (1999:42) that:

> The global symbols of disinterested, individual inquiry and collective educational sovereignty...stand in contrast to (traits) that seem to be required of employees in modern universities – commitment to corporate mission.

This discussion of academic identity offers important conceptual tools in the analysis of the auto/biographies. For example the auto/biographies heard in Redpath University have offered different definitions in response to questions inviting them to define their academic role. One said, very firmly, "I am an engineer and a teacher" when asked how he would describe himself to others. The term "academic" did not fit easily with his conception of himself; instead he would use the term "professional". Another said he was an historian (academic tribe) and it was to this community that he oriented his academic freedom. Another said it was difficult to label his activities, as so many times he is asked to play different roles, it is difficult to conceptualise them all in one role. He saw his role as providing a public service to the community of schools. Most of the academics in the study made reference to a growing need to conform to corporate style mission statements as they manifested into departmental strategies and communications with external communities, and some resented developing such traits in their self-identity. Others seemed concerned about their public identity, for example one who saw his academic role as one that should be exemplary in moral terms.

Identities are made in a particular culture and are dynamic so do not remain static. Schwalbe and Mason Schrock (1996:42):

> note that group identity or group culture, respectively, are not a`finished construction' – (they) involve a constant interplay and negotiation between the group/culture and the social context which is itself always in a state of flux. Thus identity and culture are *accomplishments.*

The stories academics tell about their identity and *accomplishments* are social constructions that need constant work to maintain them. Sometimes, Taylor (1999:42) argues that the ongoing nature of this process can cause people to forget they are made up, rather than the natural order of things.

However, cultural identities require constant work. It seems the academic is defined differently according to who is shaping that identity. The organisation person stands in contrast to the disinterested, inquiring academic person. The individual academic is caught up in this process. External public views of the academic often oscillate between both views.

Identities evolve within the culture of an organisation. This study in some ways is looking at the way the academic identity has evolved in the organisation of Redpath University. The job description many had when commencing their posts is relatively meaningless now and possibly were at the time. However reflective practice or field note evidence in discussions with academics in the case study university suggesting they have a perception of their identity which is not contained within job descriptions, but may be part of the stories they tell themselves about academic work and their academic identity. Many academics said things are not what they used to be, and that changes have taken place that does not enable them to have an (academic or professional) identity of the kind they find acceptable. Some claimed they felt like administrators given the vast volumes of

paperwork they had to deal with. Others said they felt their identity was unclear, having to play so many roles at different times, for example, researching, attending internal working groups, sitting on national committees, developing the curriculum and marketing new programmes of study. Each of these roles requires distinct competences.

Age may be a factor in dealing with new demands. All the academics in the study are over 56 years old. The auto/biographical interviews indicate some have seized change as a vehicle to redefine their identity. Others appear to have lacked agency and seemed to have reacted to change. This did not seem to be related to age but perceptions about personal agency within a large organisation.

Henkel's (2000:148) study of higher education policies and processes in a period of constant change illustrated clearly that H.E institutions differed markedly in terms of culture and organisation across the binary divide. However, despite these differences, Henkel, (2000:148) teases out the essence of academic identity and her view could be encapsulated in the following statement:

> Academic lives are concerned with knowledge, acquiring, producing, reshaping and disseminating it, and the primary communities are knowledge communities, disciplines or subject communities....they constitute the living tradition in engagement with which academics determine the values, agendas, self-perceptions and sense of self-esteem that together make up their identities.

This does not mean academic identities are homogenous. Henkel (2000:148) reminds us that 'it is possible to locate academics on a spectrum that extends from those who might be called 'idealists' to 'pragmatists'. Idealists are those academics whose lives are focussed on their discipline, whereas pragmatists are not as closely aligned with their discipline but the academic life or role in its entirety, which brings with it some status, professional autonomy and a measure of

job satisfaction.

However, there are dangers in using frameworks and concepts like this to locate, categorise and analyse academic perspectives on their identity. Trowler (1998) in looking at academics responses to policy change illustrated there were a range of categories in which you could place academics, but his strategy may not reveal the full realities of academics working lives. It is therefore valuable to conduct auto/biographical research in this field to ensure that these realities, the meaning that is placed on them by individual academics, is not lost in the desire to categorise, place academics in a bigger picture or make generalisations.

2.1.10   Academic work

One aspect of the design focus of this study lies in the changing nature of academic work and how this change was a result of shifts in the relationship between higher education, knowledge and society identified below. It was interesting to note (field notes) the language of change and how, seemingly quite suddenly, this language embraced concepts like flexibility, choice, credit accumulation and modularisation, competition, markets and so on. This language re-presented academic work, and re-conceptualised it in quite a radical way. However, it was observed that internal discussions tended to focus on `why are we having to change at all', whilst all the while using this new language to demonstrate awareness of new forms of organising education provision. Such comments seemed to have characteristics of cognitive dissonance or the difficulties of holding two conflicting views of the world simultaneously. What seemed evident is that in the midst of the changes academics, managers, students and other stakeholders are not sure what kind of experience higher education is meant to provide; the issue is currently contested. More particularly academics did not seem sure about their identity and roles in the sense that their former academic identity appeared to be

undergoing critique, revision and erosion in period where there were still are many contradictory or oppositional forces.

Andy Hargreaves (1994b) highlights this dilemma of oppositional tendencies and says we are living in an Age of Paradox in education. He points out, for example, that at the same time as higher education is being exhorted to produce employable graduates there are also declining opportunities for graduate type work. There are also many *under-employed* graduates in the UK. (Brown and Scase, 1994) A further tension Hargreaves (1994b) mentions is that as the economic world is increasingly being dominated by *transnational* corporations, and academics have to compete in a global market place according to Slaughter, and Leslie, (1997). On the other hand *national* education systems like those in the UK have developed a *national* school curriculum, *national graduate standards* and *standardisation* rather than flexibility seems to be a feature of many credit rating policies. For example, a standard size unit of credit has been implemented in the case study university, which cannot be varied except in special cases under university regulations. As Hargreaves (1995:15) says 'More diversity and integration is being accompanied by more emphasis on common standards and specialisation.'

It was therefore interesting to consider what effects were generated by these tensions on academic work. Academics appeared to be a profession under siege for a range of reasons and it seemed important to record their concerns in relation to changes in academic identity as they experienced these pressures, find out what resistance and accommodation there were to largely externally imposed changes, and consider whether the academic role was being transformed.

2.1.11 Theoretical location

This study draws upon different theoretical models. It is first an historical study (Lummis, 1987), within an auto/biographical

framework, in the sense that its main purpose is to document and interpret the lives of the five academics in a particular period in time.

The sociological theory of Weber (Whimster (ed), 2004), who conceived of sociology as a comprehensive science of social action, is also relevant in this study. Weber's theoretical focus was on the subjective meaning that humans attach to their actions in their interactions with one another within specific social contexts. Weber distinguished four types of social action. These are zweckrational, wertrational, affective action and traditional action. People may engage in purposeful or goal-oriented rational action (*zweckrational*); their rational action may be value-oriented (*wertrational*); they may act from emotional or affective motivations; or, finally, they may engage in traditional action. People display a combination of these forms of action. These typologies are useful in analysing the auto/biographies in the concluding discussions in Chapter 6.

Giddens' (1991) theory concerning the nature of the self and identity formation in modern society is also referred to.

In addition the study is located within sociology of work debates, in particular the cultural history of work. The sociology of work has a chequered history and is multi-disciplinary in character. See for example Strangleman's (2007.a) excellent analysis of the current state of this field of sociology, where he indicates a growing *cultural* approach in the sociology of work is emerging. Strangleman (2007b) is critical of the way in which sociological 'end of work' literature (Beck, 2000, Sennett, 1998, Gorz, 1999) offers theories that make assumptions and overgeneralisations about the meaning of work for individuals as it changes over time. He says we need more empirical studies, like Bourdieu et.al (1999) Weight of the World, wherein he records the cultural meaning of work for those caught up in changing work practices as a result of economic change. Strangleman (2007a:88) highlights the issue of nostalgia for permanence at work

and also points out that many sociological studies of work impute a form of nostalgia for a golden age, at whatever point of history they focus on and claims even:

> Marx and Durkheim, though still armed with an Enlightenment faith in quantitative progress, were nonetheless equivocal in terms of the qualitative effect of the transition from traditional to modern social forms. Work in traditional societies was understood as less alienating, or able to offer non-monetary rewards that capitalist forms of the employment relationship could not.

Novels also portray changing work in a way that suggests that the past has a quality that is yearned for. For example we see workers inhabiting a 'border country' in Williams, (1973), between traditional forms of work and the pressures of modernity, as they experience change. The academics in this study may indeed be in such border country as they adapt and change their identities in the process of change. They are Janus faced, looking back to an earlier time in academic work, but at the same time looking forward to a prospective form of academic work.

Within education, there is a growing focus on the culture of work and its meaning. Schooling has begun to develop such a strand of research. Maclure (1993) speaks of the way in which teachers should make a strong case for determining their professional selves in the case of changes in schooling in the face of increasing state intervention in terms of their professional practice. Sachs (2001) also addresses issues of teacher professional identity and the changing culture of work in her discussion of Australian teachers and many of her comments are relevant in this study, in particular the concept of *managed professionalism* which will be discussed further below.

Stranglemen's (2007.b) suggestion there is nostalgia for *permanence at work* contained in much research on the changing nature of work is *not* evident in this case study. The academics in this study have in

fact enjoyed a permanence of employment over at least 20 years. They have not experienced, as Stranglemen (2007:81) puts it, all the ravages of industrial decline nor felt the forces of 'juggernaut capitalism' and yet it is evident that work and employment in the UK has changed dramatically in the last 20 years. What some of the academics in this study show is nostalgia for *permanence of identity*.

The academic life was seen as a special kind of working life. At least one of the academics commented that he did not think he could get a job outside of the academic field, or even in another university. They recognised the role of academic was difficult to translate into the modern world of work outside the university. Another reflected that academic work was privileged. He was grateful for the permanence that the life of an academic had offered. Contrast this to Beck's (2000:3) vision in his book *The Brave New World of Work*, where he stretches his concept of the risk society to claim there is considerable uncertainty over work form and the loss of full employment. He claims 'paid employment is becoming precarious; …normal life-stories are breaking up into fragments'. The academics in this study have benefited from a university life which, although uncertain in terms of change and stability of role, has not been plagued by major loss of employment or impermanence.

However, some other academic identities have been fragmented, and reconstructed in the forces of rapid change. To place this in context, 81,795 or 33.7% of all academics are on non-permanent contracts in 2004-5 according to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). Brown and Gold's study of 10 post-1992 universities (2007:439) illustrates the way in which some academics manage their identities on 'non-standard' forms of contract, which may include part time, fixed term or temporary contracts in more than one post-1992 University. The way in which their academic work and identity is managed is through a 'portfolio worker' process, defined as 'high level

of qualifications, multiple job holding and sense of status'. Brown and Gould (2007) show that this was a largely as a choice made by the academics in their study. However, one third of the participants in Brown and Gould's study also said they would accept a *permanent* contract, even if part time, if it were offered in one of their places of employment.

The situation regarding permanence is more fragile when considering contract researchers. Collinson (2004) looked at the maintenance of occupational identities in a group of social science contract researchers in the UK. For this group Collinson (2004:325) shows:

> Conceptions of identity hinged upon a number of factors, including: their biographical resources and academic capital; the nature of the locations in which they worked; and the prior occupational experience of contract research work.

The academics in Collinson's study recognised their marginal status and emphasised their lowly status within the academic hierarchy. Yet, they continued in this work, and Collinson (2007:326) concludes that examining the way in which this group of academics constructs and sustains their identities in order to continue is an important insight into identity work in higher education.

Clearly impermanence of academic employment is an important aspect of change that looms for future academic employment. The academics in Redpath University were aware of this.

This case study also draws upon some management and organisational theories. For example, Clark and Newman (1997:92-93) argue that new discourses of managerialism provide the framework for teachers 'to construct new roles and identities from which they derive ideas about the logic of institutional change'. In terms of

organisations, Czarniawska's (1997) concept of organisations as narratives is also relevant.

Additionally, macro social scientific debates concerning wider contextual issues influencing higher education policy changes and emergent practices (Eggins, 2003, Barnett, 2005) have been alluded to in the contextual background to the thesis, although not explored in detail.

CHAPTER 3.   DISCOURSE THEMES AND LITERATURE

The themes discussed in this chapter have been raised in the discourse listened to over the past 15 years. They are explored in more depth here in order to clarify them and consider what effects they might have on academic work and identity in Redpath University.

3.1. Contextual themes arising from field notes

This chapter focuses on the contextual themes that were referred to in the field notes. The themes are not the only ones that may be pertinent to contemporary UK higher education but they are the ones mentioned in discussions with a wide range of academics in the period the study covers.

3.2.   Performativity

Bottom line decision making, where financial drivers shape the curriculum offered, rather than educational concerns were mentioned by many.

Barnett (2005) claims that UK universities have become subject to a kind of 'neo-liberal' capture in that they must not only demonstrate they are using public funds efficiently, but also that they are contributing to the UK's place in the global economy. He claims that universities are being stripped of their enlightenment function as they comply with and succumb to performativity pressures which seek to ensure university endeavours have an 'exchange value'. The knowledge produced within UK higher education has been assigned an economic exchange value such that if there is no value there is no exchange. Writers like Hayes (2005) suggest there is an academic loss of confidence in the pursuit of knowledge and says there is a sense of decline of academic status in society, illustrated or evidenced by the prolonged under funding of HE. Hayes (2005) also claims that the

consequence of academics having less confidence in their own authority has led to H.E. becoming so student centred as to resemble *therapy*. Bite-sized forms of information within the modularised curriculum are there to ensure easy consumption and spoon feeding (which Hayes refers to as 'edutainment') approaches to teaching, instead of challenging, rigorous study. This edutainment approach is to make sure students are retained. Macleod (1993) also alerted us some time ago to the idea of teaching as a media like performance was coming to be expected. The stress on good or excellent student feedback is another pressure to ensure students are kept in a high state of satisfaction. The well being of the student is a prime focus in order to retain them on courses; they are the major source of funding for most post-1992 universities. Challenging students, expecting them to struggle with ideas and concepts is sometimes seen as arrogance on the part of the academic, instead of making the knowledge so simple it is easily digested.

3.3.   Change and loss

Field note evidence indicated that many academics in the case study university *mourned* the loss of an academic community engendered by the massive increase in student numbers, in that they had little or no time to talk with other academics. They said things such as 'the only time I see colleagues is by the photocopier or in passing in the corridor'. The informal 'back regions' (Goffman, 1959:109) of academics working lives are being taken over by administrative purposes, bringing them more and more into public formal 'front regions' (Goffman,1959:111). For Goffman, front regions are places where we perform in a public sense. Lecturing is one such performance, as are seminars, administrative work and formal committee meetings. However, 'back regions' are places where people are able to relax, switch off the public self for a while, and be less careful about monitoring their conduct to keep up appearances. Staff rooms are back regions, as are academic rooms when not being used

front region work. The time spent in back regions are important in that in enables informal relationships to form, and for stresses and tensions to be dissipated. Many academics in Redpath University have explained to me that their opportunities for `back region' activity have been severely curtailed by the sheer number of students seeking their attention, alongside the additional administrative work they have to perform. Administrative work has `colonised' their back regions. They now feel less in control of their time, they feel guilty if they are lounging about in the `back region' mode of behaviour given the time pressures on everyone nowadays, and that anyway there is no time for it given all their extra workload. Lunchtimes were often time for `back region' behaviour, but many academic staff reported that they no longer took a formal lunch break and worked at their desks instead, also seeing students on occasions.

This *mourning* of a previous self, of a previous collegial existence, could be attributed to a form of nostalgia or it could be a more fundamental psychic concern. Dickinson and Erben (2006:1) talk about nostalgia as a culturally derived emotion:

> A personal contemplation of a valued experience in the past – an experience one does not expect to have again, so a pain of loss accompanies the contemplation.

However, the emotion is not necessarily painful. Nostalgia can be both pleasurable and painful. It is possible to accommodate nostalgia within the emotions without suffering emotional distress. (Dickinson and Erben (2006:2)

Nostalgia is not an historical, analytic process (Dickinson and Erben, 2006:3) but an allusive one. It is a feeling rather than a cognitive process. As Strangleman (2007b) has said, it is a feature of many sociological accounts of change.

However nostalgia is conceptualised, it is a phenomena that was mentioned by almost all the academic staff spoken to over the past 20 years. There is within it a sense of bewilderment about the changing purposes of higher education and their academic role within it, a kind of mourning for a lost self, and a lost collegial environment which will be discussed further below. Dickinson and Erben (2006:3) talk of this feeling of loss as one that is both mourned and accepted. It does not necessarily mean that individuals would like to turn back the clock, or that they exist in the past.

In Mourning and Melancholia (1917:78) Sigmund Freud describes mourning as:

> The reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on.

These points will be discussed further Chapter 4 when discussing approaches to analysing the auto/biographical accounts.

What is of major interest to the researcher in this study is to chart the multiplicity of ways in which this lived experience through change has been interpreted by the academics. As Taylor, 1999.139) says in his concluding chapter:

> Change necessarily involves ambivalence and loss. It is through grieving this loss that 'moving on' in a sustainable way, becomes possible.

It seemed what the academics in the Redpath University study were *mourning* was the gradual or even sudden erosion of a former identity through the way in which the naming of appropriate activities for academics had been revised.   Loss of a former identity seemed to be a major feature of some of the narratives, coupled with considerable uncertainty about the shape and responsibilities of any new identity currently in formation.

The issues highlighted above are not unique to Redpath University. Other universities have signified similar strands of concern and we now turn to these.

3.4. New ways of working

Martin (1999) does not sympathise with those who mourn the past. She undertook a survey of academic staff in universities in the UK and Australia and argues that universities have to learn about global and changing demands on HE and what these changes mean for those working in HE, rather than mourn the past.

Martin thinks this means 'letting go of traditional and valued practices and beginning to work together in a new and different tertiary climate'. (Martin,1999: preface)   The stories these staff told in her survey reflect some aspects of the discourse represented in the field note evidence for the Redpath University. Martin (1999:7) recalls:

> that the life of an academic thirty or so years ago was undoubtedly a pleasant one. Classes were usually small; we are told by Halsey (1992.99) that, on average, staff taught classes of between five and twenty students. The students in these classes were well prepared for a university education and, on the whole, were seen to be committed young men and women keen to learn and advance social progress. (ibid.9) The teaching commitments of staff were for less than half of the weeks of the year and rarely exceeded eight hours per week.
> These university teachers would have rarely published more than one article every two or three years (Halsey 1992: appendix 1, part 10b). They had no necessity to make themselves accountable or to justify what they taught or how. The professional was prestigious and confident. Neither society nor government seriously questioned their standards and values (Scott 1995: 71-2) Once appointed to an academic position, an academic staff member was there for life.

This of course applied to pre-1992 traditional universities and not the former polytechnics. However, it is analogous to some of the stories about workload and change that have been discussed in Redpath

University regarding class size and student ability. One of the respondents in Martin's (1999:8) survey:

> I now teach a first year class of 300. Around fifteen years ago, I used to teach a similar subject to a class of 30 - and was concerned even then, that the students found the concepts difficult. I'm better at teaching it now - but not that much better. I do the best I can with these huge increases in numbers and ability levels, but I know that is not good enough and that worries me. It's bad for and my self-esteem when my students don't learn. It's bad for the students and it's bad for the university (Senior Lecturer, Chemistry)

Here we can see many concerns about changing professional practice; anxieties about the effectiveness of practice with greater student numbers and different kinds of students and the loss of self-esteem that this brings if you are unable to adapt.

There are other changes of course that have been introduced with mass expansion of student numbers. The traditional curriculum of established disciplines has had to be adapted and in some cases eclipsed by new forms of knowledge in order to enable new groups of students to learn. Martin (1999:9) illustrates the problem of adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of new types of students whose preparation for university study was different:

> I am in a dilemma as to what to teach, particularly at first year level. There are so many things to balance, the ever-present demands for relevance, the concern that if you are too demanding you'll lose them. It used to be they learned chemistry and biology and the traditional disciplines in the first year, and this was seen as the basis on which practice would be developed, but now it has to be obviously relevant from the beginning and I'm not at all sure how we can do this, and maintain the grounding they have in basic science (Associate Professor, medical laboratory science)

It is evident from these comments that this lecturer was attempting to meet these new needs but retaining the original curriculum. Other respondents recognised the dilemma saying 'the problem is not just in

the students but in the curriculum. You have to rethink the subject to make it relevant to very different students' (Martin 1999:12)

There are of course other elements to the academic role, which might be construed as the service element. These include counselling students, mentoring junior staff, developing links with employers and community groups, interacting with professional bodies, or contributing to university committees and working parties. Most of the academics in this study undertook one of more of these other roles, referring to it largely as administration and development work. McFarlane (2007:15) is interested in such 'service' activities, and says 'the role of university academic staff, particularly in a UK context, is rarely understood in terms of their citizenship or 'service role'. McFarlane argues these service roles are essential in keeping academic communities and the universities they work in functioning and says that referring to this work as administration somewhat diminishes its importance in the life of a university. Instead McFarlane (2007:17) says we should see this work as academic citizenship, which although is located within the university is often concerned with the wider community. 'To be an academic citizen demands active interest in decision making processes as a member of the university' and will embrace different levels. However, at the level of department and faculty academic democracy of this kind or collegiality is in decline.

The field note evidence revealed a very cynical view of the state of collegiality in Redpath University and elsewhere throughout the late 1980s and 90s. McNay, (1995) links this trend to the growing bureaucratic culture of higher education. McFarlane (2007:19-26) says that 'the weakened position of most academic staff in modern governance structures is symbolic of the shift away from collegial to a more bureaucratic and managerial culture'...and that 'the collegiality of academic life has been replaced by a less communal and more

isolated existence'. This point has been raised by the academics in Redpath University. To be an academic is sometimes a lonely endeavour.

There is much more that could be said about the range of changes that have faced the academics in Redpath University and whether or not they recognised and acted upon them, or the need to revise their practice. However, this study is not concerned with *evaluating* the practices of academics in Redpath University.

3.5.   Self, identity and social control

Cummins (2002) offers us an insightful way of linking this Redpath University case studies' concern with self and identity to wider social and economic pressure by referring to the *social anxiety* that quality assurance procedures reflect. New quality assurance processes have been introduced in higher education to assuage fears on the part of the state that there may be uncontrollable aspects of its provision. She makes it plain that her perspective starts with a view that quality assurance processes are <u>not</u> without critique in themselves and says (Cummins (2000:100) her article is an:

> Heretical piece of work, which rejects the orthodox accounts of the 'need' for intense regulatory intervention in educational processes and rejects the 'programmatic' and colonising ambitions of QA rhetoric. The term 'quality' is a programmatic ideal ... this paper calls for considerable scepticism about what the term quality stands for in an era of mass higher education and about the technologies which operationalise it.

She begins by pointing out that the whole 'idea of quality as a freestanding strategy is inextricably linked with its espousal as a social good' (Cummins (2002:100) but that what is more elusive is how this social good can at the same time be used as a disciplinary tool to make individuals more governable. Governability involves creating persons whose activities are accountable at micro-level. It

assumes that a person's sincerity and integrity are open to question, cannot be taken for granted.

The audit culture has spread far beyond it initial remit of checking for fraudulent activities in privately owned shareholding companies. Cummins (2000:101) points out that now the fields of education and health and welfare have been particularly affected by 'Regulation, inspection, performance management, contract compliance and of course quality assurance are a central part of everyday life for managers and practitioners in human service organisations.'

Power, (1997:10) argues the state withdraws from being a direct provider of services. As it does so, it takes on a more regulatory role though systems of accounting, compliance and quality assurance.

This New Public Management (NPM) stance involves a process whereby private sector managerialist ideas are incorporated into the public sector and include. Power (1997:10) describes it in this way:

> market-based controls disciplining managers into maximising a firm's value, regulatory initiatives to ensure compliance with externally and centrally-set rules, (or, in the case of education, standards) and making working practices more sensitive to 'customers'. In this setting the success of political discourses about 'value for money' and improved accountability in public service dovetail with a neo-Liberalist agenda of making the state more entrepreneurial. NPM has constituted a challenge to the power of relatively autonomous groups such as doctors and teaching and is explicitly 'disciplinary' in that it seeks to make Public Services accountable...

This accountability is achieved through *counting*, so that it is known how many activities are being undertaken; through *accounting for* actions by having to report them to superiors; and *making an account*, or telling a story about activities to explain why they have been undertaken in a certain way; and finally by *being held accountable* or responsible for events (Jones and Dugdale, 1995).

3.6. The experience of working in a university organisation

Most Redpath University staff in this case study mentioned the increasingly *ordered* life of the academic in recent years; where there was less time to engage in social relationships at work. This leads to a consideration of the cultural life of a university. It is clear that daily life in a complex bureaucratic organisation can take on an ordered quality that increases the pace of work. Taylor (1999:136) suggests:

> As practices become more focused on tasks, and budget officers look to issues of cost minimisation in financial terms only, institutions are becoming more ordered and clinical, less human and user friendly....as the pace of work-life increase, universities come to take on some of the characteristics of shopping malls.

Taylor (1999) says this might be consistent with encouraging students to choose courses from a smorgasbord of offerings, making universities more like a supermarket the purpose being to increase flexibility and choice for *their own sake.*

This ordered efficiency oriented imperative has implications for the cultural life of the university. Currently in the case study university many departments do not have a staff or common room, and a once thriving central meeting place, the central Staff Refectory was closed some years ago although it is now about to re-emerge. There is currently nowhere to meet colleagues from different departments to exchange information, do business in a relaxed way and no place where people from other disciplines can meet and share the plurality of life in the university. There is also little time to do this.

The field notes narrative seemed to indicate a build up in Redpath University of an *organisational saga* (Clark, 1972) that characterised the culture of the university. Greater levels of accountability, to both external bodies and internal management, (often characterised as

'they'), seemed to exert a complex *self appraisal* process for these academics around how their behaviour might be interpreted by a range of others. They looked over their shoulder a lot waiting for the next missive. For example, the head of department's wish for them to be research active, the looming hurdle of the research assessment exercise, the *problem* of too many students and how students might interpret their behaviour given greater emphasis on student feedback, what my peers think of me, and how 'they' might interpret my efforts to adopt the new vocabulary of credit in higher education? Such a saga revealed a group of academics who were in a state of constant external scrutiny, flight even. They were ready to run with the latest demands but at the same time were not entirely committed to their actions.

They expressed bewilderment at the reductions in funding at a time of expansion, but did not always mention the crucial role of changing practice in assisting with teaching larger numbers. Quality teaching appeared to be associated largely with face-to-face teaching in small groups and sharing knowledge of a fairly established kind. Given this was no longer possible, they interpreted change itself as the enemy of quality teaching. Loss of time to spend with students and/or on their own personal research was also a key lament.

What is perhaps crucially significant in this discussion of experience is the issue of trust. The withdrawal of trust for academics in Redpath University was felt to be a major issue in terms of their loss of control over the use of time at work, which academics were and are experiencing, and the exposure of classroom practices to the cold external gaze of quality assessors. Many academics felt they were not trusted to do things now, which they had been in the past. Puxty et.al (1994) attribute this in part to the way academics are now more accurately described as employees of state capitalism, or state professionals, because their funding does not in fact derive from

markets, but on the state and state management of capital accumulation. Dent (200:53) goes on to explain:

> The squeeze on academic funding and academic labour – its intensification – and the move from 'craft' forms to mass delivery, arises from the relationship between higher education and the state being necessarily political. Of course the state must also maintain legitimacy and will be constrained to advance social justice so the link with capital accumulation is accordingly mediated.

Nevertheless the audit mechanisms appear to academics 'as if' they are not to be trusted to be self regulating. It might be argued that in fact academics are involved in auditing themselves, through institutional audit models, which are administered by the Quality Assurance Agency, and carried out by external peers (Power, 1997). But as Dent (2001:54) says 'all forms of academic audit, since they have been constructed to appease government, can fairly be described as forms of self-audit designed to be used bureaucratically.' In doing so academic managers in particular have been subject to a system of 'colonization/normalisation by the process and language of audit, leading to a narrowing of academic subjectivities'. (Dent, 2001:54)

There was a certain lack of clarity about these indicators of quality. For example Quality Support Centre HE Digest Spring 1997:4 claims:

> a performance indicator is taken to be a marker of the extent to which a particular purpose is being achieved. In applying this definition, however, it is necessary to clarify what the purpose is, the values underlying the purpose and what constitutes good and bad performance'

Performance is measured against the stated purposes of the individual higher education institution. The universal purposes of higher education *are currently contested*. There are diverse values which underpin each university curriculum. For example, some (largely urban) universities have values which stress accessibility of the curriculum, whereas other universities stress the excellence of their

research output in the way they market their programmes. Although the Teaching Quality Assessments ask universities to state their *own* values and mission in relation to the curriculum, there still seems to be a `hidden agenda' at work in the assessments which uses the traditional `old` university values as a benchmark.

Without entering into a further debate here about such an approach to quality assurance it is worth commenting that it is a retrospective analysis based on past arrangements. This carries the danger of fixating the highly rated in aspic, e.g. there is evidence to indicate a sense of complacency ensues once high rating is achieved rather than work out ways of enhancing quality in the future.

It seems there is a tension between `quality as accountability' and `quality as transformation' in the present system. The `quality as accountability' approach, which HEFCE adopts, initially led to a *compliance culture* in Redpath University, when what was needed was *a transformative* process which connects teaching, learning and assessment of students to quality. Since 1997, however, there have been changes towards a much greater focus on the links between teaching, learning and assessment and quality in Redpath University.

In the field notes over the past 20 years, many times academics have expressed concern about the meaning of their role within the organisation as it changed. For example, *What does it mean for my role as an academic to have students take some control over their learning, or to have to justify what I am teaching by expressing it in learning outcome statements? What do you want of me, a researcher, a teacher, an administrator, or entrepreneur devising and marketing new courses or all of these things?* (overheard comments from field notes)

To make sense of these expressed concerns I again turned to Cummins (2002: 102) where she makes important links between

doubts about self and subjectivity within an organisation and the shifts engendered by twentieth century requirements for 'organisational citizenship'. She argues (Cummins, 2002:102):

> People's vulnerability – economic and psychic – increases. No longer is there relative certainty or job security. The old psychological contracts between individual and organisation dissolve as the 'organisation man' of the mid twentieth century gives way to the flexible, instrumental and enterprising self. At the same time......there are attempts to harness the subjectivity of workers and align it with 'organisational citizenship' in such a way that the new model worker is not only self-reliable and entrepreneurial but seemingly an 'organisation man' (or woman) at the same time. Self-actualisation remained integrated to – and instrumentalised for – the aims of the organisation.

Strauss (1977) illustrates vividly the way in which language and the naming of roles construes identity. However, *renaming* an object or activity "amounts to a reassessment of your relation to it...your behaviour becomes changed along with the line of reassessment." Strauss (1977:22) The academics in Redpath University seemed to feel that there was a renaming of their identity going on, of which they were not the author. They felt that the taken for granted definitions of what academic work was about was being undermined by the changes that have been externally imposed and the new language of higher education was only partly known. The new vocabulary of higher education classifies things in different ways and as such they are difficult to discern. As Cummins (2002:103) argues:

> The language of the market has entered academia; collegial relations are displaced by managerial controls, courses becoming packaged modules, class sizes increase, staff-student ratios increase and students become customers. There is a drive to deliver models of teaching in which relationship, instead of being based on apprenticeship, is reduced to a series of transactions, which can be made auditable in isolation. Lecturers become producers of learning material with which to serve customers and the academic labour process is changed beyond recognition.

It is clear that such major changes would undermine or radically change the relationship academics had with their students. The increase in size of groups was seen by academics as undermining quality teaching. Comments were, and are still made. about teaching 'herds' of students and not knowing their names despite having taught a group for a whole module. This was contrasted with the past where knowing students, as persons, was seen as a crucial element of quality teaching and also the quality of working life. Quality teaching was not felt to be about producing learning material alone (although these materials have to be lodged in a Unit Box in the case study university as part of the accountability process *making an account* of teaching (Jones and Dugdale,1995), it was seen to be about engaging in dialogue with learners and this dialogue includes being aware of, through knowing, the way in which particular students perceive ideas in order to encourage, develop or challenging these. If you do not know your student group, because you give five lectures to a group of about 100 and cannot have a dialogue with so many, and do not follow this up with smaller group seminar work as there is little time built in for this, how can academics know their students? Mass higher education has changed the relationship academic staff have with their students into a semi distant one where the main means of communication seems to be the assessment of the module. This view is challenged by those in staff development for Teaching and Learning within Redpath University, who claim that large group teaching can be organised into a more interactive process, but it involves considerable shifts in academic practice and a differing conception of their role.

3.7.   The state and higher education policy

The study does not seek to analyse all higher education policy changes mentioned only to note what Redpath University academics felt were the potential and actual effects they have had on their

academic roles. A range of policies are discussed although it is recognised that this is a partial selection which arose from the field note evidence.

Before looking at some of the policies the state has used to change higher education, it is useful to note the political nature of education policy. Olssen et al (2004:3) offer an analysis of education policy that rejects dominant liberal/idealist inclinations of education studies, and the technicist theories of the policy sciences. Instead they put forward an argument that:

> education policy must be contextualised both nationally and globally as a transformative discourse that can have real social effects in response to contemporary crises

Therefore the way in which policies have been seen in this study, or in the way policies are operated or implemented, are as responses to crises at both micro and macro level. The kinds of discourse generated and the actions and practices arising from them are viewed less as planned strategies for change but as *reactions* to perceived threats. This is regarded as a significant factor in changing the cultural lives of Redpath University academics; uncertainty, dealing with reactive strategies, instability and lack of continuity

3.8. Education policy as a discourse of power

The field notes reveal academics debating the rationale for various education policies.

Shore and Roberts (1995) highlight the point that education policy is a discourse of power. Change introduced into higher education by the government impacts directly on individual lecturers in an impersonal and seemingly objective way. However, by extending the panopticon principles of inspectability, economy and rational administration to universities, their educational endeavours are relegated to second

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place.

Much of the discourse surrounding change within the case study university has emphasised the need to satisfy external stakeholders, like the HEFCE. Indeed, some policies have deliberately drawn attention to this point when advocating the need to change, which has tended to produce a compliance culture.

To try and understand this compliance I turned to Shore and Roberts (1995:8) analysis, which draws upon Foucault's (1997) *panopticon* concept. Shore and Roberts argue that as a paradigm for modern bureaucratic forms of powers and control the panopticon provides important insights into the way current policy initiatives in higher education function. They suggest that:

> the panopticon prison provides a paradigm for
> understanding not only the processes by which
> higher education is being restructured, managed
> and controlled, but also the rationalist epistemology
> that underlies government notions of
> `administrative efficiency' and `good management'

The policing of individuals or their management as labour is achieved through the medium of rational scientific (or pseudo-scientific) knowledge of the population. In fact this mechanism was a critical element in the development of capitalism. A new set of `disciplinary technologies' or techniques for organising new configurations of knowledge and power (Shore and Roberts 1995:9) had three aims:

> to achieve the exercise of power at minimal cost or effort;
> to extend the effects of social power to their maximum
> intensity and as discretely as possible; and third, to
> increase the docility and utility of all the elements of the
> system.

Such concepts could be applied to those working in higher education.

The standardisation of action that is promoted through credit rated programmes of study in higher education, together with the external `gaze' of new quality assurance mechanisms developed by the state, has provided considerable `discipline' of the individual subject in Foucaults' terms. As Strathern (1997:313) said 'the self in the invitation to self-scrutiny turns out to be a particular kind of self...the self (in) the type of agency that propels persons/institutions towards their stated goals.'

Higher Education is being restructured by reorganising time, space and work in new and more controlling ways. These controls are not necessarily direct. As Shore and Roberts (1995:10) put it:

> even if there is no guardian present, the power apparatus still operates perfectly. The inmate cannot see whether or not the guardian is in the tower, so must behave as if surveillance were perpetual and total.

Like prisoners, university staff have become more or less willing accomplices in the setting up of their own surveillance. Shore and Roberts (1995:11) say that in Foucault's terms "this is a classic example of the moulding of subjectivity through the internalisation of externally imposed norms."

The idea that quality can be ensured and maintained through careful monitoring and measurement of performance and productivity is put forward as a rational and objective method. The fact that it involves universities in producing mountains of written documentation to support a self assessment claim about the standard of provision (because there is no external `standard' agreed or national benchmark against which practice can be judged), leads some policy makers to argue that the system is `decentralised'. Individual institutions are argued to be in control or `empowered' to define their own standard or level of excellence. Again drawing upon Foucault's work, it is evident

here that whilst the structure of command appears decentralised, thus making it impossible to locate the source of ultimate authority, nevertheless state intervention is disguised as it operates through a number of intermediary bodies, like the Higher Education Quality Council and the Higher Education Funding Council. It is difficult to see where the power really lies; is it peer evaluation and competition between universities for the status of excellence, or is it a state imposed process designed to isolate and subjectify university labour? Certainly the policing works, despite there being no `inspector in the tower'. Surveillance is achieved through the quality self-assessment exercise. The policy of linking performance in the research assessment exercise to departmental funding can also be applied to teaching and learning quality assessments.

Shore and Roberts (1995) also pose the question `what is the effect on the individual lecturer' of these pressures?' Such a system plays on insecurities and creates a sense of competition not collaboration between academics. As there are no transparent, shared or officially defined standards of excellence, as there may be in a profession, the lecturer is plunged into an endless round of attempts to improve practice. As he/she does not know the standard to which they aspire, and often goalposts are shifted in institutional debates about this, they feel undervalued and exhausted. In fact, Shore and Roberts (1995) argue that academic standards may also be undermined by these changes. As the curriculum and teaching within it becomes more bureaucratised, standardised and quantified, and the `learning experience' subjected to ever more attention from management by measuring its quality, the time taken to teach, the resources needed and so on, so the less finite, tangible and qualitative aspects of learning in higher education slip away.

3.9. Academic practices and management

At the same time as responding to the above changes, academic practices and management of staff within universities have become driven by the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). These assessments have generated considerable competition within and between universities.

Not all students, however, are able to choose universities with the best RAE ratings. However, they do choose on the basis of marketing communications, student satisfaction surveys, location and reputation. The impact of this process on academic workers has been to categorise students as customers who are instrumentally oriented and must be kept satisfied.

Whether or not students can be realistically conceptualised as customers is a debateable point but certainly higher education has now developed major marketing departments concerned to recruit more students. We now turn to this development to explore it further.

3.10. Marketisation

Puxty, Sikka and Willmott 1994, Willmott, 1995, and Smyth, 1995, all say the increased "marketisation" of higher education has led to changes in both teaching and research. These have become subject to managerial controls once unfamiliar to the academic labour process.

In fact the term research oversimplifies the various aspects of an academics role. If we draw on the concept of scholarship, (Boyer, 1990) this helps to illustrate the point. Scholarship can mean ` discovering' new knowledge and is often the assumed definition of research. However, it can also mean integrating or synthesising existing knowledge to bring about new understanding. In particular, when looking at the work of the many professional groups now working as

academics in the fields of nursing for example, it can mean applying existing knowledge and theory to problems within practice, or the real world in a unique or innovative way. Scholarship can also mean transforming knowledge for the purposes of offering it to students in a form that is accessible, lively and interesting. However, scholarship of the latter kind is not directly rewarded, but is an implicit part of the lecturer's role. It is an important aspect of collaboration with professional education and training systems. See for example Selway and McHale (1994a and 1994b).

It is clearly the case that higher education has markets for its services, including research, and that there are a range of stakeholders. However, it is a peculiar form of marketisation of higher education. Some would argue it is a quasi-market (Trow 1994). Central government, not the student consumers of higher education, largely determine university activities. However, whilst students can decide which universities to attend the system is still `provider-led' in the sense that there is very little direct influence that students can exert over the higher education curriculum. Fashionable subjects have emerged in the higher education curriculum, which have eclipsed some of the more traditional ones, but it is the need to fill student places that drives this type of change. It is the state that has introduced `higher education reforms' not changes in demand brought about by students who `consume' higher education. The purchaser of higher education is the state. Trow (1994.21) points out:

> What we have (now) is the rhetoric of 'the market' coupled with a substantial increase in the power of external assessing and funding agencies, marking a real shift in power in the world of British higher education.

So it could be argued that marketisation commodifies academic output, transforms it for the purpose of selling it to students and other stakeholders but the real purchaser is the state.

Higher education as an element of social/economic consumption has also been debated. Ritzer (1997b:151) in his book, *The McDonaldization Thesis*, where he discusses universities within the context of the wider post-modern, consumerist society says 'Universities are a means to educational consumption'. University education is likened to any other consumer good. Students see the consumption of education in much the same way as they might consume music, food, and other resources. Going to 'uni' is seen as a right, and a rite of passage. Ritzer, (1997b:153-158) points out:

> all students want of higher education is simple procedures, good service, quality courses, and low costs. In responding to such demands, universities will.... learn most by looking for answers among those who have successfully responded to consumerism....This will include cost cutting (to reduce costs to students), the removal of barriers to success (though grade inflation and dumbing-down in order to reduce failure), decentralization to satellite campuses (to be nearer the student), use of technology (to provide home-based education)..... Credentialling will become much more important as a result, since it is this that will distinguish one consumer from another. To ensure uniformity across the satellite campuses, professors will be scripted and course content pre-determined. Courses will respond to student needs and wants, and not be part of a wider canon built into a curriculum.

Within this predicted scenario, it is unlikely that those who teach will be full time tenured academic staff. Instead, they are more likely to be on short term contracts, and/or part time and their pay, like those who work in fast food restaurants, will be relatively low. Hence the concept of McDonaldisation of higher education is explained. It is evidenced by the current growth in the rate of short-term contract staff, and poorer rates of pay in higher education in relation to other public sector employees.

There have been complaints about teaching the standardized, modularized curriculum with prescribed learning outcomes at

Redpath University, which mirrors similar concerns in other universities.

Maskell and Robinson (2001:166) offer an ironic contemporary view on the likely effects of these marketisation and consumption processes on the nature and purpose of higher education in their chapter `The tree of knowledge or a shopping mall?' In discussing the diversity of subjects that universities now exhibit, they question the strategy that has encouraged them to develop by following the `market' or economic imperative:

> Businesses are so various and – as technologies and fashions come and go – so ephemeral that there is, literally, no limit to the number or the character of the courses that different times might (supposedly) serve them. An each of these separated courses goes its own way without reference to any other or the standards of any other. Are the examination papers in Tourism and Leisure Management simply rubbish by the standards of those set in Moral Philosophy. Firstly, it doesn't matter if they are. The Moral Philosophers can say what its standards are. Or: once you're in, you're in, and that the end of it. And to get it? The funding has to be in place, that's all. The modern university cant recognise foreign bodies because it has no idea what its own tissue is/ What might be part of it? Quite simply anything. What is it then? Big.

Maskell and Robinson go on to say that a university is not a university unless it is a whole, although at the moment as indicated above they claim it is not, it is a sum of parts.

The general discourse that surrounds the purpose of changes in the curriculum are about making it possible for consumers of higher education to study in a more flexible way, and this might include putting together degree programmes in an independent way, outside of the design of a single honours route. (Robertson, 1994). This coupled with the transformation of the higher education curriculum

into a form which encourages the sale of single units of study rather than whole degree programmes, tends to commodify education and indicates that the role and purpose of higher education in society is undergoing massive shifts.

3.11. Managerialism

Managerialism has developed within the existing culture of Redpath University in a variety of ways that have interacted with the more traditional practices of management, or those consistent with collegial culture. Prichard and Willmott (1997:289) argue that 'each university is a mix of organising practices, which are historically located and variably resilient and resistant to being wholeheartedly overthrown by the new managers'. There is evidence of this within Redpath University. Some departments, faculties and individuals have resisted managerialist forms of control, whereas others appear to have embraced them with enthusiasm. This kind of organisational culture creates uncertainty and was evident in the comments recorded in the field notes. Questions were raised about how work should be organised, what was the work life balance, and the extent to which traditional values of scholarship could be undermined by the need to meet very tight business related deadlines. Prichard and Willmott (1997:300) claim:

> Universities are being reconstituted as knowledge factories organised by managers, whose aim is to intensify and commodify the production and distribution of knowledge and skills to whomsoever has the wherewithal to purchase them....equally this reconstitution is partial and is likely to remain so..

The key point here is that universities are not homogenous organisations, they seek to sell knowledge to different constituents. They are difficult to manage and some of the following points illustrate why.

There are different cultures within each organisation which respond more, or less, to managerial demands. Trowler (1998) recognised this in his study, noting that there are multiple layers of culturally interrelated ideas, values and practices that co-exist. Attempts to bring about change may interact with one or more of such layers, and individual academics (or other staff members) may interpret events according the logic of their layer. This was again evident in Redpath University over the time period of the field notes, and emerged in the auto/biographical interviews. Some departments or layers have embraced change along managerialist lines, and welcomed the opportunity to emulate the corporate world, whereas others almost seem to be in an enclave that focuses very much on teaching students in a way that almost ignores changes. These points will be discussed further in the auto/biographical analyses below.

Secondly, it is important to appreciate the *scale, scope and rate* of change in higher education in Britain over the past 20 years. As Taylor (1999:2) reminds us:

> While universities have changed since their origin, what marks the current experience of change is its scale – it is discontinuous rather than incremental.

Discontinuous, but at times rapid, change is difficult to manage. It is argued (Deem, 1998) that academics and managers have become polarised within a culture of malaise in higher education. Other writers, for example (Lapworth, 2008), have suggested that there is a crisis of identity in the university sector as mass higher education has grown into an amorphous entity where not only pre-1992, post 1992 institutions exist, but many more University Colleges, and higher education courses delivered in further education. The boundaries of higher education are therefore fluid despite attempts to delineate groups of institutions e.g. The Russell Group, or the 1994 Group.

3.12. Economic imperatives

The discourses that surround academic work are also changing.

A discourse of professional autonomy and academic freedom has been replaced by that of economic rationalism, bringing with it a focus on survival of the organisation, rather than independent scholarship. Lapworth(2008) argues that discourses concerning professional autonomy and academic freedom have been replaced with those of economic rationalism. Traditional values of independent scholarship and thought become secondary to the perceived needs of the economy. Note these are perceived needs, a point which illustrates how policies are sometimes reactions to fears rather than clear strategies relating to actual threats. Institutional managements act 'as if' such threats are imminent and stress criteria in the research arena such is it marketable, publishable, and will it bring in extra funds?

These reactive stances tend to leave universities in a permanent state of crisis with each new cut in the unit of resource, or impending audit, or new education strategy. The discourse is posed in a form that suggests academics can resolve the issue, by loyalty to their organisation in the name of survival. Loyalty to a community of scholars or their discipline becomes secondary.

In addition some writers argue that we are in an era of `academic capitalism' that is a worldwide phenomena. Slaughter and Leslie (1997:8) define `institutional and professorial market or market-like efforts to secure external moneys as *academic capitalism*' .

Slaughter and Leslie (1997:211) write mainly about the USA, but also studied Australia and the United Kingdom, pointing out that:

> The national policy of these three countries promoted academic capitalism – market and market-like behaviours – on the part of faculty and institutions. In terms of enrolments, institutions in Australia and the United Kingdom began to tender competitive

bids for student places, contracting with the government to education students for a fixed cost. ...the United Kingdom has moved furthest in this direction, providing different state support per students, with the highest amount for students in techno-science fields....Faculty and institutions lost autonomy as higher education integrated more closely with the market. The freedom of professors to pursue curiosity driven research was curtailed by the withdrawal of more or less automatic funding to support this activity and by the increased targeting of Research and Development funds for commercial research.

Such changes are argued to be part of the process of exposing universities to the market and making them more accountable.

Maskell and Robinson (2001:183) conclude their book with some cogent comments on how far even an enlightened government can do good things for education:

> No education reform can take place in disconnection from society. How could a nation with our opinion-formers have decent universities – or vice versa? At worst, it may be that if the reforms we need were possible they would not be necessary. Educational reform presupposes a certain level of existing education, where we are close to having to start from scratch – which would only be possible after something more like conversion that reform.

They return to the earlier debates about the purposes of higher education and argue for an elite form of higher education or the old university, one in which 'training' does not take place, which they feel should be undertaken in institutions such as the former polytechnics. Higher education should be where education for its own sake is undertaken. In order to achieve these outcomes they have drawn up a list of principles (Maskell and Robinson, 2001:184)

Six principles

> 1. Education is valuable for its own sake both to the individual and to the state.

> 2. Because education is valuable to all, and because universal suffrage demands it, the education of the less academically able

must receive as serious attention as the education of the academically able.

3. But because there is no upper limit at which education loses its value, and because not everyone either wants or is able to pursue education as far as it can be pursued, the formation of an `elite' must be a natural desirable end of education.

4. Education and training are often close together in our early experience but diverge more and more the higher in education we go, and must not be confused.

5. Education is, like the armed forces and pension, a legitimate public cost not an investment, but there can be sensible financial limits to that cost.

6. Training, on the other hand, is an investment, the cost of which should be shared by those who expect dividends from it.

This list is included not because it is being endorsed, but because versions of these points or values have been heard at various times in the course of this study. They are therefore a useful framework, in which to locate some of the contextual meaning about the purpose of higher education in the stories from academics in this study.

3.13 Processes of change in academic work

Two questions arise from this analysis of changes in the academic labour process. The first is how has this transition from the formal to the real subordination of academic labour been achieved? Market forces alone are not enough; there have to be mechanisms in place through which the market works and to which the academic labourer submits. At least part of the answer to this has been a growth of institutional administration recruited to manage the "crisis", who make decisions which were once those of the academic, either as an individual or as a member of the collegium. (McNay,1995) Another has been the growth of performance indicators, either individual appraisal in the form of staff development and attempts at job analysis and performance-related pay, or institutional in the form of the

Teaching Quality Audit and most especially, the Research Assessment Exercise.

Neither would have succeeded if academics had not allowed themselves to become locked into practices which enforce their subordination and there seems to be some general agreement on a compliance culture amongst academics (Henkel and Kogan, 1996:34) whereby academics "complicit through their inaction have knowingly contributed (without so much as a whimper) to the progressive fragmentation, stratification, and alienation of academic work" (Smyth 1995:47).

Miller, (1995) also laments the lack of academic resistance to managerialist trends in his comparison of changes in higher education in Canada, Australia and the UK, arguing that as academics become constrained, monitored and documented via various performance indicators, they displace personal goals of scholarship and inquiry and come to collude in the construction of their own fate. In similar vein, Parker and Jary (1995) fear that the very identity of the academic will be reconstituted in terms of managerialist objectives rather than the traditional values of professional autonomy and academic freedom. Knowing the appropriate response to gain reward, the new academic will calculate what needs to be done and do it. This point, which is evidently a strategy for younger, newer academics, will be taken up in the concluding commentary. The extent to which the older academics in this study have pursued such a *managed professional* (Sachs, 2001) strategy varies.

CHAPTER 4. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL ISSUES CONCERNING AUTO/BIOGRAPHIES

Before looking at the auto/biographies in detail it is useful to discuss in this chapter the concepts that have been used to analyse the data, and offer some illustrative examples of this. Illustrative examples from individual auto/biographies are coded. Each of the five auto/biographies has been given a code as follows; T.1, T.2, T.3, T.4, T.5 which represents the order in which they were interviewed. They have also been given a pseudonym to disguise them.

To begin clarifying the form of auto/biography used in this study is significant in illustrating the *way* in which concepts have been used. Similarly before conducting an analysis it is important to set out the conceptual framework for that purpose. The following sections sets out the concepts to be used.

4.1. What is an auto/biography

Placing auto/biography as a concept in an historical frame, Gusdorf (1980:28/29) tells us that autobiography (sic) has not always existed:

> it asserts itself only in recent centuries... throughout most of human history the individual does not oppose him or herself to all others, does not feel himself to exist outside of others and still less against others, but very *with* others in an interdependent existence that asserts its rhythms everywhere in the community.

Auto/biography as a concept is an historical one, part of historical consciousness, and following from that the idea that an individual has a history as well, as a segment of a larger historical process.

To further explore what constitutes an auto/biography I turned to Denzin, (1989:17), who offers a form of structure for the shape of a recorded life. He tells us that 'autobiographies and biographies are

conventionalised, narrative expressions of life experiences' which structure how lives are written about. They require that we acknowledge the *existence of others*, which for Denzin (1989:18) is described as 'a double perspective in mind: the author's and the others'. However, there is a distinct self, different from others.

The telling of a life story is a dialogic process. It is not one person listening passively (or objectively) to another's story. In this instance it is two contemporaries, researcher and researched, in their own higher education environment sharing some meaning about events, processes, strategies, choices etc in an inter-subjective way. Plummer (2001:262) tells us that which we know:

> Humans are never alone (except perhaps in extreme psychotic situations, but even here there may be sense of others) and are dialogic, inter-subjective (i.e. with others and not simply subjective) and have selves that are capable of reflexivity, reflectivity....Human beings are able to take the roles of others, imaginatively and sympathetically, and chart their own actions in relation to these others. ...Most especially, human beings as part of their selfhood and dialogic character can become story tellers. They are 'homo narrans', the narrators of their own lives, both interpersonally and internally.

The dialogic character of narrative identity is therefore an important element in auto/biographical research. Similarly, the influence and importance of family which Denzin (1989:17) highlights, is often a key feature in auto/biographies. Lives described seem to have *starting points* (Denzin, 1989:19) and these originate with families even when recording working life. Denzin says the significance of family beginnings is illustrated by the assumption that every autobiography must start with family. In these academic auto/biographies the importance of family was raised by some academics as an essential element of remaining in an academic post; academic work afforded the flexibility needed for family responsibilities. This prioritising of family and other relationships outside work was reflected in Bryson and

Barnes (2000:176-7) survey evidence. Academics in that study rated 'my family or relationships outside work' as the top issue of importance in undertaking academic work.

4.2   Auto/biographies as stories

In this study, there was no intention to start with family beginning but many of the respondents have mentioned their family origins at the start, either by alluding to class or by illustrating the backdrop of family responsibilities and commitments to academic life. Reminiscing about the past led them down many avenues to produce widely varying stories of their academic lives. As Kemper (1984) says subjects do not have to be taught how to tell stories; it is part of their cognitive repertoire.   They were not asked to begin at the beginning and catalogue events as stages in their development. The stories have been transcribed and therefore transformed into written texts for analysis because it is only in textualised form that it is possible to submit the data to analysis. (Van Manen 1988:95).

As Van Manen (1990:70) comments "story forms serve as a fountain of experiences, to which the phenomenologist may turn to increase practical insights."

These insights can in some ways be seen through a series of broad metaphorical images. Gubrium and Buckholdt (1977:8-9) say, when considering the important insights in coming to understand how people develop a sense of their own lives are:

> not how people respond to life change or proceed through stages, but how they negotiate and generate the reality and meaning of change, stages, and development; how they come to have a sense of them as things separate from themselves; and how they subsequently respond to them as real things.

These stories are, for the teller, a revelation of their individual

meaning, but as Van Manen (1990:72) points out:

> While biography is oriented to individual or private meaning,
> phenomenology is oriented to existential meaning.

Existential meaning, or what it means to be in the world, is
a process of understanding. It is not finding a thing hidden from us
but rather interpretive understanding of *how* the thing is revealed.
(Carr, 1989:182)

The auto/biographical narratives discussed below are told as stories.
Polkinghorne (1995) reminds us they are a special type of discourse
production which draws together the narrative of a life using a plot.
Plots are conceptual schemes that enable us to make contextual
meaning of individual events in a life. Polkinghorne (ed) (1995:7) goes
on to say that a 'storied narrative is a linguistic form that preserves
the complexity of human action with its interrelationship of temporal
sequence, human motivation, chance happenings, and changing
interpersonal and environmental contexts'. This sentence
encapsulates many of the themes reported in the auto/biographical
narratives discussed below. However, once the stories have been
placed into a plot some of this essential chance dimension of human
life appears instead as a plan. Brockmeier (2001:248) discusses this
issue in his concept of *retrospective teleology* in the context of
auto/biographical construction. He says there is an assumption that
in most auto/biographies there is the 'idea that life stories reflect a
process in time, which like the biological process of life itself,
somehow links the beginning with an end'. Equally, there is a sense
of a life as development or how the beginning and end of an
auto/biography are connected.

Despite the fragmented nature of many life stories Brockmeier
(2007:248) says they 'usually share some features of traditional

narrative genres, such as the *Bildungsroman*, pilgrimage, adventure story or tragedy' and everyday life even as represented in films, plays and novels which are 'generally characterised by closed plots, a standardised repertoire of genres and other common narrative structures'. Moreover, even a storied account of a difficult and worthless life somehow follows the plot genres of a successful life, based on the current cultural notion of a 'good life'. Somehow, apparently meaningless actions are given meaning in the process. These processes appear to have rules and Brockmeier (2001:258) calls this a 'merging of structures of development, narrative and time *retrospective teleology*'. It is difficult to talk about the development of a life without mentioning an endpoint, or telos, even if this is temporarily known at the present. However, there is a tendency inherent in auto/biographical stories to use development as a link between past and present and this is achieved through time markers. As Brockmeier (2001:259) points out:

> lived time appears to be a sort of direct and linear linkage between two well-defined moments in time. In this manner the uncertainty and arbitrariness of life seems to be absorbed, and the plurality of options, realised or not, which is so characteristic of human agency, is inevitably reduced to a simple chain of events.'

What is lost in this process is the aspect of chance where lives are told or appear as planned. In the process of telling a meaningful life it is transformed into a plot and that plot almost always has a developmental theme. The next section explores the process of emplotment.

4.3   Plots in auto/biographies

Storied narratives differ from a mere chronological listing of events.
They are sustained emplotted accounts with a beginning, middle and
end. (Polkinghorne) 1995:12). The plot of a narrative is the basic
means by which specific events within the chronicle of a life told can
be organised into one meaningful whole

The plots of stories not only mark of segments of time, indeed may
prioritise some segments of time, but also function to select from the
vast range of happenings in a life those which directly contribute to a
terminal situation, albeit it a temporary current one. (Carr, 1986). As
Polkinghorne (1995:8) explains:

> For meaningfulness and understanding, stories rely on people's
> presumption that time has a unilinear direction moving from
> past to present to future and on their sense that events,
> motives, and interpretations can affect human actions and
> outcomes. The plot relates events by causally linking a prior
> choice or happening to a later effect...stories express a kind of
> knowledge that uniquely describes human experience in which
> actions and happenings contribute positively and negatively to
> attaining goals and fulfilling purposes.

However, linking events by positing causality does have the effect of
making life stories appear as planned.

Clearly, the significance of particular events and the relevance of
certain actions are rarely fully evident until after a particular episode
in life. We make sense of lives backwards. Plots accomplish this feat
by synthesising the function of particular actions. (Polkinghorne,1995)
The plot of a narrative is the basic means by which specific events
within the chronicle of a life told can be organised into one meaningful
whole.

4.3.1 Plots and Reflexivity and research

Plots are not immediately evident in a transcript of a story of a life. The plot must be put there and this in itself needs some reflection. Who is putting the plot in place? In this case it is the researcher, using the story texts and the dialogue between the academics offering their auto/biographies. Such a dialogue evokes *reflexivity;* reflexivity in the sense of observing the actions of the self and making sense of them retrospectively.

Steier (1995:2-3) makes some important points about the researcher in research. For example 'if we begin to examine how we as researchers are reflexively part of those systems we study, we can also develop an awareness of how reflexivity becomes a useful way for us to understand what others are doing'. To that extent therefore the researcher has employed reflexive insight to understand and make meaning from the auto/biographical stories in this study.

Steier (1995:5) goes on to say that research tells us a story about ourselves. We can be 'reflective (in showing ourselves to ourselves) and reflexive (being conscious of ourselves as we see ourselves).' It is this element of reflexivity, which is being used here. The stories the academics have recounted in their auto/biography were encouraged to be reflexive stories. They were then interpreted by the researcher and understood largely through the lens of having been a part of the same organisation during the same time period. The language they have used, the concepts they have employed to explain events, the organisational frameworks they have worked within, are all shared by the researcher.

This process is not seeking to identify a reality that is somehow apart from the tools and methods used to gain data; instead the tools of a

social constructionist study firmly recognise the importance of the researcher as a fellow 'I' in the dialogue and accordingly makes clear the significance of that stance in putting together a plot, and a narrative from the auto/biographies. (Steier, 1995.5-6) explains it like this:

> Taking reflexivity seriously in doing research is marked by a concern for recognising that constructing is a social process, rooted in language, not located inside one's head...and ... language is inseparable from the particularity of its context...It is precisely through such an orientation to languaging that the self, to whom our reflexivity refers, is most clearly a social self, who become 'that' self precisely through participation with others, and allows research to become understood as a conversation (or, rather, several)

In this study, the language is one used in the relationships the academics had/have within the context of their university organisation. The researcher is part of and involved in that conversation and that context. Auto/biographies presume the *presence of an author or outside observer* , whether it is a reader or a listener, who knows of or is able to recognise his or her life. In this study the outside observer is the researcher who does indeed know the context of the lives recalled. Key critical points in a life, *objective and subjective life markers* (Denzin.1989:19) give a sense of mapping or charting a life and highlighting specific meaning. However, this meaning is not a rigid, absolute insight. As Denzin (1989.20) illustrates:

> A life, it is assumed, is cut of whole cloth, and its many pieces, with careful scrutiny, can be fitted into a proper place. But this writing of a life.......is constantly being created as it is written. Hence the meaning of the pieces change, as new patterns are found.

The auto/biographical approach to research in this study is a method that seeks to explore these meanings with the academics participating in the study to identify patterns as they reflect on their academic lives.

It recognises the impossibility of remaining *outside of* the subject matter of this study, given the fact that the author is a fellow academic who has travelled an academic life journey at the same time and in the same place as the subjects of the study. Nightingale and Cromby (1999:228) implore us 'to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement in a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research' and these comments have been an attempt to do this.

It is important to note there are two types of reflexivity; personal reflexivity and epistemological reflexivity undertaken by the author.

Personal reflexivity involves us in reflecting on the ways in which our own values, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities have shaped the research. The type of literature review contained in this study has in part indicated the assumptions made on the part of the researcher with regard to values, interests, beliefs and political commitments.

Epistemological reflexivity necessitates engaging with questions concerning the way the research question has been defined, how has the study been designed and in what ways the method of analysis might 'construct' the data and findings? Epistemological reflexivity also requires us to consider how the research question could be investigated differently, and to what extent this would have given rise to a different understanding of the topics explored. It is clear that undertaking the investigation within a sociological conceptual framework is the epistemological reflexivity element of the research.

There is also the issue of the authors own academic professional life that was unfolding in tandem with that of the academics in the study. (Ryan, 2006:152) reflects on this and says 'through identification with my narrators, I was simultaneously constructing my own story,

answering the very questions that I had posed to the men in my study'. This kind of reciprocity has been evident in interviews so far, where the narrators commented 'you remember that time don't you' and 'what happened to our department was similar in yours wasn't it?' thus locating each other in a shared existence, and shared evolving story.

4.3.2. Auto/biographical knowledge

The relationship between human agency and social structure is a central issue in this study, which as a snapshot in time, has the potential to reflect shifts in the purposes of higher education, and wider societal changes, through the experiences of a group of academics. Thus auto/biographical study as a research approach has the potential to achieve this dual aim. Erben (1987:4) explains that:

> ...biographical research has both general and specific purposes. The general purpose is to provide greater insight than hitherto into the nature and meaning of individual lives or groups of lives. Given that individual lives are part of a cultural network, information gained through biographical research will relate to an understanding of wider society.

Other writers also show how such an approach can link the self with the wider social structure. Martin, J (2003:221) emphasises how:

> Biographical studies are used to explore notions of selfhood and action with a focus on the creative intersections between human agency and social structure.

4.4. Narrative knowledge of lives

Defining the narrative mode of knowing is an important first step in the analysis of a life. For some writers 'The narrative mode of knowing consists in organising experience with the help of a scheme assuming the intentionality of human action.' Czarniawska, (1997:18). For example in this study academic experience has been related in terms of motives, intentions, strategies to manage the work trajectory, and

also avoidance of some aspects of change. Not all of these actions were seen as intentional at the time they took place, but intentionality has been imposed on events and actions in the telling of the story.

Polkinghorne (1987:21) talks of how we can explore specific *types* of explanation within a narrative:

> When a human event is said not to make sense, it is usually not because a person is unable to place it in the proper category. The difficulty stems, instead, from a person's inability to integrate the event into a plot whereby it become understanding in the context of what has happened....Thus, narratives *exhibit* an explanation instead of demonstrating it.

Polkinghorne (1987:21) further explores the concept of narrative by introducing the idea that narrative presentations contain three elements. The first is a presentation that is directed at the self, it is the story we tell ourselves to make sense of our actions. The second is the telling of the story to others to tell them how we made sense of life. The third is how it is received; how is the teller's story understood and interpreted by the listener. It is the second and third element of narrative that is being focussed on in this study.

Bruner (1985) adds to our understanding of narrative knowledge of the self by saying that this knowledge is much more than emotive expression. It is a legitimate form of reasoned knowing.

This leads us to highlight here what kind of knowledge is being sought in this study. On the one hand it is possible to look at the five academic auto/biographies, which are documents of lives lived in a particular time period, in a particular organisation, as a 'case', and compare and contrast the themes and ways in which the five stories make sense of their experience. This would be a paradigmatic approach. It could generate categories, or common attributes shared by the five academics, and it would be possible to suggest that other

academics in other universities may share some of the experiences that shape academic lives. This a typical strategy employed by rationalist enquirers.

In a narrative analysis, what is being sought is identification of a set of themes that will order individual data into a plot for the purposes of identifying meaning. However, this is an individual qualitative analysis. Themes are not established prior to the analysis, they emerge from it. It is storied knowing.

Both these strategies will be employed in the analysis of the data; paradigmatic cognition in the sense that some of the themes identified will be brought to bear in comparing and contrasting the five auto/biographical stories in Chapter 7. The danger of this approach is its tendency to reduce human difference by fitting it into categories and rational frameworks. However, it is a useful exercise in seeing how far the knowledge gained from this study can be extrapolated to other academics in other universities.

However, the main aim of the study is to record individual academic lives and identities to provide a 'thick description' (Geertz,1983) of each academic life in the context of mass higher education. Each individual auto/biography will initially be analysed to identify distinct themes they have raised, which may or may not be linked to wider conceptual/theoretical frameworks. This permits the uniqueness and diversity of human experiences to be identified. As Hatch (ed) 1995.11) says:

> whereas paradigmatic knowledge focuses on what is common among actions, narrative knowledge focuses on the particular and special characteristics of each action...the cumulative effect of narrative reasoning is a collection of individual cases in which thought moves from case to case instead of from case to generalisation'.

This study is primarily intended to be a collection of individual cases.

4.5. Constructing a self identity in an organisational cultural context

The institutional daily life in an organisation like Redpath University is the site for the academic storied lives. That organisation is where 'self stories' are made. However, that is not to say individuals are totally determined by the scripts available in that organisation, or from the wider academic discourse on roles and professional practices. As Holstein and Gubrium (2000:153) highlight it is important not to overstate the extent to which the self is extemporaneously constructed. It is more useful to regard the self as 'self constructed' through a series of interpretive operations, drawing upon a whole gamut of possibilities, in the circumstances of institutional discourse. This approach echoes the process discussed by Claude Levi- Strauss (1966) in his metaphor of the 'bricoleur', who is involved in a kind of salvage operation to craft his or her self from available scripts. Self construction in this sense is always 'ineluctably local' (Geertz, 1983).

Thus the making of a self in an institution or organisation such as Redpath University is, as Holstein and Gubrium (2000:153) say 'a practical and artful response to prevailing circumstances, an application of what is available in relation to the narrative tasks at hand'. It is in part local to Redpath University although it is clear that such selves may share elements in common with other academics in other post 1992 universities and these are available through communities of practice.

4.5.1. Organisation models and the self

In order to conceptualise the university as an organisation, I turned to Czarniawska (1997:3) who argues that a new vocabulary of organisations is needed, given the 'inherent vocabulary does not help

us to understand ongoing processes' in organisations. To find such a new vocabulary, Czarniawska has drawn from a range of disciplines that include anthropology, literary theory and the institutional school of sociology, and in so doing employs the hermeneutical principle of explaining the less known with assistance from the better known. Czarniawska (1997:5-6) has adopted an organisational narrative approach to explaining institutions, which she argues brings organisation studies closer to cultural studies and literary theory:

> The claim that the main source of knowledge in the practice of organisations is narrative is not likely to provoke much opposition...however; the next step should be taken; acknowledging the existence and importance of narratives means that we need adequate devices for interpreting them, which leads us in turn to literary theory. Literary categories such as genres can serve as metaphors, or even analogies, for other kinds of institutions.

Analogies heard about Redpath University have likened it to a large ship or sailing vessel resisting the enemy because some of the academics in this study have referred to it in this way when thinking about how change takes place. They suggest change in Redpath University is like trying to turn a warship round, which is slow and needs to keep a good lookout for impending calamities. There are also other metaphors that are helpful in capturing the essence of life in parts of the university and some academics suggested the university is like elephant that you cannot see entirely; you only felt patches of its skin at a time and as a result you would never guess what the whole looked like. There is a sense that Redpath University does not in fact know what kind of university it is, or wants to be, due to having grown from such an amalgam of smaller organisations. For example, a former College of Advanced Technology, an Art College, a large College of Education all combined at various stages to form a Polytechnic and now a post 1992 university. Each of these parts had differing cultures and the relics and implications of this still persist.

4.5.2 Nostalgic Organisational Stories

Nostalgic stories were a feature of many of the auto/biographical accounts. They were nostalgic of an organisation, which no longer existed or perhaps never did. Nostalgic feelings can be seen as a warm and good orientation about the past or features of the past, perhaps a yearning towards it, but with a recognition and acceptance of the impossibility of bringing it back. They may not be based on real events, but imagined pasts.

All academics in Redpath University had been in the organisation as least 20 years, and in some cases 30. This led them to see the organisation of the past almost as a family. Other metaphors included madhouse, well-oiled (or creaky) machine, dinosaur, and castle under siege. By far the most common metaphor however was that of the organisation as a family.

Many organisations are seen to have a 'golden age' by those reflecting on their past involvement within them, which belong to a mythological pre-history, rather than documented history. Those who have lived through this golden age regard it as their personal and collective heritage and use it as a template or benchmark by which they perceive, interpret and judge the present (Gabriel, 2000:177). Similarly, some of the academic auto/biographies at Redpath University allude to such a golden age which belonged to their youth, and to times when they had more freedom to organise their work lives, or to adopt or develop practices according to their own judgement. The picture they painted was of a very loosely structured organisation (Weick, 1976) where they had a great deal of freedom to manage their own work.

There are certain elements that acted as a focus for nostalgic feelings. These are buildings, leaders, other characters and departed

colleagues.

In the Redpath University auto/biographies many spoke of buildings they had occupied, or places within buildings. Their nostalgic feeling, although expressed with warmth, did not always relate to an ideal building. Often the privations of a building were felt to develop a more collaborative culture amongst academic and administrative staff, which generated a sense of jollity.

Gabriel (2000:178) mentions types of accommodation in his study and says that some of the people actually preferred the *older* buildings because they symbolised past values and a more authentic way of working:

> Far from corporate splendour, the new building came to stand for a corruption of the old values. Although the building was outwardly the same, its new interior affronted people's sense of authenticity and epitomised the hollow rhetoric of PR. The atrium, intended to symbolize corporate openness, came to stand for what many of the older staff felt to be the spiritual void at the heart of the organisation. Under such circumstances, the old building's dark corridors, ironically, came to symbolize authenticity and community.

Again elements of this can be seen in the Redpath University auto/biographies. Some spoke with considerable nostalgia about some of the older buildings in which they had worked but saw the newer corporate style buildings as anomic.

Gabriel (2001:82) goes on to explore nostalgia and identity and argues:

> Psychologically, it is most accessible as a component of *self*, that valuable but precarious web of truths, half-truths, and fictions that surround the entity that we familiarly refer to as 'I'...as a dimension of identity, nostalgia increases our sense of self worth. No matter how low, infirm, or powerless we are now; we take heart from earlier grandeurs and glories. The world

may have changed but no one can deny us our past.

There is thus a paradox in nostalgic recollections. On the one hand we can recall with pleasure past times certain events or key moments in our professional lives but at the same time recognise they are never going to be repeated. However, nostalgia enables us to have a kind of vicarious fulfilment whereby we can recall having been somebody, someone who participated in the key events, even if we are now a no-body in contemporary professional life. 'Nostalgia enables a has-been to become somebody again' (Gabriel, 2000:183).

Nostalgic stories can attain the qualities of an epic in organisations, and some of the field notes recorded in the introduction allude to this. The ways in which people, individuals and groups, overcame each organisational challenge to their academic selves and practices, and the hardships that were endured and survived to bring about change, were recalled in a chronicle or saga like way illustrating the strength and determination of those who participated.

4.5.3. Organisations as sources of experiential definition.
Organisations and their agents are sources of experiential definition – purveyors of identity (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000:154). Self presentation in organisational life is, according to Holstein and Gubrium (2000), becoming more and more *deprivatised*; that is the self is constructed according to the agencies definition of it, so that our primary subjectivity is colonised by the public circumstances of working life as well as other arenas in which we live. The diversity of selves, the myriad of possibilities, are limited only by the availability of representational categories. This point is raised here because it is evident from some of the academic narratives that they wished to stress their multiple selves and make sure their story was not recounted entirely as a professional academic self, or an organisationally defined self. However, it should not be concluded

that somehow the self is under siege, or plagued by overpopulation of possible selves. Some selves have more moral merit than others and we make careful choices about these in our lives within our communities of practice.

Thus the storied selves are not just drawing upon the scripts available to hand in Redpath University. There are many other multi-layered sources of self and identity in each academic life drawn from their multiple roles outside of the university and layers of community practice involvement, and these too have been referred to in the narratives. As mentioned, some academics have suggested that their academic selves are not the most important element of their self. Their achievements outside of this framework have been described as more significant to them.

To what extent has the quality assurance drive shaped the self identities of academics in Redpath University? Has the panoptic gaze of external accountability proved to be a major factor? Holstein and Gubrium (2000) pose these questions; 'what is the moral flavour of panopticism as it applies to the self in discursive practice; is the self morally implicated or marginalized; what degree of choice does panopticism leave for self construction?' They go on to suggest that the grand view of panopticism implies actors are left with no separate moral will. This is not the case. Holstein and Gubrium (2000:226) say there are characteristics of everyday talk and action that mitigate against the 'experiential penetration of totalised discourses and their pervasive moral orders'. Local discourses provide some moral options for shaping, evaluating and cataloguing identity but these are not absolute. An example of this in Redpath University from the auto/biographical stories is that each respondent complied in different ways to quality assurance requirements according to their own values. There was no common form of response. There is little evidence here that mass higher education has shaped academic roles

into a common form. In fact there is considerable diversity evident in the auto/biographical identities. What may have been significant however is the role of institutional talk (Drew and Heritage, 1992) and how it shapes perceptions of academic roles.

Nevertheless, as Goffman (1959) illustrates, we can go through the motions of compliance without succumbing completely to the 'gaze' of those who seek to shape our selves. Examples of this abound in the field notes taken over time at Redpath University. Academic staff would say when asked to draw up documents describing their courses that they had 'included all the right words', the implication being that they were not their own words. They made it perfectly clear that this was a game they were playing, not one where they had internalised university definitions of how they should think.

Academics in Redpath University cannot be conceived of as 'cultural dopes' (Garfinkel, 1967). As Holstein and Gubrium (2000:228) propose:

> The self is not completely predefined; it's not the by-product of a totalised and totalising cultural or social system; it isn't what some grand narrative – some monolithic panopticon - might designate...the moral climate of the self we live by is located at the working crossroads of institutional discourses and everyday life, in the interplay of discursive practice and discourses-in-practice. It's a space where the self has multiple signposts, directed in various ways by what is both locally shared and broadly consequential.

What is being described here is a process of 'self in construction'; always narratives in the making over time, in a local sense, not over-determined selves. The academic stories reported on here have clearly taken different roads on their professional journeys, construed events and practices in different ways in order to construct their identities. They have reflexively worked out who and what they are as they articulated their academic selves in the context of the organisational

discourses within Redpath University. They did so as agents with multiple signposts.

4.6. The self in dynamic relation with culture

The concept of the self that is being used in this analysis is a socially constructed one. Identity is created in the interaction between self and society (Bruner, 1990, Gergen, 1991). Bruner (1990:108) suggests:

> Self... must be treated as a construction that, so to speak, proceeds from the outside in as well as from the inside out, from culture to mind as well as from mind to culture.

While we create our selves there are many plots available to us within a culture, such that we are able to 'create ourselves projecting our identities against accessible plots...but every performance changes, augments, distorts, or enriches the existing repertoire' (Czarniawska, 1997.44). The self is thus formed in a dynamic relation with a culture that in turn changes that culture.

Czarniawska (1997:45) goes on to argue:

> The self is produced, reproduced, and maintained in conversations, past and present. It is community-constituted...in the sense of being created by those who take part in a conversation; it is historical because past conversations are evoked in the course of present ones.

Individual identity is created not by any action but by a self-narrative (Bruner, 1990). However, this self-narrative is undertaken in relation to an audience. Goffman, (1959) discusses the ways in which this perceived audience can shape performance. The performance of the self is monitored by looking at the ways in which individuals manage the impression they have on others. Kelly (1992) draws on Bakhtin's (1985) idea of 'dialogical self' where we are guided to understand the self in relation to any audience whose responses, whether real or imagined, shape self-presentations. We *review* these performances to

see how authentic they may have been by reflecting on how well they were received by the audience; have we been accepted as that self? (Goffman, 1959)

It is also interesting to note here Polkinghorne's (1988:150) comment that 'we are in the middle of our stories and cannot be sure how they will end; we constantly have to revise the plot as new events are added to our lives'. This point is raised because, given the constructionist nature of the research, it is possible that if any future researchers decided to replicate this research with the same participants, they may find a different narrative construction for each of the participants, depending on new events in their lives which may cause the academics to re-present themselves.

Hatch (1995:129) also reminds us that 'just as tellers have their own purposes for framing their stories in certain ways, so do story receivers have their own agendas and priorities'. This study was undertaken with a specific agenda in mind; that of academic identity formation and change. Other researchers, with different agendas, my focus on different issues and thus a dissimilar narrative may emerge.

All auto/biographical narratives involve a protagonist which is the self. It is the actions of the self, the thoughts of the self, the feelings and intentions of the self that are described in the narrative. However wide ranging the life story is, however many characters are introduced, however fragmentary the tale it always revolves around a centre, the protagonist, who is ultimately merged with the narrator. Bruner (1991:69) tells us the narrator:

> takes upon himself or herself the task of describing the progress of a protagonist in the there and then, one who happens to share his (*sic*) name. He must by convention bring that protagonist from the past into the present in such a way that the protagonist and the narrator eventually fuse and become one person with a shared consciousness.

The time of a life conflates past and present to some extent in the process of describing the progress of the protagonist and time in narratives is discussed in the next section.

4.7. Auto/biographical narratives and time

There are number of conceptual definitions of auto/biographical narratives and time offered by a range of theorists. Perhaps the most significant, and from which flow other conceptualisations, is that contained in Ricoeur's Time and Narrative. Vol.3. (1984).

Villela-Petit (2006:1) discusses Ricoeur's aim in this volume, which is 'to reconstruct the mediations required in order to connect the question of narrative with that of time....narratives encode, and so preserve, the memory of what deserves to be remembered'.

Human time is not just the inner time of individual consciousness, neither is it the cosmic time based on regular movement of the stars, with which we used to measure time in days, months and years long before clocks were able to do this for us in smaller segments such as minutes and seconds. No, for Ricoeur, time is distinguished by its relationship to human action and suffering. It is only through telling one's story that time can acquire a figure or reality for the individual, and not be lost. It is narrative as a linguistic *construction* that mediates between the lived time of consciousness and the measured time that clocks provide. (Villela-Petit, 2006)

Brockmeier, (2001) reminds us that although auto/biographical narratives usually present a time evolving plot, they do not do so in every instance. A plot *(fabula)* can follow linear lines but does not necessarily include all (life) time. Instead it can be synthesised into a *sjuzet*, which is a narratively composed synthesis. Thus the plot does

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not follow chronological time; it creates its own narrative time where many events can be collapsed into one period.

There are three types of time modalities (or tenses), where the past, present and future are reported; individual, natural and cultural time. They refer to how the contemporary culture conceptualises these matters and they enter the language of how we talk about ourselves. Individual time as we have discussed is narrative time and prioritises only some of past experience, natural time is seasonal or segmented and may have a different pace e.g. as in the early years of my life, whereas cultural time is clock time and may contain specific dates. The auto/biographies discussed below in Chapter 5 employ all of these concepts of time.

The course or direction of time that is evoked in auto/biographical accounts is thus an important aspect in any analysis. Bruner (1990) reminds us of the significance of this order of events and highlights the fact that it is the sequentiality or temporal order of events rather than strict notions of truth or accuracy of memory that lend structure to a narrative. He suggests that there are no structural differences between fictional and empirical narratives. The function of a story is to find an intentional state that mitigates or least makes comprehensive a deviation from a canonical cultural pattern. (Bruner, 1990:49-50) It is what is distinct about individual auto/biography within the context of an established cultural pattern.

4.8. A good life
When we tell a story about our lives, we make ethical judgements that explain why we have taken certain courses of action, and not others. Narratives are therefore not equivalent to ethical neutrality. How does selfhood, so associated with narrative identity, manage at the same not to be totally absorbed by it? How can we look at the protagonist of our story and suggest reasons, ethical ones, to explain our actions.

How can individuals stand back in a reflexive way from their narrative identity and insert ethical meaning into actions taken or otherwise? These are important questions in considering how a sense of the good life is constructed for each individual.

The ethical dimensions of our narratives, the living of a 'good life', are a crucial element in such stories. Each of us develops an answer to what constitutes a good life which accounts in part for the diversity of personal accounts. The self can experience crises of identity relating to the opportunity and capacity to live the good life as defined by the self. Freeman and Brockmeier (2001:81) define this point by arguing:

> One's identity, insofar as it is tied to the interpretive appraisal of one's personal past as it takes place in autobiographical narrative, is inseparable from normative ideas of what a life is, or is supposed to be, if it is lived well. We shall call these ideas conceptions of the "good life", using an Aristotelian notion in broad outline...what we wish to do is to call attention to the fact that the narrative construction of identity not only has a psychological, social, and aesthetic dimension but an ethical one.

The extent to which there exists any form of consensus as to what constitutes a good life in any given social context will affect the degree of narrative integrity that runs through the stories people tell about their lives and their identities (Freeman and Brockmeier, 2001:82).

In those periods of history or within particular cultures where there are strong canonical constraints and a limited range of possible meanings, it would seem there would be less ambiguity about auto/biographical constructions or a strong narrative integrity. However, in periods or cultures where there are competing standards or less binding ones and notions of the good life are contested, narrative integrity would be relatively low. This is not to make a moral judgement about such periods, and the choices individuals make within them, as if there are absolute standards for living a good life.

Rather it is clear that whilst individuals aim at some form or narrative integrity the extent to which this is a broad challenge is related to the competing and contested nature of what constitutes a good life.

Freeman and Brockmeier (2001:95) highlight the ways in which conceptions of self and the good life changed through time by suggesting:

> that conceptions of the self and history....based on ...agreed upon visions of the good life, as embodied in the historical figures of the citizen of the Greek *polis*, the *pater familias*, the committed monk, the courageous warrior, and so on, gradually gave way to more open, plural and heterogeneous vision.

Thus we might argue that we have moved from relatively circumscribed models of the self and ideal life narratives to potentially 'model free' selves, with a vast proliferation of possible life narratives. However, Freeman and Brockmeier (2001:95) claim that there is still a considerable challenge in attaining some measure of narrative integrity in the process of auto/biographical construction. Greater choices of models of the self do not negate the need to make sense of a life and offer it in an integrated form with an indication of the type of good life lived. For example, where there are major crises in identity, due to events in a life, it is sometimes impossible to find narrative integrity; life may have been lived within the horns of painful dilemmas where we can choose to do one thing or another but not both. The plot for such a story cannot illustrate a journey, encompassing, say, a heroic unfolding account. The conflict and dilemma of choosing one or other of these painful dilemma life paths does not have a clear emplottment within the traditional genres of tragedy, adventure story, triumphalist narrative and so on unless the individual makes a clear choice. Nor is it clear which choice constitutes a good life as defined within contemporary culture. The

narrative integrity of such a story may be ridden with apologies, explanations, for having made one or other choice.

There are many versions of what a good academic life might be; there are certainly a plethora of roles to play in contemporary academic life.

4.9.   Loss and Change in professional academic life

Many of the narratives in this study mention changes in professional practices, environments, collegiality, and student approaches to their studies.   These were in some ways conceptualised as losses. Maris (1986: vii) in his perceptive book on how individuals in society manage loss and change discusses the effects of these processes:

> Our purposes and expectations come to be organised about particular relationships, which are then crucial to the way we constitute the meaning of our lives. When we lose such a relationship, the whole structure of meaning centred upon it disintegrates.

Maris (1986: vii) goes on to argue that loss of relationships arising from

change can have all the characteristics of bereavement in their effects:

> The intense anxiety, restlessness and despair which bereavement characteristically provokes, express the profound threat, which this presents.

Maris (1986: vii) speaks of grieving in this context as a response to loss of meaning. 'If grieving is a response to loss of meaning, then it should be provoked by all situations of loss, including social changes, where the ability to make sense of life is severely disrupted'.

Therefore it could be argued that in circumstances of organisational change and loss of meaningful relationships, which many of the auto/biographical narratives report, structures of meaning fall apart. These structures of meaning have to be replaced in order to restore a sense of self esteem and effectiveness and this requires some exploration of the management of grief and mourning in the processes

of change.

Maris (1986:27) tells us that grief is 'mental wound which heals slowly and leaves scars'. Within an organisation this grief can occur when individuals (or whole groups) are asked to make radical changes, possibly arising from policy changes, and give up former ways of working, work with new unknown colleagues, and maybe lose relationships that have been carefully nurtured over many years. Maris (1986:156) points out that reorganisation in an institutional setting involves disruption and invalidation of experience:

> Everyone in the organisation has come to understand his or her job – the purpose it satisfied, its give and take, the loyalties and rivalries it implies – as a familiar pattern of relationship, on which they rely to interpret the events of the working day. This definition of their occupational identity represents the accumulated wisdom of how to handle the job, derived from their own experience and the experience of all who have had the job before or share it with them. Change threatens to *invalidate* this experience, robbing them of the skills they have learned and confusing their purposes...

These are individual reactions but Maris (1986:154) talks of situations characterised by collective loss, as in the case of social change in a community, or organisational changes and says these types of crisis take on another aspect. They can be projected as a form of conflict with the organisation for example, which Maris (1986:154) suggests 'expresses a search for identity, whose demands are more ambiguous, evolving with the conflict itself'. Essentially this is asking the question - who are we now you have changed our identities? Where do we fit in, or find meaning in our activities again? How can we reconcile the past self with the present demand? As Maris (1986:155) perceptively notes:

> The articulation of this conflict is therefore as crucial to assimilating social changes as mourning is to bereavement. Even if it were possible to foresee how interests might be balanced with the utmost fairness, everyone still has to work

out in his or her own terms what it means to their particular attachments, gradually re-orientating their essential purposes.

Those who have responsibility and power to manipulate change often act as if this process of 'working out' does not need to take place. They act as if all that is needed is careful explanation, and when such explanations are rejected or criticised, dismiss opposition as the action of dinosaurs, or claim those who resist are unable to foresee or adapt to the future. This type of comment can be seen in field notes discussed in the introduction to this study. Maris (1985.155) suggests that this kind of response from reformers expresses a profound contempt for the meaning of lives other than their own. He further argues that 'if we deny grief, we deny the importance of the meaning each of us has struggled to make of life...loss is painful because we are committed to the significance of our personal experience.' (Maris, (1985:103)

Maris (1986:156) also suggests that such insight indicates three principles for the management of change:

> First, the process of reform must always expect and even encourage conflict....Second, the process must respect the autonomy of different kinds of experience, so that groups of people can organise without the intrusion of alien conception. Third, there must be time and patience, because the conflicts involve not only the accommodation of diverse interests, but also the realisation of an essential continuity in the structure of meaning.

Collectively, people in organisations have considerable power to subvert change, constrain development, or ignore changes they do not find acceptable. They will often do so if innovations are imposed within a short time frame, and there is no time to assimilate them within their own experience, or adapt them within the existing interpretation of their working lives. Over the long time period of the auto/biographical stories in Redpath University it is possible to identify how innovations relating to expansion and change in the case

study organisation have become assimilated within the structure of meaning of the auto/biographies after an initial period of considerable anxiety around loss of former professional selves. As Maris (1986:156) claims:

> People cannot reconcile themselves to the loss of familiar attachments in terms of some impersonal utilitarian calculation of the common good. They have to find their own meaning in these changes before they can live with them.

Thus arguments put forward by reformers in Redpath University were about how the whole university (the common good) will be negatively affected by the refusal of some groups to update their practices, or radically change them. This view was not always accepted.

The main point of this section has been to highlight key issues around the process of change in organisations which has to accommodate the politics of identity, with all its associated and unresolved conflicts around loss, grief, continuity of (professional) selves, and structures of meaning around academic life. These issues are present in the auto/biographical accounts to which we now turn.

CHAPTER 5.   THE AUTO/BIOGRAPHIES

The auto/biographies discussed in this section are introduced in terms of how the data was obtained and the process of analysis used. Wenger's (1998:149) five dimensions of identity have been kept in mind when interpreting the text in relation to identity formation. These are reiterated here for ease of reference.

i)   identity as negotiated experiences where we define who we are by the ways we experience our selves through participation as well as the way we and other reify our selves.

ii)   identity as community membership where we identify who we are by the familiar and the unfamiliar

iii)   identity as a learning trajectory where we define who we are by where we have been and where we are going

iv)   identity as a nexus of multi membership where we define who we are by the ways in which we reconcile our various forms of identity into one identity and

v)   identity as a relation between the local and the global where we define who we are by negotiating local ways of belonging to broader constellations and manifesting broader styles and discourses.

5.1. Method of obtaining data

The five auto/biographies analysed here were obtained by conducting at least two interviews lasting from 1 to 1½ hours with the volunteer participants. Every set of interviews was recorded and then fully transcribed ranging. The transcripts range in length from 60 to 100 pages.

Each person was sent a copy of the transcript and invited to comment and correct any errors, particularly of meaning and emphasis, and if necessary add points they felt had been left out. These transcripts will be retained and archived with the permission of the participants.

However, they are currently kept securely and confidentially. Anonymity is attempted by changing their names and some details.

5.1.2. Reflexivity

During the interviews some participants said they had enjoyed the experience and it had given them a valued opportunity to reflect upon their professional lives. One rushed through his story, almost without drawing breath. Another needed considerable prompting to elaborate. These points are made in the introduction to their stories because it is clear not all participants were as comfortable with or behaved similarly about the process of storytelling about themselves, nor were they equally reflexive

5.1.3. Stage of academic life

Each participant was at a different stage in their academic life, although all had at least 20 years service in Redpath University. Some were in the full throes of a current project, or a new post, whereas others had their eye on retirement.

5.1.4 Process of analysis

The first stage of the analysis was to put each story into a plot, because in the absence of emplotment, lives can appear as a haphazard collection of disjointed, fragmented events. This process involved recursive readings to create a plot or narrative configuration that is redolent with meaning relating to that particular person.

This involves a number of discrete recursive processes in a hermeneutic circle, a to and fro sense, moving from parts to the whole:

- First it is essential to evolve a plot that is capable of configuring the data elements into a story.

- Testing this early attempt at emplotment with the data to see if major events and actions conflict with or contradict the emerging plot idea

- Making adjustments depending on the outcome of above

- As plot takes its form, the key events and happenings become apparent as those which are crucial to the story's clarity

- At this stage it becomes possible to decide which events will be included in the final storied account, and which are extraneous or do not contradict the plot. Thus not all data will be included. (this process is described as 'narrative smoothing' by Spence, 1986)

- As order is imposed on events and happenings this imposes a higher level of order on them than they had as they were lived. It is important to recognise this, as it involves looking back and forward and making sense of now, in between and futures. The way in which time has been used as a temporal device to collapse, and explain the flow of the lives is also a feature of this process.

5.1.5. Coding

Each of the five auto/biographies have been given a code, T.1, T.2, T.3, T.4, T.5 which represents the order in which they were interviewed. They have also been given a pseudonym to disguise them. Where the voices of the participants are cited they are in italics and the page reference of the transcript is appended, e.g. (T.1.20) to denote the Transcript No./page of transcript, to enable further analysis if required by subsequent researchers.

The transcripts are not attached to the thesis. The participant's pseudonyms are as follows: T.1 Paul, T.2 Stan, T.3. Harold, T.4. Fred, T.5. George.

PAUL

T.1.

1.   <u>Brief professional biography</u>

Paul originally worked as a secondary school English teacher for 15 years. English teaching is his passion. He has worked at Redpath University for almost 20 years. He is 59. He has worked in one department, Education, for all of that time and is a Senior Lecturer. He has had a range of responsibilities whilst working in the department, and is currently Course Leader for the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (English), Course tutor on M.Sc. Education and Training Management, Mentor Co-ordinator for Initial Teacher Training and university contact for Portsmouth Primary School Centred Teacher Training (SCITT). He has an M.A. Educational Studies. His current research interests include Pupil Voice (PhD research), developments in the English Curriculum at Key Stage 3, and the impact of the Literacy Strategy on reading development at Key Stage 3. He has developed and taught Continuing Professional Development courses for teachers, and works collaboratively with local schools/teachers/pupils. He intends to retire in 2007/8 when he completes his PhD but continue with his research work wherever and whenever he can. He has a number of consultancies, which he expects will continue, and new ones develop.

2. Plot: An explorer in the education eco-system

The plot for Paul's life could be seen in metaphorical terms. A journey metaphor is helpful in theorising Paul's life. He has been a kind of explorer, travelling in a familiar land but finding areas where there is room and sufficient interest to stay, but nevertheless seeks to investigate and reconceptualise his educational environment. Paul sees the education system almost as a complex eco-system that is constantly evolving and adapting where he is a part of a process of regeneration. He is very much aware of change in education sectors, both schools and higher education, and points often to issues about succession and fitness for purpose. For example when he returned to Pembrokeshire after teaching in Manchester for 10 years, he felt that the Pembrokeshire School was '20 years behind the times' and posed a significant challenge for him in his mission to improve the teaching of English there. He is opportunistic, finding spaces to work at improving taken for granted education practice wherever he is. Upon joining the Education Department at Redpath University, where research activities were somewhat low in priority, he soon made links with the local teaching community and undertook collaborative research projects seeking to enhance practice. He both generates and regenerates ideas in this process. The obstacles he finds are bypassed, he travels around them. On finding he had few colleagues in Redpath University he could work with in his research, he sought others in different universities and now seems to have found an intellectual home in a university in London. The gains and losses in this journey, the obstacles he has overcome are used illustratively as part of his wider interpretation of the way academics progress in the higher education system. For example, given that former schoolteachers, as he was, do not have a history of conducting primary research when they join higher education professional education departments, he has worked assiduously to encourage, sow seeds, and nurture his fellow colleagues to enable them to conduct educational research,

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write articles, and collaborate with the school community. This is to ensure they have better career opportunities. He did this based on his own experience of working with a 'catalyst' person as he saw them who was brought into the department for two years to generate interest in education research.

He sees the purpose of all knowledge as a way of generating new insights. He thinks higher education is fragile as a system and he offers a cogent critique of its purpose and fitness for purpose in contemporary society. Higher Education is evolving in relation to wider economic and social forces and he is aware he is witnessing quite radical changes in the eco-system of education, so in some senses he proceeds as an explorer catching glimpses of the collapse of a system, and the emergent strands of its replacement. This enquiring, intellectual man intends to continue his exploration even after retiring from his career in higher education.

P. 3.<u>Paul's narrative: An explorer in the educational eco-system</u>

P.3.1. <u>Introduction</u>

Paul had always been interested in language and literature, although he first embarked on a Law degree but soon switched to English. Initially he had plans to become a journalist, but realised it was difficult to join a major newspaper, as this would mean many years on local newspapers which he did not relish. Like many of his peers who were unsure about future career paths, he decided to do a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) with the view that it was a good insurance strategy to get a professional qualification. Paul began his career as a schoolteacher after completing an English degree, first choosing primary education after a fortnight's observation in a primary school. However, he did not think he could manage the mathematics education and felt he was a 'one subject' person so transferred to secondary education half way through the first term.

3.2. <u>Entrepeneur of the self</u>

Paul's strategies for managing self development, or being an entrepreneur of the self (Rose, 1989) can be seen clearly in his account of his early life as a school teacher. Paul was placed in an all boys grammar school in Wales, moving on after he qualified to innovative grammar schools in Manchester, and then Southampton, both schools for very able pupils. He had never lived outside of Wales when he went to Manchester, coming from a small village. He taught in these two schools for 10 years during the 1970s. He says this was a massive learning curve period for him, both because the pupils were very bright and demanded lots of work, and the departments he worked in exciting challenging places to be. In 1980 he married and felt it would be a good idea to return to Pembrokeshire to a nice rural environment and found a post in a rural co-educational school. Again

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this was a challenge as it was about 20 years behind the times, and he was teaching boys and girls. He moved from a high flying exciting department to a quiet, sleepy but pleasant environment. The parents and pupils had low expectations and narrow horizons. He knew he had a limited chance of turning the school department around given the pressures to stay the same but made some inroads. All the major subject changes going on in schools in the 1980s seemed to bypass this school e.g. English becoming a more dynamic diverse subject. He stayed for 8 years, as it was a good environment to live in and start a marriage.

3.3 Professional Development

However, during the latter part of the period, 1986-7, when he was still school-teaching he went on a full year HMI In-service Education for Teachers (INSET) secondment and got the chance to do a one year Masters degree in Educational Studies at Oxford. Whilst there, he did a huge amount of work in the relatively new area of linguistics. He also updated his knowledge of secondary curriculum design in related to the emerging National Curriculum. He found this a marvellous year and he felt changed as a person. The seminar approach and one-to-one tutors that Oxford uses was particularly valued. He felt that it made him critically reflective as a teaching professional. However, when he returned to his school he found nobody asked him what he had done, *'it was like I had a couple of weeks off for flu...OK Paul, books are in there, this is the timetable for the year!'(T.1.5)*. He had no-one to discuss the heady new ideas he had just been working on, no-one interested in implementing them, despite the local authority funding his secondment. At that point he decided to move away from that particular school because *'I have been here longer than I anticipated, I have done this course that has given me lots of additional ideas and not a lot can happen here with it (T.1.5)*. This was a key moment in Paul's professional life, a juncture and turning point. He decided to take any short-term opportunities that

arose, rather than a longer-term commitment that would be more difficult to move on from. He applied and was accepted to Redpath University, School of Education in 1988 for a temporary post on the Primary B.Ed, even though he was not a primary school teacher. He was employed to advise on the curriculum study element of the degree on the understanding that the course itself was running down and people currently teaching it were taking early retirement. His role was to cover this interim period. When asked why he chose higher education for this next stage in his professional life he said *'I had three choices after the Oxford experience...the next logical step would mean that I leave there to go to a larger school as Head of Department, because I was Head of Department in a small school; go into Senior Management as a Deputy Head or go into Advisory work or go into Higher Education....I knew I didn't want to spend thirty years in the classroom and always felt I would like to be in Teacher Training but at the time had no idea how I would get there'* (T.1.7). It seems then that Paul had a long-standing plan for his professional life that simmered away all through his school years. He had indeed been an entrepreneur of the self.

3.4. Key Mentors

Paul also mentioned key contacts or mentors at this point. *'Peter... was a big influence in English Teacher Training and ran it in Oxford -his brother Michael...ran the PGCE in Southampton and I used to see Michael quite a lot...I actually realised my ambition because of these two brothers'* (T.1.7). Thus when a temporary one year appointment in HE came up he applied. He had no reason to choose Redpath University, and had only visited the area once before. When asked if he was aware that Redpath University was a former Polytechnic or new university he said *'yes but I don't think that distinction was clear in my mind. It was a big teacher training department and because it was a one year post at least there was a chance to find out what the world of teacher training...I didn't really know whether a polytechnic*

was higher or lower status than a university or even the rank order on any sort of scale' (T.1.7). The type of institution seemed less significant, as long as it was higher education.

3.5. Academic identity

Paul's academic identity is based on his perception of himself as a teacher. Initially Paul did not consider himself as an academic, and this is fairly typical of those professional groups who enter higher education after a successful professional career elsewhere. His academic tribe was the school teaching profession and educational theorists. It is clear he did have an idea of what a higher education tutor should do after his experience of short courses with Michael...at Southampton. *'I had an idea of what was expected of a Higher Education tutor in Education and felt I could get myself into this and learn the role over a few years' (T.1.7).* He did also say that although his entry in higher education was partly planned, the actual university and whether it was in Initial Teacher Training or teaching on an English degree was flexible. It just happened that a post came up in Initial Teacher Education first.

The Department he joined had restructured and although he was appointed for Initial Teacher Education, he said he had *'to virtually identify what I wanted to teach and what I was interested in teaching and what was available...so from teaching a very prescribed and regular curriculum in school I was given the chance to teach anything that I felt I had expertise and some interest in....and I made a timetable for myself that seemed to be pretty standard practice at the time'* (T.1.9). This kind of flexibility, where the curriculum in HE to some extent was crafted around the expertise and interest of staff, was common at that time, but is no longer the case. Now academics are appointed to very clearly delineated posts due to the funding claim that has preceded their appointment. He was asked how he made the transition from school-teacher to higher education lecturer or

academic. Paul says that his transition to higher education appeared *'seamless'* and he attributed this to the fact that he was under less pressure than he might have been if he were younger, or if the contract had been permanent. He found this liberating, a time to try things out, see how they go. This is interesting in terms of academic identity development; having sufficient space and time to explore new approaches, new ideas, evaluate practices. Such space appears to be a scarce commodity currently in higher education

3.6. Research and scholarly activity

Paul was asked at what point the issue of undertaking research and scholarly activity in higher education was discussed and how he responded to it. He said *'I had completed two years in higher education and had recently completed the MA Education Studies in Oxford so had some research experience from undertaking my dissertation which was with the schools in Wales I worked in...I had also part completed an M.Ed at Exeter earlier...so I did have a sort of research background...but there was no pressure to undertake research or to publish in the first year or the second of being at Redpath University. It was encouraged as a 'good thing' but in the world of that professional based polytechnic type of environment it was seen as desirable and not essential.'* (T.11) In fact this was the reality of the polytechnic culture. Academic staff, particularly those who came to teach on professional training courses, were not pressured to undertake research and publication, and few had experience to prepare them for this role. However, on achieving new university status, and with the advent of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) this changed significantly. What changed most was the funding to departments who did not have research active academic staff who could be submitted for the RAE. Funding was reduced. Deem (2007:115) illustrates the importance of teaching and research cultures in education departments and shows how the career

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trajectories of academics 'their habitus and forms of symbolic capital they bring to academic life' are affected by RAE rules.

Paul was well aware that old universities did have an expectation that all staff would undertake research, even those in professional training departments. However, *'in our group ITT team there was not a lot of pressure to do research as we are not being entered for the RAE or anything and it isn't tied to any sort of financial or professional promotion directly, I mean applying for a Principal Lectureship...there seems to be no real pressure to make it something that takes up a portion of your time in any formal sense'. (T.1.12.)* In fact there is a great deal of pressure within Redpath University generally to undertake research and publication but the culture of the School of Education seems is not dynamic in promoting this requirement given the dearth of funding. The majority of staff are former school teachers and have no history of undertaking education research. Many new staff had said how they much they enjoyed the culture of the School of Education and the degree of professional autonomy they enjoyed after their school experiences.

Paul did feel that to change to this research culture would need a catalyst of some kind, and mentioned a former colleague in the department, R, who had been employed to generate research-based activities within the department and had achieved a certain amount of 'collective research' in the department in the two years he was there. So there is a passive rather than pro-active stance towards research characterises the culture of the School of Education.

3.6.1. Research and academic identity

Paul was aware that there were some disadvantages in taking this passive stance towards research, particularly for younger colleagues, who may want to move on to other universities where not having a research profile may hamper their chances. *'When I go to UCET*

meetings for example there are colleagues there who are very active in research so I think we need to be alert to the national pictures and some universities are pretty high on the agenda in that area' (T.1.13). Paul clearly saw his peers as important audiences for his own identity. Paul felt doing his own research had improved his practice and contributed something to the national debate *'I have certainly been able to disseminate my findings within both partnership groups within the ITT partnership and between colleagues so its raised some key issues of ITT work and I think it has contributed a little to the national debate on student voice in this case, the role of students, pupils in schools'* (T.1.12). Paul felt that other universities education departments fared much better in the research funding stakes, for example *'the Institute of Education in London will attract you know half a million pounds at a time from the DfES or whatever agency to attract huge scale two or three year research projects and they have got research teams to do it. I mean they have the resources and the capacity to do it.....* His own research has been run on a shoestring, in contrast. *'I ran this particular student voice project on some funding that of the Training Schools provided for us and that was it. So I think the gap between the big and the relatively big is ...a million or a million and half compared to my own five or six thousand pounds'.* (T.1. 13) Here is a stark illustration of the difference between high status pre-1992 university research funding and post 1992 universities. Despite this Paul has ploughed on and conducted his research over several years, and been asked to present papers at DfES venues as well as overseas. Paul was asked whether he had considered moving to another university. However, he felt that the lack of priority and support for research within the culture of his department had meant he had become stuck in the job because he had no fully funded research projects under his belt. He had also had to use other university libraries to further his studies. *'.in terms of age now I doubt any institution would consider me worth employing in my late fifties....I mean in terms of research profile you would have to have a very long*

track record of publications to get in....anybody working in an institution like this without the opportunities would be hampered'. (T.1.13). His determination to continue his research despite considerable obstacles, including his full teaching timetable, was impressive. However, Paul was clearly aware that the `comfortable' culture of his department had disadvantages.

3.7 Collegiality and service

Therefore he has been running seminars for younger colleagues (all former school teachers) to try and encourage them to undertake research and publication early on in their career to build up a track record and had modest success saying *'if younger colleagues had aspirations to move to other institutions for whatever reason they need to be alert to what the requirements are before they are eligible'* (T.1.14). Paul's willingness to act as a mentor for younger colleagues, and his extensive work with the local school community and membership of many working groups, calls to mind the idea of academic service and academic citizenship that Macfarlane, (2007:2-3) refers to, and which is rarely included in discussions of academic identity.

> Service is more than a set of functions or activities such as serving on a university committee, mentoring a colleague, reviewing a journal article or advising a local charity. It is about commitment to a set of values and beliefs...it is about commitment to service...and (this) is about being an academic citizen.

For Paul there are obligations and responsibilities to service inherent in his role, although as Macfarlane (2007:3) goes on to say 'the notion of academic citizenship has become impoverished in modern university life.' Macfarlane believes this has arisen because many aspects of an academic's role have been contracted out, e.g. pastoral

care, specialist learner support function, and reward based on an increasingly individualised and competitive culture.

3.8. Professional autonomy

We talked about professional autonomy within the academic profession. Paul explained that he did have a measure of autonomy in relation to the design and delivery of the curriculum, but less so now than when he was a schoolteacher prior to The 1988 Education Reform Act. Paul felt in general his whole career had been characterised by considerable professional autonomy. He had been able to develop the Initial Teacher Training programme in ways that fostered independent and critical thought, despite it being dominated by what he called a curriculum product outcome model.

3.9. Curriculum changes

Again the discussion with regard to Initial Teacher Training threw up another paradox. School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) is undertaken in schools but the award is not an academic one. *'There are also SCITT programmes where if you meet the 42 standards you can be awarded Qualified teacher status but not an academic award...in other words you can get a professional qualification but not an academic award so you separate the professional role and the academic connection. Traditionally PGCE try to keep these two aspects together...you could run the SCITT with FE colleges'* (T.1.16/17) Here Paul is illustrating another aspect of curriculum change in higher education. Levels 1 and 2 can, and often are, delivered in Further Education, particularly with the relatively recent Foundation Degrees (which are not actually degree level but go up to Level 2) and are competence based with standards defined externally as are SCITT schemes. This 'university work' is cheaper to deliver in further education or in the workplace. However, Paul feels that *' if you are claiming professional expertise which gives them the title of being a*

teacher, an accountant, a lawyer whatever you need something beyond competences I think and this is what the PGCE is trying to do and think the government is trying to up the ante on that by saying you can go for competences but you have got to demonstrate you can do it.' (T.1.17). Paul has had to adapt constantly to different demands on his skills and interests according to the current drives within the university and also for survival of the department, saying *'I have taught on many different, four of five courses and even got to choose some of these....it seems to me that is not typical in most institutions. But we have done it over the last fifteen years because we have moved from course to course and programme-to-programme and skilled ourselves up to do a bit of this and bit of that. I think that this has diluted our profile'.* (T.1. 21). This could be interpreted as revealing that Redpath University as a post 1992 university has on the one hand yearned to be a research focussed university and occasionally put pressure on department to achieve that aim, but at the same time not been in a position financially to do this.

3.10. Higher education purpose

The above points illustrate the ambiguity in the university purposes. Furthermore it poses questions about how responsive the university curriculum can be to market forces whilst still retaining what Paul calls a 'profile' or identity. The fact that Paul and his colleagues have had to change what they teach and teach different groups in order for the department to survive was a result of considerable marketing endeavours to make partnerships with new professional development groups. It has had considerable consequences for the academic staff in his department in terms of a consistent professional identity.

Paul says he does not know if Redpath University has made up its mind about what kind of university it wants to be. *'I mean it never seems to make it mind up because it's a loose federation of several different much older establishments. I mean the original Teacher*

Training College, the college of advanced technology, the Art College, etc. I don't think its ever put its money on the table and said this is what our model is going to be for teaching. There will be different interest groups, different sorts of juries behind them and I am thinking whether the university ....is always trying to look for then next best fit and moving forward (reactively)....you can be a very collective place where you can some people do this and some people do that sort of thing or you become a research driven institution like Manchester Metropolitan. (T.1.20). These comments echo those heard in the field notes commented upon earlier in this study that claimed Redpath University did not know what kind of university it wants to be and has many layers of culture and practice within it. Paul reveals what it is like to be working in an Education department within this kind of university that has inherited a whole range of colleges, histories and practice and continuing attempts to bring them together in a corporate whole.

Paul then continued to discuss what he saw as the unique features of higher education experience for students. He felt that *'in a general sense its about asking questions that data necessarily needs...I mean its about asking beyond, its like the cliché really about looking outside the box and actually asking about potential future issues, its about enquiry, about contesting and debating and it seem to me its about not accepting anything as normal without taking it, questioning it and seeing what other alternatives are. I would think that in any society whether you would call it higher education or whatever if it is going forward it is going to have to have that function undertaken by a group or groups if it is going to develop otherwise you would have a static culture, civilisation and static economy. So, whether it is done in HE, or focus group, government think tanks or whatever, unless you have got that querying, questioning, critical, predicting, hypothesising role going on you haven't really got much hope of moving forward.'* (T.1.17) This passionate plea for the important role of intellectual debate in society

links very directly to Cummings (ed) 2005 debates about the changing role of the intellectual in UK society. Paul clearly feels that universities should have an intellectual role, along with other groups, although some contributors to Cummings work suggest that universities role in this respect has always been somewhat weak. Panton (2005:140) argues for example that 'there is little historical evidence to suggest that the university has provided the kind of supportive environment in which intellectual life and the unbridled pursuit of knowledge might flourish; let alone the kind of environment which provides the cultural impetus to speak against the grain'.

Hearing Paul's story there is clearly evidence that there has not been a fully supportive environment for his research, but on the other hand he has been able to widely disseminate his critical findings from his research through various conferences, government focus groups and other venues. This illustrates either a paradox or a period of transition for universities where the research role of post 1992 universities is declining from a limited start and the academic role may either be changing or even being divided between old and new universities who may become 'teaching only' institutions.

3.10.1 Market forces

We then discussed further some of the curriculum design issues that pertain to changes in higher education. Paul was clear that *'if you want a customer led market where customers want a degree therefore in order to show they have met the certain success criteria that they are eligible for a degree then a tightly knit unit descriptor and learning outcomes are important in order that you can say 'this batch of fifty people did as well or better as the batch last year', so you have got a product of a quality assurance mechanism. If you want people to be... more individual and pick up issues or interests or the personal qualities of enquiry then you need some element of flexibility...a dissertation or action research project'* (T.1.18) Here Paul is suggesting that the

market pressures and some of the quality assurance approaches around standardisation have the capacity to crowd out individuality. He was discussing product and process models of the curriculum and he felt that a great deal of the higher education curriculum focussing on learning outcomes was about product rather than process. He also referred to the economic exchange value of higher education. *'If you want to put an economic value on the subject you are going to have some sort of way of saying if you have somebody doing a BA in whatever in one institution has achieved roughly the same as somebody in another. So it's about quality assurance in terms of product...this is partly achieved through this tightly controlled mechanism. I was reading a paper a few months back now written in the states which said that because higher education costs the individual so much now they really have to be guaranteed a degree because why would they pay £10,000 dollars for no guaranteed outcome! It is quite clear from that perspective why some of the critics of higher education say it is being diluted...if its not diluted it is certain uniform, making units standardised in order that everyone gets the same...* (T.1.18) Paul goes to the heart of the debate about change in mass higher education here; the increased pressures to expand whilst at the same time ensure a standard outcome. Paul thought that we would soon see the development of *'different tiers of university. Look at the international league tables, there are about a dozen universities worldwide that are doing major research projects which are not tied to the number of students on graduate programmes and which presumably will go on being leading edge in terms of research and enterprise and some sort of intellectual activity. You will have others, which are going to be in a mixture of research and teaching, and you have largely new universities that continue to offer the teaching and learning product outcome model.*

3:11   The good life

Interpreting what constitutes a good life, one where the participant can look back and see some form of coherence, where values appeared

consistent, or there is a narrative integrity to your life, is important in analysing auto/biographical stories. Paul saw what was happening in higher education as negative to a good life as an academic, so he had taken steps to ensure he was able to share intellectual ideas with like-minded peers. *'The outcome (of expansion) is the thousands of degrees that are produced...that's it...and that is why, coming back to the Institute of Education where I do much work, we are doing different things.* (T.1.18/19). He describes the scholarly work he undertakes in collaboration with the Institute of Education, where he spends a considerable amount of his time at weekends. He is clearly an intellectually driven academic who does see his role as one where research is an important element, even though he is based in a post 1992 university and in a department where research is not a prime focus. Nevertheless he has made sure that he has developed his skills in this respect and national and international representation. He has given papers on his PhD research to the University Council for the Education of Teachers in 2003 and in 2005, to the Common Ground Learning and Teaching Conference in Cuba in 2004, and to the University of Sussex Research Group in 2006.

Paul did not think his department could ever move towards being a research-orientated department, which he feels would be more appropriate for a good academic life.

Paul said he intends to retire in 2007-8 but was ambiguous about it. He said he will not give up his research interests and will continue to undertake this work wherever the opportunity arises. This indicates the importance of his research activities for his professional identity as an educationalist and as an academic. His view that his teaching role as an academic was to develop critical thinking skills was maintained, despite having to respond to a wide range of subject teaching roles during the course of his academic career. He did not

mention his wider social life or his personal relationships at all in the course of our discussions, although he is married.

STAN

T.2

1   Brief professional biography

Stan has worked in Redpath University for almost 20 years. He is 57.
He is an animated, amusing man prone to self deprecation, but full of
interest in a wide range of topics. He has held several different posts
in the university and is currently Acting Deputy Head of a new Art,
Culture and Media Studies department. He has a PhD in Visual Arts,
an M.Phil, PGCE, and a first class honours B.A. Education in Art
Education. His current research interests are around cultural
practices in the 1960's. Prior to becoming an academic, he was first a
full time professional musician, running a band that played all around
the UK, and making records put out by a well-known music publisher.
He ended his musical career after 3 years and became a gardener for
the City Council for a brief period. He then did a B.A. Ed and became
a secondary school teacher for 15 years teaching Art. Following that
he became a member of the National Curriculum Council for Schools
in London for 3 years before coming to Redpath University to take up
a post in the School of Education educating teachers. He currently
publishes books and articles in his main research field, but also
publishes books and articles on cricket.

2. Plot: Odysseus

The plot for Stan's professional and academic life is a storm tossed journey with safe havens along the way. He is constantly seeking meaning for his working life, through striving for excellence, achieving professional acknowledgement and using ethical practices within a creative paradigm. His life has been a restless journey where he has had a number of different roles, but not necessarily planned one of them, hence the erratic nature of his narrative of life; but he always seems to long to go back to where he started. He wants to be the hero, to excel, but has doubts. Two important mentors offered him guides about how to achieve both in art and intellectual enquiry. His life could also be seen as a quest for a professional situation in which he can feel at home and also enable others to learn and achieve, much as he himself has done. However, he also has a parallel life model, the ghost life or his 1960s one, where he can be done with all the professional endeavours. He harks back nostalgically to this 60s life characterised as it was by his early music band days, and claims he would revert to a version of it if the academic career collapsed or when he retires. Elements of this 60s self persist in his current approach to professional and academic life, which he calls being a maverick, and likened his personal style to that of 'Yosser Hughes' the TV series character from Boys from the Black Stuff, where the character could and would do any job as long as it was a job. Temporality and silences are also a key feature of his life in certain quite long periods, e.g. his

account of being a musician and teaching in a comprehensive school for 15 years occupies just a paragraph or two in his story despite its importance to him, whereas his discussion of life in the university is looked at back and forth, in a recurrent narrative, illustrating how narrative time rather than chronological time operates. Stan reflects clearly, reflects deeply on his life, and has a spiritual element to his self that he uses to guide his actions or at least helps to make sense of them. The theme that he has never felt he has made it, or quite been up to the job recurs throughout his story. His quest for excellence continues in his latest post as Acting Head of a School in higher education.

3. Stan's narrative

Stan made it clear at the start of our discussion that he had not been academically orientated in his youth. He got a scholarship to a grammar school under the old Grant Maintained School system. The school he attended was a very good fee paying school. He left aged 17 with "six dodgy O levels" (T.1.) and didn't know what to do next but was interested in Art so went to a Further Education College to do O level Art. He failed to work hard and joined a band for fun. He also met an Art tutor at this College (D) who he later claimed to be one of the most important people in his professional life. Six months after starting the band they had a recording contract and this led to Stan spending 3 years as a travelling musician. However, and this is a recurrent theme in the life story, he felt 'towards the end of it we had no money and weren't getting anywhere and it wasn't going to happen" so he abandoned it. Boredom set in, but more importantly the sense that he was never going to make it big time in the musical profession. He speaks of these twin issues throughout his story; the desire to do something really excellent but at the same time a restless sense of wanting to move on and these are reflected in the progress of his professional academic life. He did seem to have a sense of needing direction but had no clear view of the path he wanted to take at that time.

As Stan had no money and needed work urgently he took a job working in the Parks Department of the city, as a gardener. There were no career prospects and his dad told him *'you are daft really, you were always good at art, and you could have gone and re-pursued my ambition to be a fine artist'* (T.2). However, Stan judged that it would take five years to do a degree and then a teaching qualification in Art and felt he was too old at that point to give up that many years to it. Planning for the future was not a feature of Stan's life story and this of course may have been a cultural factor. Future time perspective is not

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always a working class value and he said he mixed with working class peers more easily than the middle class ones in his school. "*my life outside the grammar school revolved around very few school friends, I lived a different life in Seamouth... around the popular music scenes really, round the mod scene which turned into the hippy scene, I'd go out three or four nights a week watching bands, dressing up, I did all of that stuff I absolutely immersed myself in it*".(T.3).   What is evident from these comments is his commitment to new experiences where initially he has masses of enthusiasm at the start, almost playing a part. He said, in response to a question about how he conceived of the word 'professional' "*I have always called myself....(Yosser Hughes)...you remember boys from the Black Stuff...Yosser Hughes walking around with his kids? I have always thought of myself as that person. Now of course that is a little self-deprecating because I am clearly more capable than that...*" (T.62) The Yosser Hughes character was in a 1980s television series that illustrated the awful waste of human potential caused through high unemployment, and the character walked up to employed people and said ' I can do that. Gis' a job'. The phrase entered the general language. However, note the later comment that of course Stan can really do the job.

3.1 Professional training
After the gardening job he decided he would do a 3 year Teaching Certificate at a teacher training college. His reasoning was based on a sense of what else could he do at that stage "*really it was that (serendipity) and it was also... I just got to that point in my life when I thought I need a career and I don't know what, I mean what can you do as a failed pop star who campaigned? The only thing you can do is teach....But that is what I thought – seriously, I'm not going to make the grade as a....(sentence left unfinished)*" (T.3.2)

Again this theme continues, that of not having made the grade (or become excellent as he saw it) at one thing leading on to trying

Again this theme continues, that of not having made the grade (or become excellent as he saw it) at one thing leading on to trying something else in a kind of recurrent search for meaningful activity. He states this very clearly: *"there are two careers which I think would have suited me just as well, one would have been as a graphic designer but I thought there was something rather better about painting, and I wasn't a good enough painter to make it as a painter..."* (T.3.2.)

3.2 Strategies and self-management

Stan said most of the decisions and positions he had held in his career were by default *"it was all a bit by default really, and I remember my first long teaching practice as a student was a bloody disaster...they (the School he was placed in) thought I was bone idle and I didn't know what I was doing. I was really frightened out of my wits by it, I didn't know what on earth was going on and I was 22 and these twenty five 16 year olds....It wasn't discipline so much as it was just a, kind of, what am I going to do with these young people, I've got no idea what to do with them for the next hour"* (T.3.4.) Stan was frequently brutally honest with the interviewer about his own shortcomings but often tempered the self-deprecation with later statements that indicated that he had overcome the problem or that it was temporary. He did in fact go on to be a well respected Art teacher.

3.3. Professional life as a school teacher

This above latter extract illustrates a major theme in Stan's professional life story; that of the importance of motivating, communicating, empowering students, which may well have stemmed from this early, somewhat frightening experience. He went on to achieve a first class honours degree in Art Education, having been advised by his tutor that he should aim for more than a Teaching Certificate and gained a post in a comprehensive school upon completion.

However, successful teaching experience did not remove his sense of not quite making the grade, his feeling of not being excellent. He said *"I taught in comprehensive schools for 15 years and was quite successful and ended up head of expressive arts at St. Larks. I don't think there was ever a moment in that time where I thought this is the life, you know using the word life deliberately, this is the life for me. I don't think I ever thought that because there was always....I was always anxious about whether the thing was working...yet often it was"* (T.3.4).

He does admit that he had a very rapid rise to Head of Department in a school and said *"to be honest with you the first ten years of my teaching life I was on a quite powerful academic trajectory. I did pretty well. Especially for somebody, you know..."* (T.3.4) and here he fails to complete the sentence, as if it is perfectly clear that I have before me someone who was not and could not have been excellent. This humility of his reverts in parts to self-deprecation and again it is a theme that is prevalent in the life story. The theme is that he has never quite been up to the job, that he has never made it.

It is a story whose plot reveals someone seeking to find meaning, or a home, in his professional life and that meaning must include feeling he has excelled, and that others think he has excelled also. The idea of the looking glass self is apparent here.

3.4. Dislike for rules

However, Stan's view of himself is accompanied by a hatred of rule bound behaviour. In fact he said *"I didn't feel at home in schools, I used to be terribly uncomfortable about the.(he was referring to rules) I mean I was a typical art teacher, pop singer etc of the 60's, I felt very uncomfortable with all the discipline rubbish, I felt very uncomfortable with the all the school uniform rubbish, you know the prayers at 9*

o'clock. (T.3.5). Here there is an indication that his 1960s youthful self, or identity, the one who was a hippy musician which did not sit easily with the responsible teacher who had to enforce rules. Again this paradoxical theme returns again but is described later as being 'a maverick'.

He claimed this reluctance to blindly accept rules was because he was a *"bit of a maverick"* (T.3.5.) and acknowledged that people got fed up with him because of it. He says being a maverick meant questioning established practices, whether they needed to be done or not, which was based on his part in *"conviction, that's based on some kind of moral judgements about should we do this...on other occasions I can just be a bloody nuisance. There's no doubt."* (T.3.6). This was the first point he mentioned clearly quite strong ethical values about how to conduct oneself as a professional; being aware of the moral implications of what was happening and not sticking to the rules just because they were there. This element of his character becomes stronger as his story unfolds.

3.5 Use of time

He was asked whether he questioned established practice out of boredom and he responded passionately to make it quite clear that he valued his time and hated wasting it on routine tasks *"I do get bored, I've been bored out of my mind this week, but basically I've been bored out of my mind writing strategy documents and preparing for the annual departmental reviews and so on, checking academic regulations, just drives me nuts"* (T.3.6.). Here there are clear indications of how time as an academic is eaten up with quality review processes, which Stan clearly resents and sees as bureaucracy. *"I tell you what the great danger with me about all of that...is that I will overstate my objections to something like bureaucracy whereas if you really, really, push me I would actually be prepared to say I think this is necessary, I think we should be doing this you know. And actually I*

don't mind tidiness...I like to think that I could go to somebody and instantly get, instantly check on all the units that are being delivered on a course or find out how students are doing, so I don't like it if I can't do that'. (T.3.6.) Clearly Stan is perfectly aware that large organisations need to be organised.

This is the beginning of an aspect of Stan's professional values are paradoxical. He makes a great deal of his maverick nature, and his admiration of the 1960's generation of values that eschewed too much order, but he is also keen that organisations should run effectively and that he is recognised for his contribution. Stan complained about the way time was colonised by other demands *"I've no doubts that my time is constantly colonised and very difficult to manage. I've taken myself on time management courses, I've been to counselling about it, I've got a mentor at the moment because I'm actually on a thing called a Future Leadership Programme, which is kind of odd at my age really but it's interesting so I have a senior member of staff mentoring me...but even so I find it absolutely impossible to create a space in time, and when you invited me to do this I was really keen because though I can really in a sense afford the time, but actually the luxury of somebody saying just talk about and reflect on our experiences was really.... (I hope its useful for you) but was very attractive to me, just to think I wonder if I'm going to come away with a different sense of what I am doing, and will that help me?* (T.3. 8) Stan was very enthusiastic about taking part in this study and in one sense it reflects his curiosity, his enthusiasm for some different, something new as well as a desire to have space, time to reflect. He is also always searching for meaning.

3.7 Self-identity: the ghost in the narrative
It seemed as if his life as a professional and as an academic almost conflicted with a (not well hidden) self-image or identity as a 1960s laid back person. Almost as if the narrative of Stan's life had to be

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reviewed, quite frequently, to make sure he remained on the professional academic path, while longing at times to be that free person. Bruner (1986.17) describes this as the "vicissitudes of intention". The story or narrative by which we live, the interpretations we place on life, provide a clear context for our experience as an explanatory plot but sometimes this narrative integrity is difficult to sustain. Somehow, Stan has kept telling himself that the professional career as school teacher and then as an academic was the way to make sense of life, was his explanatory plot, but in the background was another, lost plot held in abeyance. Later in the interviews he reverts to that 1960s self, which always seems to be a ghost in his narrative by saying, in response to a question about what he was going to do after he gave up an academic career, "*Unless something dramatically changes my in my life I always planned to go at sixty...because I can go with a full pension...my ambition is to live in a cottage in Glastonbury and grow potatoes, with an old car and my record collection and that's it. I don't want a lot of money, so materially, people say you have to adjust (after retirement) and I think I can't spend all the money I have got now....I am quite happy to retire and be an old hippy*"(T.3.69)

Here there is an illustration of the past in the future. As if the 'in between', the flow of time, the time of his life as Ricoeur (1980) says we need to consider rather than chronological time in narratives, Stan has collapsed into an 'intervening period' before he can get on with being his authentic self. It is almost as if his preferred identity has been kept in abeyance, not exactly on hold, but in the wings throughout his professional life.

Yet, in the same sentence there is this clear paradox "*(but) two things have changed that. This new Faculty and the potential for Creative and Cultural industry to practice within Redpath University in the city, if we can get beyond the bureaucracy and begin to realise some of the visions*

for all that, which are actually visions to some extent that have informed my entire life, even before work as a school teacher...there were things I was passionate about in the Arts in Seamouth. That could change me...I might well stay on" (T.3.69/70.) Here is trying to merge the two kinds of identity; one that is a free, passionate about arts, liberal, creative and one who is a manager of a new department embracing those features and looking forward to the challenge.

3.8   Professional autonomy

Stan wanted to discuss the changing way in which the curriculum for Art was both taught in schools and Higher Education as an example of professional autonomy. He talked of a way of teaching that he learned whilst doing his teacher training as *"what I did was one simply one of the most wonderful courses you could every imagine in your life, it was absolutely astonishing...in terms of what it offered me intellectually, creatively...it made me believe that if I acted with integrity and commitment that I could simply be in charge of my own pedagogical practices with my students and make the right decisions and proceed from there. And I have always kind of believed that to be the case".*(T.3. 7) However, he said that the James Report that came out in the early 1970s, altered teacher training. Now, most secondary art teachers come through the Post Graduate Certificate in Education route, having undertaken and Art degree or similar first. Stan felt this was inferior as a preparation for teaching *"what I see is they only spend one year preparing to teach, whereas I spent four, the other thing of course that what they do is very more prescribed, not just in terms of the national curriculum but also the curriculum for teacher training".* (T.3.7) Stan now feels that even in higher education the curriculum is prescribed to certain extent. *"other people tell you what do "*(T.3.7) Stan is in no doubt that he has less professional autonomy now than he had when he was 29.

3.9   Professional development

Stan's sense of progression, or feeling of treading water or standing still in his career was also a prominent theme in his narrative. He talked about the recent new scales developed by Higher Education Role Analysis project that sought to put everyone on one longer scale. Prior to this, Stan said, everyone got to the top of their own particular scale and then they were stuck. *"I'm 57 this year and at the start of this academic year I had only recently arrived (in new department called School of Creative Arts, Film and Media. SCAFM) and I was thinking I've got 5 years probably and then I'll retire, so I've got five years which I am going to enjoy and do some stuff, but I'll stay as a PL and deputy head.* (T.3.9)   However, due to the rapid resignation of the new Head of this department, Stan found himself invited to be Acting Head, as he was the only PL in the department, all other staff being relatively new to Higher Education. Again, *'promotion by default,'* as he kept reminding me. Since his auto/biographical last interview Stan has maintained his ironic take (Rorty, 1989) on higher education and his own role in it. He has just been awarded a Teaching Fellowship (2008) and on congratulating him he shrugged this off as being able to put a good case to the awarding body. He always seems to generate a distance between his own talents and university life.

The reason he had gone on the Future Leadership programme was not because he thought he would become Head of his department but because he had his eye on the Faculty Associate Dean post as a progressive step, moving out of a department and into Faculty management. Now, as in so many instances in his career, an opportunity to become Acting Head arose and he took it. He was questioned about the serendipitous nature of his career progression and responded *"never planned anything actually* (T.3.11) and when asked whether resigning from his school teaching post after 15 years caused any repercussions in his life he said *"I was in a new relationship with my still present wife, my second marriage and we*

weren't at that stage living together. I wasn't in a position to do that at all really; I had a mortgage and didn't know what to do. From November to Easter I applied for something like 50 jobs and didn't get an interview for one of them!" (T.3.11). When asked if this indicated he was a risk taker, he said he was once but *"had become more cowardly"* (T.3.11). Stan said he resigned because he *"wanted a better life"* (T.11) and had explored jobs in a wide range of settings like art galleries, or research for the arts council, mostly offering less pay than he had been getting. Again, chance played a part in the next stage of his professional life. *"then this extraordinary thing happened at Easter, where I got this job in what became the National Curriculum Council, and which had been the Schools Council. It was in its very short phase of School Curriculum Development Committee, a very short period that nobody ever remembers, it was absolutely lovely. I remember going to the interview and saying I want to come here because I want to keep my research going (he had just finished his M.Phil). (T.3.12)* The enthusiasm for something new, the willingness to embrace the job with energy and interest, shines through each time he embarks upon a new venture. It is like hope springing up each time, that this post will provide the meaning I am seeking.

Paradoxically, as he had claimed never to plan anything, Stan said at this juncture he had a *'long standing ambition since undergraduate days, and his wonderful experience on the B. Ed Art, was to teach and research in higher education.'* (T.3.12) Here Stan demonstrates he has had a long term aspiration, an image of another self, a future self, a scholarly self. He was questioned about this future planning, asked if this was a long term vision he had always held? *"There is a vision but not specific plans and its often luck! What I did then was a PhD and I struggled like mad, I couldn't cope with it. They gave me a social scientist (at Redpath University) to supervise me who didn't know anything about pedagogy as we would understand it. And he kept saying to me if you are going to do something about art and design*

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education you have got to read Kant. I couldn't bloody understand
Kant, I didn't know, I don't mean I couldn't ...well I could kind of
understand Kant but I could not understand why (the relevance)
(T.3.12).

3. 10. Key mentor or persons in professional and academic life.

Important persons emerge in Stan's life that he says enabled him to
rethink his capability. They are like guides on his stormy journey to
self-identity. He talks about them reverently. Firstly, a Lecturer in the
School of Education talks to him and guides him towards undertaking
a study that reflects on his 15 years of teaching. This shocked Stan
"Now this will seem odd to you but I had no concept that doctoral work
could be reflexive about your own practice. Literally no concept of that,
you know...never occurred to me." (T.3.13). However, the lecturer Y.
assured him that doctoral work could indeed focus on reflexive
practice and helped him into it. Stan accompanied Y. to observe his
B.Ed classes and said *"he had this wonderful thing where you just ask*
people two things, you say how do you feel about....and when they
start talking occasionally you ask them to clarify something but saying
what do you mean by it? (T.3.13) The students set their own agenda,
made meaning for themselves, and Stan saw this an eye opener for
pedagogic practice and linked it to his own teaching. *"I thought this is*
astonishing, and it suddenly fitted in with all the stuff that I had talked
about 10 years before which hadn't fitted before. You know,
phenomenology, existentialism and then I began to learn about what
people call qualitative research and I now prefer to call interpretive
research and so on and it just excited me to death" (T.3.14) The major
key person, who Stan claims to have enabled him *"to just take myself*
seriously you know as a person who could think...a man who turned
my life completely around (T.13.) was the Head of the School of
Education where he was newly employed. The way in which the Head
changed Stan was because *"he believed I could, absolutely*

believed in me, he still does and he just changed my sense of self enormously...(T.3.13)

Earlier in his career, when he was in a further education college doing O level art, he refers to a third key person, D, with whom he had a lifetime artistic intellectual relationship prior to D's death .
"Interestingly D. (Art Tutor at college) was another one really, in a completely different way of course because D. would not articulate it, but would kind of grunt and nudge, but he would support you (T.314).

Thinking about the significance of these key mentors in Stan's life, what is striking is his absolute conviction that these others were so instrumental in enabling him to understand, know, and make sense of things. He does not attribute it to his own ability but to a vicarious process, through the eyes of these key others. In fact this constant hesitancy about his capacities in a professional role, his capacities as an intellectual being persist. He asks *"Am I legitimate, there's always been a bit of me doubted that, even when people tell you - you can."* (T.14). Stan said he had never been interested that much in psychology and said he got into trouble a lot at school and was told he was a waste of time, which he said was true! Stan pointed out that that *"when your peers are captain of the first eleven and going to Oxford to get a double first, there's always a sense of you're not that clever."* (T.15) However, for Stan it is more than that, it is a constant reiteration of his self view that if you are not first class, excellent then you have failed.

3.11. The culture and values of school education

Given the uncertainties about his authenticity or legitimacy as an academic, the discussion moved to what kind of education professional Stan saw himself as, given that his educational experiences when young had not been that successful in his terms.

He said he had always tried to be 'unassuming' with people *"I've always been very keen as I've moved up the ladder to be as unassuming as possible with people theoretically underneath me because I always had that sense of my own life, of there being people up there who knew better than me and would tell me......but I never really thought they did!! (T.3.15)* Stan went on to say that he used to listen to schoolteachers telling him things and thought *"they were talking crap and they weren't very bright and I now think I was right. It was an intuitive thing. I couldn't articulate it, it wasn't intellectual."* (T.3.15). Here is a view of schoolteachers as non- intellectual beings, which in fairness was probably the case. The nature of Teacher Training at that time, the level of knowledge in the curriculum that some schools followed, the general cultural factors of the UK that were, and possibly still are, anti-intellectual, favouring the `amateur' was certainly present in some schools. It is almost as if he left school teaching to find out if he could become an academic.

Stan welcomed the opportunity to discuss his professional experiences, and said from the outset that he was looking forward to reflecting on his life. He thanked me for affording him this space in a busy life.

Harold T.3

H.1. Brief professional biography

Harold is 59. He has worked at Redpath University for the whole of his career. After graduating from Robert Rudford College of Technology in Northumberland in 1968 he was appointed as a temporary Research Assistant in 1969 at Redpath University, School of Social Studies, working with a Sociologist. Following his appointment as a lecturer in 1970 he has held many different posts in the university. He was a Senior Lecturer in Sociology from 1970 to 1990. He taught in a range of topic areas including political sociology. He has a strong interest in the theatre and has acted and directed in plays at a local Bench Theatre. He does not regard himself as an academic but as a professional. He is a risk taker and has noticed and made the most of the `holes' (Sennett, 2006:84) identified in 'loose organisations'. These are the 'sites of opportunity, not clearly defined slots for promotion in a traditional bureaucratic pyramid.' Harold has noticed these in Redpath University organisation and on many occasions he has taken risks and used them to develop practices. He has been offered many other posts in other universities but has remained in the one university, for family reasons.

In the early 1980's he began to take an interest in teaching and learning after feeling disillusioned by the approaches that were common at the time in Redpath University and elsewhere and attended a number of workshops run by the Institute of Education at the University of London. He developed his teaching approach which was and is innovative and has been acknowledged by the university and his peers, nationally and internationally. He was awarded a National Teaching Fellowship in 2003.

Harold also developed the university curriculum by setting up work based learning degrees at foundation, bachelor and masters degree level with colleagues. This was called the Work Based Learning Programme. This programme enables people to put together their own degree programme designing their own learning contracts based on their work interests, subject to availability and feasibility. This necessitated major alterations to the assessment and registration requirements in Redpath University but is now an accepted route of study. He developed this programme following a brief period in staff development in the Education Development Unit and then became Director of the Work Based Learning Programme for 15 years.

Harold is now Director of Foundation Direct at Redpath University. He has been Visiting Fellow at universities in Australia, in 2004 and 2006. He has become known internationally through conferences in Australia, Thailand, South Africa and the United States of America.

H.2. <u>Plot: The Thespian</u>

The plot for Harold's life is clearly a dramaturgical one. From the beginning of his career in Redpath University he has conceptualised the organisation as a theatre. Indeed he claims his life has been written up already in a book entitled Playhouse, which he feels is an apt title. From the outset he has seized many chances to take risks, challenging taken for granted reality by holding it up to the light; in sociological terms *making the familiar strange*. Once he has established a clear philosophy of how change might look in real terms, he becomes an evangelist, spreading the word to all those who are interested, and some who are not.

The phrase 'there is no education like adversity' (Disraeli) seems to have underpinned many of his strategies for professional development. Challenging other professional standpoints, whether they be about knowledge creation, teaching and learning or the curriculum, has formed the core of his endeavours. He has relished creating problematic scenarios and then offering solutions to perceived dilemmas.

Harold has found meaning in his academic life by developing competences that he develops through setting his own challenges; to see if he can. He has also illustrated how he needs to contribute to debates; he is not a person who will sit on the sideline. His accomplishments have gained him national and international respect and this is important to him. Power is how he construes professional autonomy.

He has done all this through a framework of drama and theatrical interactions with others, sometimes as fellow player and sometimes as director. Scenes at work are conceptualised as theatrical, with players, acts, protagonists and antagonists identified, which is almost

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Machiavellian in political insight. He then introduces plot lines and tries them out.

There is also a spiritual growth element in his life story. This is in part related to his professional approach whereby he philosophises and critically reflects on all aspects of his subject teaching to ensure he knows where he is. So, for example, if teaching gender he explores his own masculinity. Being part of higher education, and analysing his own role in it is also a strong theme of his professional life as is his diagnosis of the 'dangers' higher education faces. He has a very strong democratic approach to student learning and access to higher education and will always challenge those who seek to keep it an exclusive domain. Nevertheless he is certain that higher education in its current form will not survive and thinks it will eventually move to the workplace. He does not see knowledge creation as exclusive to higher education and he could see trends that would shift it more towards the workplace.

In addition he has very strong family ties, and sees this element of his life as very important. He takes family responsibilities very seriously but again is able to critically reflect on his role here and is able to come up with innovative solutions to difficult family situations.

There is also an uncertainty-v-inevitability theme in his account of his professional life. He was aware at the outset of his weaknesses in research capability, and knew this caused some to doubt his capacities but also he knew with inevitable certainty that he was going to play a powerful, contributing and dynamic role as a lecturer and subsequently as leader of a range of developments. He does have self doubt but, as a sort of cure, plunges into quite risky projects to see how they go and inevitably they have flourished. This provides motivation to do it again.

Harold's academic identity has grown inexorably over time into one that has considerable autonomy and confidence. He has arrived at a point in his professional life where it is appropriate to reflect on 'what next' after retirement and continues to look for opportunities.

In summary the plot for Harold's professional life is one that illustrates a person who can seize the day and make something creative out of sometimes unpromising material. He has done this with very clear democratic values. He overcomes obstacles, undermines resistance, all the while clearly relishing manipulating scenarios to help achieve a goal. He is someone who is always searching for new challenges and never seems to have had a fallow period in his professional life. He says his approach to retirement will have similar characteristics.

H.3. <u>Harold's narrative</u>

There are a number of very strong themes that have emerged within Harold's professional auto/biography and these have been used to make meaning out of and structure his story.

H.3.1 <u>Early life as an academic</u>

Harold began his academic career in 1969 at Redpath University and has been there since he graduated with a Sociology degree from Robert Rudford College of Technology in 1968. His first post was as a temporary research assistant and then in 1970 he was offered a position as permanent Senior Lecturer in Sociology when the College of Advanced Technology became a Polytechnic.

He says his career path was not a planned progression. *'The reason I am here is nothing whatsoever to do with education.... when I was a student I looked at the back of New Society (Journal) and hadn't a clue what I was going to do on graduation. I saw this research job at Redpath University and applied for it.' (T.3.1)* Harold mentioned they did not do dissertations in his undergraduate degree, so he had no experience of research, but the job was for a research assistant. He said he only went for the interview as he liked the area by the sea and thought he might combine a trip there with the interview. At that time there were funds for employing more lecturers. The job he applied for was offered to someone else. That person declined so Harold got the job by default.

Despite being informed by older staff that his first student groups were unlikely to achieve at best a 2:2, with most of them getting thirds, Harold managed to increase the overall grades considerably in his first years of teaching. *'In my first group of courses I took the political sociology class and all the students got a first or a 2:1 for their work....it seemed quite obvious what you had to do. You tell the students what the criteria are and make sure they've got good practice*

at handling it and get them excited and then get them to go off and do the work'. (T.3.4)

For Harold teaching is a very personal endeavour. There is no sense of the detached objective professional social scientist here. He engages with passion in the topics in a reflective way that cause him to ask himself questions about his own identity. He said *'you cannot teach gender without saying 'oh, what is my masculinity' and I can't teach politics without saying, 'well, what a nark socialist am I?'* (T.3.8) He has explored his own theoretical and philosophical position in all the areas or topics he has taught in sociology and in areas of curriculum development.

Harold's early successes at teaching were clearly the starting point for his subsequent interests in teaching and learning processes.

H.3. 2. Dramatic exposition; the world of work as a stage play

Harold has always had a strong interest in drama and the theatre and in some ways this is reflected in his approaches to academic work and situations he is in. He is a dramatic kind of person, he likes to challenge taken for granted reality, to try new things. He looks for opportunities and challenges wherever he can. It could be said that he finds 'holes' (Sennet, 1998) in the university organisation which warrant further investigation and development and this has been an ongoing strategy in his career

It seems Harold's academic career fits very neatly with the phrase 'the entire world's a stage and the men and women merely players'. He not only likes to play parts but also to direct the players too, as well as using dramatic scenarios to wake up participants to a different way of seeing things. His approach is at times confrontational.

H. 3.3. <u>Challenging the taken for granted approaches to teaching in</u>
<u>higher education</u>

We went on and talked about this approach to the academic role and
academic life and it was suggested he had a kind of *myth busting*
strategy to working in higher education. He agreed and said *'there are*
some myths about teaching and I realised if you like from an
educationalist point of view that there were some issues I had to learn
about. What was pedagogy? Discovering what the word meant for first
time, things like that, but then there was also stuff about
communication and the theatre which was a wonderful way of
exploring that.' (T.3.7.)

Harold said his approach to teaching was very much informed by this
theatrical stance, and said he *'stepped outside academic sources to*
find answers...for example, rather than necessarily read the political
science book on the nature of fascism etc. I found the dramatical
approach a very useful way of doing it.' (T.3.7)

He also used music to promote classroom discussion about
masculinity e.g. Joe Jackson's song about *'what's a man now, what's*
it all mean, is it rugged, cultured and clean.' (T.3.7) For Harold, this
was an important way to keep topics live for students, linking them to
contemporary culture. He also said *'I think there are sources of*
knowledge that are outside of the academic arena, there to be
evaluated and potentially equally valuable.'(T. 3.7). This outside/in
aspect of Harold's approach to teaching means he could not be
conceptualised as a retreatist in any way. He has moved with the
times, he has adapted and changed his teaching and learning
approach as higher education has expanded and changed its purpose.
In teaching he starts by posing the *uncertain questions* and ends with
the *inevitability* of change and creates imaginary scenarios or
simulations to illustrate these points. These themes, of uncertainty

and inevitability are also used in a wider sense in his academic activities.

Illustrations of his dramatical style come from his accounts of conference papers and workshops he has given. He was also involved with Pegasus Projects, which were part of Enterprise in Higher Education initiatives at this time. He then got involved in and became a key leading light in the Standing Conference on Education Development, which later became the Institute of Learning and Teaching (ILT). Like many innovators, recognition often comes from outside the higher education organisation, rather than within. It seems difficult to be a prophet in ones own land. One significant conference was recalled whereby a role-play was enacted with three different (simulated) universities where Vice Chancellors were asked to develop their mission statements. They were respectively called Ivory Tower, PolyUniversity and Tesco's University. *'we recruited some drama students from Exeter University to play the students and they would decide where to go to based on the mission statements'* (T. 3.11). All this anticipated future developments in the higher education sector.

H.3.4. Seizing the moment

It is clear from examples Harold provided, that he enjoys seizing the moment, dramatically, and did indeed refer to this theatrical stance as a benefit. *'I had always been interested in the theatre and saw the theatre as a real interest way of beginning to explore some…. areas because I got involved in doing plays about masculinity at time when I was about to start teaching about masculinity. I got involved in stuff on race and fascism and so on, so I would deliberately choose to get parts in plays or try to get part in plays or direct plays that explored some of those issues.'* (T.3.7)

Harold gave further examples of his dramatic challenging approach recalling a talk he gave to a Church Group in the city when he was based in the Academic Development Centre as Staff and Curriculum Developer. He was talking to them about a newly developing M.A in Church Studies at Redpath University. *'I recall I faced a church group where there was a wonderful stained glass window at the back and all of the audience were dressed up in their robes and I gave them a lesson on women in politics because they obviously understood women as a critical question.....at the end of it I got their blessing and it was like being on stage and I think I kind of floated off'*. (T.3. 16)

This example reveals a man who enjoys being the centre of attention, enjoys playing to an audience, and enjoys putting forward provocative arguments. Harold felt one of the difficulties at this time was that lecturers did not have facilitation skills and did not know how to run an interactive tutorial group. *'I think a lot of people found them a bit scary....or alien. So the notion of it felt a bit too 'oh my goodness we are not counsellors or therapists' we should not be doing this stuff.* T.3.9). Yet Harold, who had also run Access to Higher Education courses, had experienced the value of communicating with students in a group, enabling them to write notes, develop writing skills and also being aware of a students' personal background and issues that may inhibit learning. He wanted to share this knowledge with his colleagues, help them use it to facilitate more effective learning, but they were mostly adamant students had to know the subject first, lecturers had to focus on keeping up to date with their subject and engaging in this 'extra' activity was a diversion to this endeavour.

It is clear from these examples that Harold constructed and reconstructed his identity, almost chameleon like, in whatever circumstances he encountered and has very clear convictions about the academic role he wants to play. Pierre Bourdieu's (1993) view that social structures determine the conditions of social action and

habitus, referring to the internalisation of those structures, is evident here. The dynamic of the game that Harold plays with regard to his role within Redpath University could be understood in Bourdieu's (1993:18) terms

> Investment is the disposition to act that is generated in the relationship between the space defined by a game offering certain prizes or stakes (what I call the field) and a system of dispositions attuned to that game (what I call a habitus) – the feel for the game and the stakes, which implies both the inclination and the capacity to play that game, to take an interest in the game, to be taken up, taken in by the game.

H.3.5. Purposes of higher education

Harold saw the purpose of higher education in contemporary society as a moral one. '*I think it is about moral issues in the sense of knowing yourself and knowing what you do on the basis of your position of deep understanding and reflecting on it. ...Getting students to do that so that they can grow through knowing themselves, growing and understanding the relationship between the subject, the self and what is practiced*'. (T.3.8) Harold's views here clearly show he thinks the importance of higher education is in developing moral and philosophical selves, but he also acknowledged that it was also about the economy and work. '*Yes, an awful lot of it is to do with work, the economy, but it is also to do with life, and what to do there...*' (T.3.8)

Harold predicted the advent of 'corporate universities', by which he means universities run by companies. He thinks this is a developing trend because higher education will lose the education market. '*I think universities are at the moment being seen as a way of maturing the rich economy, (and they are pretty good finishing schools) but if it continues and 50% of the population do go to university and incur major debts, then those with no family tradition of people going into higher education may back off. The long term solution to this is to create a learning society and the strategy is....to have learning companies...in which universities are an outsourced learning supply.* (T.3.30) He felt we might also go down the road of 'academic capitalism' and sell uniquely

British ideas on the global market in relation to our research in addition to outsourcing learning companies.

These two purposes of higher education are in some ways paradoxical as it is difficult to envisage companies claiming their university degrees were about *growing through knowing yourself.*

H.3.6. Research

Harold thinks effective learning and teaching strategies are absent in Redpath University and said *'I wonder how many people here have a sense of those sorts of things – the fact that all universities in most part don't have meaningful research into pedagogy is quite stunning. I mean here we are talking about researching and wanting to be researchers....* (T.3. 25)

Harold said he thought if such research *were* undertaken it would open a Pandora's Box in Higher education. It would highlight the mythical nature of what is claimed for higher education. Here Harold was acknowledging that higher education was a place where you could learn to think, but that it had created an aura or myth that it was about high levels of research, when in fact he felt that more research went on outside of higher education.

H.3.6.1. Knowledge creation and higher education

Harold felt that *'an awful lot of what we do has elements of further education (in the professional and technical training field)...I believe what I learn now is going to be rapidly out of date in certain subject areas so what we should really do is teach students to be Lifelong Learners. I would have no problem with that.'* (T.3.27). When pressed to see if that is how he saw the future of higher education, as facilitating lifelong learning he would not go that far. *'I would not have a problem with that but I don't think that is where it will go. There are*

*a lot of people who have a kind of academic protectionist or professional
protectionist role around their subject area, which says to be whatever
you want to be you must first know all of the things they specify'*
(T.3.27) Harold was touching here upon elements of academic
professional identity where the subject itself provides the framework
for that identity, rather than teaching and learning approaches, or
facilitative skills.

Harold also felt that higher education would eventually become victim
to the much easier availability of knowledge within society via the
internet, and the freeing up of the mystique of the professions and
other gatekeepers of knowledge and practice. *'I think its good thing and
I find it very reassuring for example when I go and see my GP and tell
the GP what is wrong with me and he looks it up in a book to see what
is the latest treatment'.* (T.3.28

Harold felt that *'there is a lot of nonsense about the whole idea of 'what
is knowledge'.* (T.3.28) He felt that important knowledge was created
in the world of work. On further discussing these points Harold
agreed that this kind of knowledge has mainly economic value, or is
capable of contributing to profit. Although higher education
knowledge is not currently so tightly proscribed Panton (2005) argues
higher education research is moving toward that model.

H.3.7. Curriculum development

Harold argued that doing a degree in the past (prior to modularisation)
had enabled students to think about the philosophy of the whole
degree, and he initially felt that modularisation or unitisation would
break this up. Nevertheless, after the initial modularisation process,
Redpath University introduced Learning Outcomes to the unit
specification, indicating clearly specified and assessable outcomes to a
unit, Harold felt this was a positive step, as it *'enabled people to look*

at the way in which they were teaching, if only the beginning of that development' (T.3.15)

However, the standardisation of the higher education curriculum (of which the use of learning outcomes was a part) was about mass higher education and rationalising what was produced. He felt that this would lead to a situation where creativity in the curriculum would be inhibited. Harold felt that the curriculum changes so far had the effect of *'exposing what was really going on and put it into a form which quality assurance systems could look at more effectively'* (T.3.15) He claimed he enjoyed this exposing role in staff development work as it helped people to understand the curriculum and teaching and learning. However, it was a stressful and risky role to be the messenger in this way.

H.3.8. Power and professional autonomy

In terms of professional autonomy, Harold enjoyed a great deal of freedom to write degree courses once the CAT became a Polytechnic. *'we were given incredible license by the CNAA (Council for National Academic Awards)....what were basically three young Turks, all in their twenties, were writing their own stuff and being supported by the senor sociologist A. who encouraged us to be creative and use our initiative to make the degree as current as it could be.'* (T.3.5) Harold said this early experience has informed his approaches now as a Director and manager. He said he likes to *'get a group of bright young people together, protect them, and give them the freedom to go off and do their stuff.'* (T.3.5.) He seemed not to fully recognise that the freedom to be creative had waned with the advent of tightly proscribed curriculum development and teaching and learning processes.

H.3.9. Family and belonging

Harold said there was obviously a 'back story' to his professional life, and that was his family life and subsequent divorce and remarriage.

He said his early days as a lecturer were his looking after kids days, and that his working wife went back to work after the children were born and he became the main carer during the day. He fitted his university work into that role. When he became divorced he did not want to become a 'Saturday Dad' so bought a big house and he had the top floor and his wife and children has the ground floor. It was a very modern way of organising family life after divorce (T.3.18). However, divorce itself caused considerable trauma to Harold and in some ways he thinks his failure to get promotion early on in his career was linked to this.

H.3.9.1. <u>Permanence and stability: family and belonging</u>
Harold stayed at Redpath University despite many job offers in other universities he has had over time. He was asked why, when he had initially become disillusioned with the place. He said there were various reasons. He had a family locally, and travelling up to London each day, for one job offer, was not easy. He had been recently divorced and felt that working so far away would mean he would not see his children much and take part in their lives. The other factor was the job in London he was offered was only a three-year contract, whereas his new job in Redpath University was permanent, and at the top of the Principal Lecturer scale.

Harold gave many more examples of how family ties have kept him at Redpath University. So we might argue that family and belonging, permanence, the stalwarts against uncertainty and inevitability in professional life, are very important to him.

H.3.10 <u>Constructing a new identity: lecturer to academic developer</u>
Harold also felt at the time of failure to gain promotion in the Sociology Department, certain difficulties and concerns about not being in the same age group as the students any more, not having as

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much empathy with them. So he started to rethink his teaching and learning approach. He says there were some important people he learned from at this time e.g. Graham Gibbs and Trevor Habeshaw, who were significant mentors. He attended a number of seminal workshops a the Institute of Education in London and says *'it was almost like coming out really for me'* (T.3.6)

The success of Harold's work, facilitating new ways of approaching the higher education curriculum, and doing some staff development work, led him to seriously rethink his position at Redpath University in the 1990's. He was offered a job at a London Polytechnic as a training manager for staff development with the Open Learning Foundation. The Vice Chancellor of Redpath University, who was recently appointed, called him in and said I understand that you are regarded as a really 'shit hot' staff developer and want to leave us? Whereupon he was offered a job at Redpath University as a staff developer and Harold, as ever ready to exploit a chance, already had his job description for just such a post written out in his pocket, which he was permitted to use in his new post. *'I suspected not that I was really a hot shit developer, but that the Vice Chancellor, N. didn't really like the London Vice Chancellor M, taking someone. I suspect there was personal rivalry between them as much as anything else.'* (T.3.13)

These comments illustrate some doubt about his own professional identity or expertise, but also hint at the highly political nature of Harold's diagnosis of situations and his strategic approach. He knows how important status, and relationships, and reputations are in higher education, as in most professions. He has considerable political insight into the Redpath University organisation and management.

He took a job in the Education Development Unit for a while, but decided to leave central staff development after reviewing his position. He had discussed his career position with the Dean of his Faculty and

decided to leave. Largely this was due to two issues; one he disagreed with the philosophy and approach of the Academic Development strategy and he realised that being in a central academic development role was a cul de sac in terms of his own academic career.

H.3.10.1 Another academic identity

Harold then became involved in the emerging Work Based Learning Programme. He was invited to do this based on his work with Pegasus Projects. The key curriculum developments in the Work Based Learning Programme were the use of Learning Contracts, Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) and designing a long thin management spine throughout the degree course that held it together. Harold said he used strategies he had learned earlier from Pegasus and his curriculum development work in Sociology. The university received £50,000 development money for this new Work Based Learning programme and were lacklustre in their support for it, and it remained unvalidated for a year, despite recruiting students, as there were so many obstacles to overcome regarding its innovative nature. It did not fit into the quality assurance framework that existed. However, Harold managed to get it validated by rewriting the proposal and it is still running, with currently around 100 students enrolled. Harold took over as Director of the programme from a previous incumbent after it was validated, and went around the country talking about it as a concept. He was Director for 15 years. The degree has become a model for other universities in setting up work based learning degree routes and was cited in the *Dearing Report* as an example.

This shift in his role was a key moment for Harold. He enjoyed the evangelical role of speaking about the degree to others in different universities, again employing his dramaturgical style, but this time experiencing less resistance, and more interest and praise. He recalls using innovative PowerPoint presentations in this process to create a

kind of cinematic impression of a new and wonderful degree that all employers would leap at the chance of using for professional development. He took current students and employers into these presentations, who all extolled the virtues of the degree route, acting as an entourage of touring players.

Harold acknowledged that the 'old polytechnic' that was now Redpath University was indeed a relatively conservative place with regard to curriculum innovation but was very proud of the Work Based Learning development saying *'there was this incredibly radical programme about students designing learning contracts being delivered in an old polytechnic at the bottom of railway line on the south coast.'* (T.3.17).

Harold was offered jobs outside Redpath University during his time as Director of the Work Based Learning degree programme. *'I was actually offered jobs while working on this degree and was asked if I would be interested in applying for a job by the Empire State University in New York!* (T.3.18). Again however he said it was familial ties that prevented him from going abroad. By now he had remarried and said it would be impossible to take his stepchild to USA, as his stepson would not be able to see his natural father, with whom he has a good relationship.

H.3.10.2   Another identity change

After several years as Director of Work Based Learning Degrees Harold was invited to set up Foundation Direct at Redpath University and about this time also achieved the National Teaching Fellowship in 2003. He had resisted applying for it in previous years, because although *'they give you £50,000 what that means is more work, another project and it is not actually a reward in that it puts money in your back pocket...I am not sure it does reward you.'* (T.3.21)

Harold commented wryly *'yes, calling me Director of Foundation Direct it is quite a good title. I was Director of the Work Based Learning Theatre!* (T.3.33) Here he illustrates how he conceptualises his work, likening it to directing a play in a theatre.

Despite his misgivings he said a couple of things happened to him after the Teaching Fellowship award. He was asked to take on the temporary role of Acting Director of Staff Development after the person in post left, indicating his earlier innovative approaches had been recognised and this was clearly important to him. He also was able to negotiate a Visiting Fellowship in an Australian University on the strength of having been awarded the Teaching Fellowship in the UK. So in his view there *was* a professional reward in getting this Teaching Fellowship recognition as it led to other things; it opened doors.

He began work as temporary Acting Director of Staff Development in Redpath University at a time when radical changes were being made to this department. It became essentially focussed on quality issues and was renamed The Department of Curriculum Quality and Enhancement. (DCQE) There were a number of other staff already working in there in that area and Harold claimed he would not have wanted to stay as *'I suspected my job was not going to exist and…it was not about real curriculum development anyway but a process whereby they could cut and paste from what the Quality Assurance Agency said into something that could work here…'* (T.3.22). The university decided to include a whole range of services under the DCQE, including counselling, student support and finance, so Harold with his innovative and very distinctive ideas about curriculum development, did not feel he would have a conceptual home there.

H.3.10.3.   Another move, more conflicts, and more theatre
Harold then looked around for another job in Redpath University and applied for the post of Academic and Curriculum Development Officer

in the Technology Faculty, the faculty that had previously hosted the Work Based Learning Programme. He got the job, as a two-year contract. The Dean of the Technology Faculty knew of Harold's challenging approach and said *'what I want you to do is sort out what's going on in the classroom and that seemed to me a bit like the themes that I had found capable of being interactive...So I went for the job and was beginning to recognise what the size of the task was... and we moved quite rapidly and came up with a real curriculum strategy for Technology...It was remarkable about what autonomy you get, to be able to speak with a voice which had authority'* (T.3.22). However, he did come into conflict with the DCQE as he challenged the Programme Specification documents it was now required to submit for new degree programmes. He argued with them that an assessment strategy is not the same as describing the type of assessment.

Not only had this conflict arisen, but one Head of Department refused to work with him. He said it was not just the older staff that resisted him, but also some younger staff. He managed to win most of them round in a short space of time however, focussing on his work on Professional Development Portfolios and Learning Contracts he had developed in work based learning.

H.3.11   The meaning offered for so much change

Harold commented at this point about his many moves within the university and said he left his Technology Faculty post after less than two years because he got involved in an Early Years Foundation Degree, as part of his National Teaching Fellowship and this led to his current post as Director of Foundation Direct. It's as if one thing flowed almost seamlessly into another, like a new part in a play arising from a part you have been seen in before.

The many posts and career directions were raised in the auto/biographical interview at this point and he said *'I have actually been in seventeen different offices since 1969 which is quite remarkable. It is a new one every six months. There was a period of time when I had three offices all at one time!* (T.3.22) He was clearly keen to show how active and developmental he had been in his career.

Subsequently he went out to be Visiting Fellow at an Australian University in 2004 and was asked to work there after being told *'you have been the most successful visiting fellow we have ever had, you have really inspired people, so would you like to come and work for us?'* (T.3.20) As before Harold declined for family reasons. He was invited to be Visiting Fellow at another Australian University in 2006. On his return he faced further family issues in that he has become the main carer for his elderly mother who lived near him and has since died.

H.3.12   Uncertainty and inevitability; an identity beyond the academic

We ended the auto/biographical interview by considering 'what next' might be on Harold 's agenda.   He said this: *'it is a fact of life or death that I will be 70 in ten years time...so I have to assume the chances of me being around here are 50/50. If we think about Erik Erikson's stages of life, when you get to the final stage, looking back I mean, do I feel I would I have done this again? Integrity-v-despair? I think you have to fight against arrogance in later stages of your career....but I also think you have to keep working and keep learning and that is where I think you become professional in the sense that you do expose yourself to, and welcome criticism, it hurts, but you welcome it...* (T.3.35)   Harold said he will retire, in about 18 months time, when he is 61. He did not think he would be needed full time even for that long. So he has plans to go part-time offering *'a gentle steer'* to the department. Later he says he *'will look to do some stuff about going to*

Australia or whatever. Its about working with new people, finding a new challenge, working in a different ways but also finding a new way of structuring my time......one of the things about working is your life is structured for you in a lot of ways.' (T.3.35)

Harold reflected that undertaking such a restructuring life project was difficult because *'you are forced to do it at a time when you might not have the energy to do it...can we reflect back on that? I think it is an interesting way of looking at it. One of the reasons I probably found the sociology team working so difficult....was that my time was being more and more structured by the university because it was moving to mass higher education and a new set of rules and I didn't like it. It was not a space I would enjoy. I have always had relative autonomy...have only ever shared one office...I have a fantastic office now...the only problem is I have to walk through another office when I am leaving. I prefer the idea of walking out on to a corridor where you are free agent. My best work is often spent on a flip chart, or wandering around the garden pruning roses or sitting in the bath...'* (T.3.36/37/38) He clearly values the autonomy he has had at Redpath University and shows how important his sense of agency is for him.

So at the end of our interviews Harold was clearer about what was important in his professional life; relative autonomy, space to think, not having to comply with rules and setting himself regular, quite risky, challenges and achievement. Perhaps this was Harold 's notion of a good life in higher education.

He said his life had already been written up in any case by a former partner of his. The book he referred to is entitled 'Playhouse', a very fitting title for his life given the above narrative.

Fred T. 4

F.1. Brief Professional Biography

Fred is 61. He began his working life as a railway engineer, having completed an apprenticeship in Industrial Archaeology. He then went on to teach in a further education college having been a student at Redpath University in 1969-73 when it was a Polytechnic. He was offered a post at the University and took it as it led to a large pay increase at the time and he was familiar with the department he joined. He has worked at Redpath University since 1980. He teaches Mechanical Engineering.

He has experienced a number of changes in role since joining Redpath University. He began undertaking a range of consultancy contracts as soon as he joined the Polytechnic, which led to earnings at least 50% on top of his salary. These contracts included work for the gas board on stressing pipes and a big Japanese Seaweed Treatment contract. At this time the Polytechnic, as it was, actively sought staff with industrial experience. However, by the early 1980s a requirement to undertake empirical research was introduced.

Fred did his teacher training in 1981, the Certificate in Further Education, awarded by the CNAA. He enjoyed this and had a pleasant few years in a collegial department with no discernible hierarchy. He said the Chair of Faculty Board was a rotated post between the three heads of department. He said standards were good, and it was friendly department. The staff student ratio was low, about 6:1.

However, by 1986 there were severe financial difficulties. Contract income was affected by a high rate of inflation, and the department's actual income declined. Redundancies were undertaken which Fred fought hard against on behalf of his colleagues. At this time, the employer was in fact the County Council and the redundancies went through with fairly generous settlements for voluntary redundancies.

Fred originally taught Higher National Diploma courses, full time and sandwich route, Engineering with Business Studies and a M.Sc. in Field Technology which was his own research area. However, there was little money from Research Councils for Polytechnics at this time and research was funded from contract income.

He said from 1992 he wrote a large number of articles and conference papers to fulfil new contractual obligations about undertaking research arising from the post 1992 University status. He was unimpressed by the Research Assessment Exercise, seeing as a game, and participating perfunctorily.

Since that time Fred has changed his role. First he began working with Teaching Companies but gave this up after he discovered the income generated did not all go into the department. He also spent some time working on Knowledge Transfer Partnerships but again gave this up due to having no say in how the money is distributed.

To redirect himself, he then spent eleven years working through the British Council Overseas on contracts in Ukraine, Poland and Russia from 1994-2005.

Fred is extremely cynical about what he regards as self serving management and administration and resents the highly bureaucratic nature of Redpath University. He has had a number of conflicts with colleagues and senior staff regarding policies and practices and does not comply with quality assurance procedures.

He now just teaches, and is not on any committee, nor does he have an administrative role, which he finds astonishing but attributes to the fact that he is awkward and asks difficult questions. He plans to retire next year.

F.2. Plot: The craftsman

Fred's working life originated in industry as an Industrial Archaeologist. He is a craftsman and says he likes practical things. Craftsman in this sense is used to denote someone who invests himself in making something that he or she can be proud of. (Sennett, 2006). It is about doing something well for its own sake. When discussing the academic role with him, he claimed he was not an intellectual of any kind he was a craftsman. This gives a very firm indication of the paradox of Fred's professional life and how his academic identity has proceeded and fragmented.

Initially he was valued as a craftsman at the Polytechnic he joined before Redpath University was formed. He was respected for the skills he had and the industrial esteem he enjoyed. He had contacts with industry that he was able to use on behalf of the Polytechnic. He valued his teaching role and undertook a Certificate in Education (Further Education) at an early point in his career enjoying enabling young people to acquire the skills in engineering that he prized so much.

Things changed quite dramatically in the early 1980s when Redpath University, whilst still a Polytechnic, began to have aspirations that were university like. It is well documented that some Polytechnics wanted to emulate the traditional universities and this was the case here prior to the 1992 university status. Fred took part in the process and produced articles for publication, which he found no value in doing. It was clear he did not see this as part of his identity. He prized his technical skills in making things but not writing about that. He did not think it was part of industrial culture to produce publications and Fred's identity was, and still is, firmly rooted in industrial culture of a former period.

He won industrial contracts which funded his departmental activities. There was little or no Research Income at that time. However, inflation eroded the value of industrial contracts and during the period 1981 – 1986 there were redundancies in his department and faculty.

Shortly after the 1992 university status Fred changed his role and worked with Teaching Companies. However, the income from these endeavours did not all arrive back in his department and he saw how very different education as a business is from the outside economic world. He could not fathom why income had to go to the various levels of bureaucracy within the university before it came to his department and became de-motivated about generating these contracts. His identity was being changed from a relatively autonomous entrepreneurial craftsman into a person whose autonomy was very limited.

Again he changed his role and began working on Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) with industry and commerce but soon gave up for the same reasons. He did not believe the KTP department had any idea how to communicate and negotiate with industry and said they sat in their offices. In fact Fred has particular disdain for administrators and managers who he does not feel earn their keep. In much the same way as some craftsman and technically skilled manufacturers used to conceptualise those 'in the offices' as parasites, so Fred retains this view of management. He does not trust them and sees them as scroungers living off the generosity of others.

By 1994 Fred was very disillusioned with his role as an academic lecturer. He then spent eleven years working through the British Council Overseas on contracts in Ukraine, Poland and Russia. He had earlier had very good industrial links with Japan. To hear Fred talk about some of this technical work, his body animated and full of enthusiasm, is to know where his professional identity lay.

He returned to a university teaching only role in 2005. His identity, he said, is now located within the family. He does not undertake any industrial liaison or contracts, and just fulfils his teaching requirements. He was keen to say however that even in his family it is important for him to be practical.

It could be argued that Fred's professional identity as a craftsman has been eroded over time during his years at Redpath University. It is a problem for all those who enter higher education with a professional or industrial skill who are unable to keep up their links with economy, commerce or profession. The storyline for his professional life is rooted in the historical changes that have taken place in industry and in higher education. It poses the question of whether some Polytechnics can now play an effective role in educating and training technical labour or should leave this either to industrial apprenticeships or further education.

F.3. Fred's narrative

Fred agreed to do the auto/biographical interviews, but said his life

was not really that interesting. The interviews proved to be a rather

breathless encounter for the interviewer. He barely drew breath for at

least an hour and half in the first interview. Some of the questions

posed were not answered. Instead he posed his own. This is

mentioned because some sociologists, like Harding (2006:2), suggest

that the interviewer can have a great deal of power in such

encounters. This did not seem to be the case with Fred. As Harding

says, however, 'the present is a crucial reference point for attempts to

re-member the past and that interview talk and subjects are co-

produced by interviewer and interviewee.' The present did provide an

important trigger reference point for Fred in the interview and

facilitated much of his story.   Fred was very keen to tell his story, and

he knew it by heart, and was going to recount it whatever questions

we roamed around.

F.3.1 Beginnings

Fred said he originally went for an apprenticeship in the dockyard at

16 years old and that it was easy to secure. He said *'my apprenticeship*

was in Industrial Archaeology. It was very old fashioned. I spent a

year filing metal. It was nonsense. I am one of the few people in the

world who can set valve gear on steam train engines. (T.5.22)   Fred's

early working life was in a Navy base, as an apprentice. He said *'we*

worked from 7 a.m. (or if you were under 18 you started at 7.45)...I
worked from 7 in the morning till 3.30 p.m. We did what we called a
float time, so you didn't have lunch you just stopped for a break
wherever you were working. We were poor and I had to cycle to work.
(T.5.24)

Fred is now 61. He has worked at Redpath University since 1980. He
teaches Mechanical Engineering. He was formerly a lecturer at
Highbury Technical College. Prior to this he was a railway engineer in
charge of the workshops and had been offered the chance to return
whilst he was at Highbury. However he decided to come to Redpath
University which at the time was a Polytechnic. His reasons for this
decision were largely related to his family as he would have needed a
daily commute to London and this would have less time with his wife
and children. However, another reason he cited was that he had been
a student at Redpath University when it was a Polytechnic from 1969-
73 and had enjoyed his time there.

F.4.2. Joining a Polytechnic department

The Department of Mechanical Engineering that he joined had not
altered much since he graduated so he felt at home. The other reason
for moving to a Polytechnic was that his pay rose substantially from
further to higher education. He said he would have been even better
off if he had come direct from industry or the railway as industrial
rates of pay were higher and were matched by the Polytechnic at that

time. This meant he started at Lecturer 1 scale and spent the next ten years incrementally rising to the stop of Senior Lecture scale as it was then. This is an example of the often difficult shift from industry or professional roles to higher education; pay scales in higher education have not kept pace with other occupations of similar calibre.

He began his post by engaging in a *'lot of consultancy which was very useful, not least because it was a lot more money. I mean I earned in 1981 over 50% extra in this way on top of my salary...My salary was £7,000 a year plus the contract monies meaning I earned over £10,000 a year.'* (T.4.3). These consultancies included *'work for the gas board on stressing pipes, and Japanese Seaweed treatment, which was a big research contract at that time.* (T.5.3.)

Fred said that at that time the Polytechnic actively sought staff who had industrial experience *'which was the fashion, but as soon as I came here (in late 1979), within about two years, that fashion changed (in the early 80s) and they wanted researchers so I became unfashionable!* (T.4.3).

F.3.3.   Teaching and learning

Fred did his teacher training in the second year of his post at the Polytechnic. *'I did the Certificate in Education, the CNNA Polytechnic teaching diploma (together) in two years. It was quite fun really. I enjoyed that.* (T.5.5) Fred taught in the design group in his

department. He talked about his teaching approaches. He said in his classroom lectures he used Overhead Transparencies and as there were limited numbers of photocopiers, and to get them printed centrally was expensive. So he used a Banda Machine to run off handouts. He did this to save money for the department. *'at the end of the year we were the only group that had reduced our photocopying bill, and the next year we actually got less money because we proved we didn't need as much as last year!! So the Banda Machines went in the skip and I started running photocopies through. That is funny but that is finance here.*(T.4.17)

Having got this example aired, he went on to say that he felt he made a difference to students by 'interesting them'. *'a lot of them are from school and I think one of the things we do (in the Faculty) actually after three years is to enhance enthusiasm for their topic.......in our place (department) we make a difference (to school-leavers) by showing them the broader world in some subjects and those applicable to how they think engineering is. Also, for Navy people who have done a full apprenticeship plus HND equivalent who come in to the final year with us. I think it is showing them the difference between training and education in the Navy. One student said he never got less than 92% in his Navy assessments because the Navy teach them to the assessment or to do the test. Then they come to us.* (T.4.18) He made it clear that this was a challenging but worthwhile time for both school leavers and Navy students, and went on to say there are social benefits too. Fred

felt this was positive to have older and younger students working together and that the placement year was also a very worthwhile experience for students and gave examples of how he had seen students grow and change as a result of that year. (T.4.20)

It seemed what irritated Fred currently was what he referred to as the possible 'feminisation' of the teaching approach in higher education. Higher education has embraced many aspects of teaching and learning that can be located within a counselling frame of reference. Being concerned about students well being, ensuring the relationship between teacher and taught was harmonious, and generally softening the learning process is a trend that is well documented. There is also a great deal of stress on the relationship between the lecturer and the student and the need to have dynamic lectures using a wide range of technical devices such as interactive whiteboards etc. Fred felt this was all secondary (superfluous?) to enabling students to have hands on experience of making things.

F.3.4.   Collegial life

For Fred, life at the Polytechnic was full of pleasant colleagues, it was collegial. He did not feel there were any managers. He said the standards were good, and the people he worked with were very caring, friendly and interested in their subjects.

The staff/student ratio was low, about 6:1 which is an amazingly low ratio compared to the present 20:1. Fred said *'we did have a lot of staff because in those days, I don't know if you remember, you couldn't start a new course unless you gave up an old one, unless the government wanted a courses in something...for instance we did an engineering course with business studies.* (T.4.6) Here Fred is drawing me into his memories of the past, and reminding me of the more relaxed pace of life that did once exist in Redpath University. He asks often *'you remember it like that don't you?'*

The kinds of degrees offered in Fred's department included Higher National Diploma, full time and sandwich degree route, Engineering with Business studies and an MSc in Field Technology which was a research area. He made a comment about the MSc saying *'the interesting thing about the MSc is that it stopped running because of internal criticism that it attracted too many overseas students!* (T.4.6.) This is quite different today, when overseas students attract much higher fees than home students.

F.3.5. Research/Consultancy income

Fred believed his colleagues who were undertaking research were good. He mentioned two; one did research in fatigue in mechanical behaviour and materials and another environmental engineering. Both these staff had been promoted eventually respectively to Head of Department and Professor. This work also used to attract a great deal

of income through consultancy contracts. The income came from industry and not from the Funding Council. Companies such as B.P, Rolls Royce and the American Air Force were mentioned. The Japanese seaweed consultancy was funded by the Japanese Ministry of Public Building and Works. Fred didn't think there was much money, if any, for Polytechnics from research councils at that time. He then referred to his own research writing period. *'(I wrote) crap papers for crap conferences after 1992 when we had to do research. I started writing for engineering type conferences and also getting my name known about the money I was bringing by publishing in technical papers, journal papers and all sorts of things to which I may or may not have contributed. (T.4.30)*

Fred was well aware that the research assessment exercise is to some extent a game, and he proceeded to play it. He conceptualised his strategy in the following way. *'I just worked the system to suit me. This is rather like my book on the Greek Ionian Islands. That is what the Greeks do. There are the conquerors and the conquered. The conquered used strategies ...like... words of a derogatory nature. I think that is what I have done. '* (T.4.30) This snippet illustrates Fred reads more widely than in his technical field and is a political animal, which is evident in many of his comments about change and how it has been managed which he discusses next.

F.3.6. <u>Management of the university</u>

Fred was keen to highlight the way in which managerialist forms of management had overtaken a previously collegiate organisation.

He discussed the *'management of the place'* as he recalled it, in the past. It was a different organisational structure at that time. *'we had the Faculty Board, and the chair was rotated amongst the Heads of Department in that faculty, and these departments were Civil, Electrical, Mechanical Engineering. Each got a year as chair. No one was interested in power and management, but they were interested in making things better if they could.* (T.4.7). Fred gave numerous examples of how management had managed crises. The following is one.

F.3.7. <u>Financing higher education and redundancies</u>

In 1985-6 there were financial problems and major redundancies in the Engineering faculty. Fred said *'in 1979 we had a Conservative government and between 1979 and 1986 the revenue for the department went down, and of course there was inflation in 1980 of about 25%. So whereas there was say an allowance for a project in 1979, this amount did not change for 6 or 7 years after that and the value of the money fell by a factor of two. By 1986 we had all run out of money and that is why we had the big redundancy.* (T.4.8). The significance of this issue for academic work and life is worth exploring further at this point. It is

clear that the Engineering Faculty relied very heavily on industrial contract income to fund staff, and this money was divided annually between departments to ensure continuity of employment. Once the contract income decreased or shrunk in value due to inflation, academic staff were left vulnerable. Currently there are wide ranging debates in higher education about academic staff 'funding their salaries' through Knowledge Transfer contracts and/or research income from funded projects. It is clear this strategy for funding academic work carries very real dangers and can lead to the academic workforce engaged in industrially linked subjects becoming so 'flexible' that their roles are unstable.

F.3.7.1 Management and top-slicing

Fred stopped doing consultancy work because he said the university got *'greedy'*. By this he means that a top slice was taken from external income and used to pay for central administration. *'I had to pay for those people who did not offer any service, so I stopped doing consultancy…I think it is pure greed on what I would loosely call the management side in that they see these activities going on and they want a share. I think this has been a major source of failure in the university.'* (T.4.12)

F.3.7.2. Union representation and negotiations with management

Fred was involved in union negotiations on behalf of those threatened with redundancy and claimed the staff were not redundant and could

be redirected in other spheres of their subjects. However, the University and the local county council argued *'there was a diminution in work and these are grounds for redundancy.'*(T.5.8) Fred pointed out that staff were not redundant as they were *'originally working more than their hours in the first place'.* (T.4.8) This was not accepted on the part of the University and illustrates the problems in higher education at that time of not having clear contracts of employment with hours and duties delimited. Normally, apart from teaching your specific subject, all other duties were *'at the discretion of the Head of Department'.* This led to wide discrepancies in the work load of staff across Redpath University, and even in the same department, and is still not fully addressed by the introduction of HERA.

The County Council was the employer of the staff at the time of the redundancies, not the Polytechnic and they would not provide sufficient resources to carry on employing the same number of staff, so many were made redundant. Voluntary redundancies were possible and these staff got 10 years enhancement of their pension contributions.

Fred pointed out that at that time the Teachers Superannuation Scheme (which covered Polytechnic staff but not pre-1992 universities) was being raided by the government, as teachers and lecturers were paying into it, but few were retiring. Fred's department subsequently suffered a severe shortage of students and were under continual

threat of closure, with regular changes in Head of Department attempting to deal with the situation. It was clearly a difficult time but financial information was not always transparent. *'Our Head of Department M, said we are three quarters of million in debt, and after looking at the figures... a week or two later we had another meeting after M had gone back to the faculty and we were now half a million in debt. So in a fortnight were a quarter of a million up.....they didn't really know, they were making it up, and yet were in a position of saying this is fact.'* (T.5.29)

F.3.7.3. <u>Morale</u>

It is not difficult to imagine the effects of this lack of clarity on academic staff morale. They had no idea how such a large debt had accrued, they worked as normal, successfully educating students. It highlights another of the issues in the expansion of higher education and how that expansion has been funded. For example, lack of clarity about accounting processes through all the different layers of the bureaucracy, as well as top slicing factors. Academics have no control over many of these accounting issues, no clear understanding of why they have accrued, and yet the 'solutions' to so called deficits often involve them in working more intensively to bring in more students, or teach bigger groups to save resources. Although Fred was angry about these anomalies his frustration is understandable.

There have continued to be regular arguments within Redpath University in most faculties about how budgets are calculated and how deficits are represented. Each faculty is now charged with promoting greater transparency, as are departments, although as funding comes in using different formulae is still hard to make sense of it. For example, some students are funded at a higher rate by HEFCE; other students are not funded by HEFCE at all as they are 'additional unfunded students'. In other words the numbers bid for students at Redpath University have been exceeded. Other students pay higher fees, such as overseas students, and some students fund themselves at full cost. On top of this, all income to a department in the form of fees or contracts arranged is 'top sliced' to fund the central administration. Other strategic funding issues also prevail, such as 'viring' monies to weaker courses to keep them going, or to support new courses as there is no capital fund for curriculum development. Put this mix into any departmental budget and it is easy to see how complex it is.

F.3.8. The ageing of the academic workforce.

Fred reflected on the age profile of his department and said he could not see why Redpath University was advertising for a new Head of Department as '*I cannot see it (the department) lasting for another five years....the whole department must go in with another department as there are not enough staff now and these are all old blokes anyway*'. (T.4.10) This illustrates a common problem across universities; the

ageing of the academic workforce who are not replaced when they

leave, but fewer younger cheaper staff are recruited.

Fred seemed aware of changes in employment in the wider economy.

He said that as the academic workforce aged, they had to stay at

Redpath University as other employers would not want them. *I think*

*if you look now people of our age are unemployable.' (*T.4.11).

indicating his awareness of ageism in the workplace.

F.3.8.1. Capitalism and short term contracts

Fred also said it was well known that the wider workforce was full of

temporary contracts. He said *'industry has changed*

enormously....they don't want people like me, they don't want full time

people, they want contract people. (T.4.11) Fred felt the pressures of

academic life were not of the same kind, although he mentioned

'mountains of marking which you don't know how you will get through'

(T.4.11). He did not feel short term contracts or temporary contracts

were a problem in his sphere of higher education.

F.3.8.2. Teaching Companies and Knowledge Transfer partnerships

Fred started doing work with Teaching Companies in 1988 after he

gave up the consultancy work. These are *'now called knowledge*

transfer partnerships...I had about two million pounds worth between

1988 and 1998.' (T.4.12) and involve the university in selling their

knowledge to companies and other organisations. Not all the money

went directly to Fred's department, but they got '40% overhead on the grant money and because we became the university link we attracted additional funding...the monies that came in they paid to postgraduates, they paid for equipment, and they paid for travel and all sorts of things. In fact...one portion of it could be spent by the grant holder in consultation with the Head of Department....and you didn't get (what happens now) what I called a 'think brigade' setting up a committee and saying how we should spend the money.'(T.4.13).

Fred talked about how he worked in the Teaching Companies. He said they worked well until Redpath University decided to set up Faculties. 'Teaching Companies were working successfully back in 1986...and then we had faculties. You have to ask why they exist. I fought against them at the time because they cost something like £200,000 each to set up. This was a million pounds of our budget! ....not only that we now have a Quality Empire on top of that with so many rules and regulations that nobody actually understands them. I don't even read the syllabus. I do what I want. (T.13/14) Fred withdrew from Teaching Company work. 'I went on then to the British Council Overseas Contract in 1994 to 2005. I had eleven years in the Ukraine, Poland and Russia.' (T.5.30) He used the circumstances in which he found himself at Redpath University as a trigger to do something different. 'To move on is all you can do, so that's what I did. (T.4.30)

Fred stopped doing Knowledge Transfer Partnerships because he had

no say over the money it generated. He clearly resented the loss of his

previous professional autonomy over financial resources that he had

generated. This raises some awkward questions about what is

expected of academic staff in universities like Redpath University. It

does not have a large research funded income. Most of its income is

derived from funding for teaching. Therefore growth of contract

income is a crucial factor in the financial health of the organisation.

However, paradoxically, the academics that do have the skills to

generate this income are often not expected to have any say in how

the income is spent. What entrepreneur in the wider economy would

generate income and hand it over to administrators and managers to

distribute? There is a dilemma here between higher education culture

as an educational organisation and as a business organisation.

F.3.9. Bureaucracy

Fred bemoaned the bureaucratic layers that have sprung up in

Redpath University to 'micro manage' any form of income. He felt this

had arisen because *'academics doing their own thing get in the way of*

their tidy system and administrators........ run it like it was a personal

thing and they want to control! (T.5.13) Clearly Fred is a non-

conformer and has asked very pertinent questions about the reasons

for having so many layers of management, as have other academics in

this study.

F.3.10   Quality Assurance

Fred does not believe standards have improved as a result of the Quality Assurance developments. *'the standards haven't improved, we tick the boxes, but nothing has improved, the classroom activity has not improved. I don't even do feedback with my students; I don't ever ask them, I don't care.* (T.4.14) He said some of his well respected colleagues such as P. *'is a smashing bloke, good lecturer, believes in the quality assurance work he but my criticism of P. is he is a typical Naval Officer, (the Navy does not make people, people make the Navy) so he is automatically suited to the military life (as in Redpath University) following rules, reading books about it, applying (Quality Assurance principles) wherever he can...and I think he does a good job, works very hard but actually these people achieve nothing!* (T.4.14)

Fred did not feel that quality assurance procedures had affected him particularly as *'I don't take an active part in it. I am totally ignorant of the quality assurance system in this place. I use the bits which I have to use, like giving out course work and returning it to students, and I put numbers on their forms...it is so funny...we are supposed to do blind marking. So let's say you get a piece of work in and it's got a number on the top. The first thing you do is know who it is because I have got their records. They have done all the presentations and I have written down what they said. The presentation does not count in the mark but I was there when they did it.'* (T.4.44)

Fred continued with his critique of the Quality Assurance procedures and said he did not believe it was there because of lack of trust but '*all this audit exists because politicians need to answer questions in the House of Commons. That is the only reason. They need to prove fact. 30% more people entering higher education, 30% more research, more links with industry and so...they have to have answers to their questions .....so it filters down into here. Our management have to supply the DfES or whoever they supply, they higher education funding councils with all these facts. They have set up an empire to provide them with the facts....and Faculty and Department have to supply them.* (T.4.15).

F.3.11.   Organisation of the curriculum

Fred has similar criticisms to level at the introduction of Learning Outcomes to shape teaching, learning and assessment.   His particular irritation was the fact that learning outcomes were an all or nothing measure. '*you cannot have a 55% learning outcome in a practice subject.* (T.4.!5) Here he is highlighting the problem of having learning outcomes with vaguely prescribed criteria. They are not either/or outcomes.

He said in his department they rewrite the officially recorded learning outcomes. '*We rewrite them to suit ourselves and provided they met the appropriate 'speak' with the people who are concerned with reading them (and they don't have to understand them particularly) then it is*

written in a format. That is why I say I have no syllabus. (T.5.16) Here
Fred is highlighting the fact that bureaucrats, not subject specialists,
read the paperwork and check if it is the right format, but they have
no idea about the subject itself and would not know if what was being
proposed was valid at higher education level.

He is also illustrating how some academics have adapted a very
inflexible, standardised curriculum design to suit the particularities of
their discipline. In Fred's Department students make things for their
degree. Take for example the design brief to make a bag. *'It could be a
design for a backpack in emergencies, a bag for a fisherman so if he
falls it automatically inflates and lifts him to the surface, but this would
be no good for a mountaineer if his bag inflates up a mountain, so you
have a variety of projects across a whole load of topics which cannot be
judged in the same way. So we overcome this....in a variety of ways.*
(T.4.17).

F.3.12. <u>A good academic life?</u>
Fred was aware that the benefit of higher education for him was
mainly financial. *'I always tell students the benefit of education is...if I
didn't have a degree I would earn £20,000 a year and get cancer from
all the chemicals as a mechanical engineer. Well now I earn £45,000 a
year talking to you. What would you rather do I say.* (T.5.25) He tells
students *a degree gives you a key but it might not fit the lock that you
want it to fit.'* (T.4.31)

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This kind of extrinsic motivation for being a university lecturer is at odds with other academics in this study that see it as a vocation, or as an intellectually rewarding career. In fact Fred said on looking back he wished he had done different things. *'my regrets are that I didn't start my own business.'.* (T.4.25)

F.3.12.1   Past and present

Fred went on to talk about the past again, saying *"academic life was collegial and academics felt they were important. The place was academic in outlook and what has happened in the past 25 years....is that the management and administrative structure has real contempt for academics. We get in the way of them operating a tidy University. That is the real change in 25 years'* (T.4.25-6) Fred was convinced that the management wanted, as he stated, 'tyre fitters', people who could do a routine job in a standardised way 'every 38 seconds' and not argue.

Fred also talked about 'renaming' of departments in order to render some staff redundant. For example, renaming Mechanical Engineering to Technology which meant some of the mechanical engineers no longer had a logical place for their knowledge. Whilst this is Fred's conception of changes, and is not necessarily endorsed in this auto/biography, it illustrates how change is perceived by some academics. It is perceived as if there is a conspiracy to outwit,

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undermine and remove any academic who does not fit in to the emerging regime. In fact Fred reported on a conversation he had with a new Dean of his faculty that implied all the income that Fred generated from his research endeavours would be treated in the following way. *'You go out and do the work and we take the money. We tell you what to do with it. You can buy an allowance.'* (T.5.27) Any autonomy Fred had enjoyed in terms of generating and spending income for his department had now to be passed through another layer of management. In fact Fred took out a grievance procedure against the dean *'not because he had taken the money but he prevented me from carrying out my academic duties.'* (T.4.28) It caused a furore in the university and the dean eventually left.

Fred also saw what the dean had said and done as bullying - *'endemic bullying, endemic to this university....I think it is endemic in the workplace generally. If you give people power they put on their traffic warden hat and they want to control everybody else.'* (T.4.27) However, the resultant conflict suggests there were highly visible stand offs on both sides.

F.3.13   Staffing strategies

Fred expressed further bewilderment around these issues when he mentioned there was a staff freeze at Redpath University at the moment. He pointed out that Redpath University had developed a new Entrepreneurial department, with a large office and new staff

whilst at the same saying department had to freeze posts. *'the Entrepreneurial department is to be the sole point of contact to the university and yet we have what have been called all sorts of things over the years; industrial liaison people who are supposed to go out and bring jobs in; we have faculty managers for bringing work in when they actually don't get on their bike and go out and sell. What they do is say, 'ah you have brought your contract in have you. Right your overhead is 40% and half of that comes to our place and all of a sudden you look round and they are controlling what you have done. ......I think the Entrepreneurial department is the place where no one is going out and selling the university because they actually think it's too hard for them and they cannot do it.'* (T.5. 33) Here Fred is ridiculing Redpath University's efforts to generate income bearing contracts with industry but at the same time suggesting that academic and administrative staff are not effectively trained for this role. The all singing and dancing academic, who can act as a salesperson, bring in income and also be a specialist is a rare person. Academic capitalism may be an emerging aspect of higher education but not all staff are capable of playing this role.

For Fred *'knowledge is power so if you have knowledge and can sell it you will do so providing there is something in it for you.'* (T.4.33) Fred felt this could either be prestige, increased income, or recognition of some kind. What he objected to was playing the salesman role, which he has done very effectively throughout his career, and not always

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being rewarded for it. Instead he felt he was being penalised by top slicing, or even having the money annexed so he has no say in how it is spent.

In terms of development from a business point of view it may make sense to invest in the new, whilst keeping the existing staffing structure on a reign, but again Fred's perception of this is the effect it has on him and his academic work. Staff in departments where posts are frozen have to work more intensively to keep up the same level of work. They are not consulted about this in any depth apart from a discussion about when it will happen and how to manage it.

Fred clearly felt and feels undervalued as a member of academic staff following the various experiences he has described. He believes this is due to lack of respect and 'contempt' for academics on the part of managers. He was not able to link changes in management to wider governmental policies and strategies or pressures for expansion that have brought about many of the financial and staff management issues.

F.3.14.   Academic identity

Fred spent a great deal of time in his auto/biographical story talking about his difficulties with others, mainly managers. His academic identity was clearly shaped by these relationships. He made some libellous critical comments, which are not included here, about

particular senior staff. He is clearly a political person in his interactions with others in the university organisation. He seems to see much of his working life as a battle for reason and sense.

We then went on to talk about Fred's conception of himself as an academic and he immediately said '*grumpy old man ...I think I have an image in my department as a trouble maker...and J (his colleague) has cut me out completely, not a thing, no admin, nothing. If we did a survey on what teachers here get paid I would be red circled because I am a top rate PL and yet I have no administrative responsibilities at all. They are all taken'.* (T.4.36) Here there is evidence that if you cause problems in a large organisation you can be isolated and shunned. Fred did clearly feel that. He thought J. felt he was '*a loose cannon. I think that is just one of those personality things. I carried him for years and he knows this. I marked his final year projects for instance because he could not cope with it. He was a trade union bloke but when I crossed swords here a few years back with my grievance procedure he was next to useless'.* (T.4.37)

Having said all this, Fred said he just saw himself as a member of the design group and *I go in and teach.* He was asked if he felt he was a teacher now. '*Yes I think so. I don't see myself as an engineer any more. I haven't been an engineer for years. I am a teacher in engineering.'* (T.4.37)

He went on to say *'I tend to think of myself (identity) in what I was at home. For many years I was the dad and I think to a certain extent with my sons I still am that. I did up my son's house and my wife and I spent three months doing this. It was always me up the ladder because although my wife said my son should go up the ladder I said 'no, if he falls off the ladder he might have another thirty years and if I fall off the ladder I might have ten years, so I pushed them out of the way'* (T.4.38) He is clearly a protective person when around his family.

However, academic work for him is now just a job. Nevertheless, he said he had enjoyed being an academic. *'I have enjoyed it. I mean I have my best mechanical project student this year since 1990 I would say. The lad I taught in 1990 lives in Japan now and he won a scholarship to learn Japanese and did an eighteen month in depth total immersion Japanese course...he was a great success.'*(T.4.38/39) He clearly had respect, and an almost paternal pride in some students.

When asked if he would do it all again, transfer from industry to a teaching role, he was adamant he would not come to Redpath University.

Whilst this auto/biography is not intended to offer a psychological analysis it does seem that Fred is constantly battling with loss. Loss of position and power at work, loss of hard earned resources, and loss of what he perceives as injustice all seem to plague him. His

professional identity as a craftsman has become fragmented by transferring to an academic career. He does not seem to have been able to resolve this. The worth and value of a degree are seen in terms of financial reward and not the same as the creative process of making something.

George T. 5.

G.1.Brief professional biography

George is 63. He was a student at Redpath University and graduated with a B.A. (Hons) in History, French and Economics in 1964 when he was 21. The degree was an externally validated University of London degree. He had no plans at that time to become an academic. He originally wanted to be an architect. However, after he graduated he took a part time job in the Library at Redpath University. He stayed for three years to earn a living and provide time to decide what career to pursue. He found library work boring. At the same time he was a volunteer in the city record office thinking he might try out archive administration. He found this archive work quite stimulating and interesting. He subsequently took an MA in Local History part time studying at Leicester University as this was the only place that offered this subject. George gave history seminars in Redpath University library during this time and was advised by an academic colleague that he was good at it and should consider a career in the academic profession and he was offered academic work running small tutor groups, although not allowed to give lectures. After a year he was invited to see the Head of Social Studies at Redpath University and offered a full time academic job in that department. Following his appointment in the School of Social Studies he registered for a PhD at a local University, which took 9 years part-time. His special subject is local, maritime and military history. He published a book on his topic in 1979. However, George regards his teaching as the most important element of his role as an academic although he is also clearly an assiduous researcher. He has strong values concerning his teaching role and makes high demands on his students but was keen to stress need for kindness and humour too. In 1993, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society based on his research and publications. He has served on the Councils of the Naval Records Society and of the British Association for Local History. He currently serves on two Editorial Boards. He is now writing a trilogy of volumes on the East India Company and its relations with the provinces in the 18th Century one of which was published in 1999, and second is due in 2007. Other publications have included Portsmouth and the East India Company (1999) and Gales: a brewing business and family history (2007). He has recently been promoted to Reader in Local and Maritime History and was very proud of this achievement. He does not plan to retire, and has recently married for the first time and says he delights in the fact that his wife believes in him.

G.2. Plot: The Scholar

George finds delight and wonder in his subject of history and this was a very refreshing aspect of our discussion. In his demeanour he is like someone from a previous era, perhaps an Edwardian gentleman. The themes for George's life are dignity in all things whatever they are and keeping the spirit of enjoyment. He is not searching for a reason to be, going up alleyways or embarking on fruitless journeys in his academic life. He enjoys being as he is here and now. He is a steadfast professional.

The overarching theme for George's life story is one of professional diligence, whether it is with his academic teaching, his research into archives or in producing books and articles. He does all this with kindness, humour and not a little irony. He is a traditional person, courteous, thoughtful and respectful of others.

George values face-to-face encounters, and eschews technology as a means of communication. He relishes interaction with others, and is as full of excitement when he meets someone with a historical 'pedigree' as he is to meet a new class full of students starting their educational journey.

He has enjoyed his career as an academic and sees it as a privilege, especially in contrast to some occupations, which he feels don't provide the opportunity to engage with the world in the way that he has and does.

He does not rush at life, but savours it with relish. This does not mean he does not have a keen eye for humbug. His views are critical but humorous and seek to highlight ridiculous aspects of working in a large bureaucracy. He has a sharp wit, and is not averse to cutting comments where he thinks them appropriate. Wry humour is a characteristic.

G.3. Introduction

George graduated in History, French and Economics from Redpath University in 1964. This was an External degree from the University of London. He had no plans at that time to become a professional academic and in fact thought about architecture, archive administration, or some form of historical research. To give himself time to think about what career to pursue, and to earn a living, he took a part time job in Redpath University library. He was there for three years and said this *'gave me money and also helped me to decide and put me off being a librarian!'* (T. 4.1) He did not like library work as he found it *'soul destroying...I failed to get excited by it, put it like that.'* (T.5.2.)

At the same time as his part time library work he was a volunteer in the City Record Office, handling documents and sorting them out. He said this was because he was interested in this field of work. However, he soon realised he had alighted on his real passion and said *'I got a buzz about doing the research on records as opposed to archiving. So in my spare time I started to research and write.* (T.5.1.)

This led eventually to him being noticed by the Head of Social Studies at Redpath University, who sent for him and said his colleagues had recommended him whereupon he was offered a full time job

G.3.2.   The central role of students in academic identity
George has always taken his teaching role very seriously and is very keen to know his students. He wanted to tell me about his first teaching group, which was very large, around 45 students. He remembered it clearly despite the long passage of time. He said *'They were a phenomenal responsibility but they included some very interesting people one of whom was wearing a black hat and a white scarf. His name was Stephen and we had a cup of coffee and a natter*

one day and I said to him 'you have an interesting surname. I have only ever come across it in relation to Alexander the Great who was prime minister of Russia at the time of the revolution in 1917'.....Yes, said Stephen, he was my grandfather!' (T.5.2.) Being an historian this revelation was exciting for George. He went on to say he had descendants of George Washington's brother in this group, as well as other famous people and stressed how exciting he found teaching, and meeting such an interesting range of people. It illustrates his profound empathy with students as he is always keen to hear about their lives.

He said the job he did contained considerable responsibility for the students and said *'I am not just a year tutor; I have to look after 75 people. I am not just an academic adviser, or spiritual, welfare, moral, financial and bereavement adviser – I am the whole lot!* (T.5.3) He said such work 'takes it out of you'. Adult students in particular need a good deal of support. He resented people thinking academic life was a cushy job.

George's views on work as a vocation are very clear. *'I was brought up to believe, even in my childhood,...that if a job was worth doing then you did it well or you didn't do it at all.. I think this is a profession dealing with the mental development let along the physical, psychological, and social of your students. You cannot short change them. That would be wrong.* (T.5.3) George's sense of academic work as a vocation was a strong theme in his auto/biography.

He is an extremely student focussed academic. He said academics should possess a key professional element; *'the element of kindness that is centrally important.'* (T.5.7) George is in fact well known for his hospitality, kindness, and respect for students. He never fails to meet them at an appointed time, has clear tutorial times, and will go out of his way to find ways of helping them. This information was provided by some of his students whilst I waited outside his office for one of our

appointments as I was early. They wanted to know who I was waiting for and when I told them they volunteered these points with no prompting from me. I think they thought I was a fellow mature student!

George is proud of this reputation with students and upon receiving a criticism from a newly appointed colleague that *'students are terrified of me'* (T. 5.7) he got quite angry. He said he could *'show him files of correspondence going back to the late sixties thanking me for what I have done, telling me what they are up to, how their families are growing up, their career progressing.....I don't think that is terror!'* (T.5.7) For George, the students are his family.

However, his approach to students is not lenient in any way. It is *'firm but fair'* (T.5.8) George expects students to work hard, to mirror his own view of work as a job well done or not at all. *'I once said to a student who had described himself as a customer - you don't have any rights without acceptance of responsibilities. You are not a customer. Let us make it quite clear this is an institution of undergraduates and postgraduates and we don't have customers. We have learners.* (T.5.23)

He is a popular dissertation tutor, unlike some of his colleagues, who he claims are more interested in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) than teaching and learning. Students know George will give them his time. *'I mean a typical example is our dissertation students are allocated half an hour a week per semester. I have got 14 people booking in with me and I said to them if you require more than half an hour you will get more than half an hour, I am not having a meter on the table that will ding when you half hour is up. This idea that you can measure and quantify everything is ridiculous because it is the way bureaucrats look at things. You don't get the best out of people doing that. If we are to be measured at all it should be on how we get the best out of people.* (T.5.23)

Students also know George has a sense of humour, which he uses to put them at their ease and get the best out of them. Clearly George is very proud of his capacity to bring out the best in students.

He constantly referred back to his work with students in our conversation. He said he had a bizarre experience when contributing to a criminology degree. *'I was holding a seminar that related to the dynamics of transportation to Australia and there were eleven people in the group. One of them was descended from Captain Cook, one from the convicts sent there, so I said is there anyone else with famous ancestors and one lady said one of my ancestors was Bishop Cuthbert of Tunstall who was burnt at the stake in the 16th century. All this in a group of eleven students.'* (T.5.39) George says this with wonder and enjoyment at his good fortune to be in such a job. It tells us a great deal about George's identity and the meaning he places on being an academic.

He says he will miss his students more than his colleagues when he eventually retires. *'Some of them have become great personal friends. I have been to a number of student weddings, and had numerous invitations I could not take up. I have even been to funerals. There is a bench out there dedicated to a caretaker. He and I got talking a few years ago and I said you ought to think about doing a degree and he did, and then started an M.Phil. He always referred to me as his mentor. Then he developed liver cancer and was gone at the age of 47. I went to his funeral. Another memorable student is a taxi driver in the city. If I am on the streets now and this taxi driver sees me he always pulls up and said I didn't take your advice George and it all went wrong! He always pulls up and asks me where I want to go.* (T.5.40)

George is also aware that the background of students entering higher education now is very different from 20 years ago. He has

explanations for this. *'I think it is the change in A level's due to the National Curriculum; it is also due to societal changes and the way school children are taught.* (T.5.10)

George lamented the fact that current students did not read widely, or even at all! He said he had once asked a seminar group to find out more about a particular person and report back next week. One girl in the group reported that she did not get on too well because *'she looked it up on the internet and he wasn't there! ...So I said are you telling me this person does not exist? It is not entirely their fault as they live partly in an instant world where you tap a button and everything comes up as gospel.* (T.4.10). George said he felt students were very uncritical of information gained in this way, and he could no longer make assumptions in his teaching that students had a broad basic understanding of topics. He said the National Curriculum has led to a situation where schools do not deal with 19th Century History.

Having bemoaned the changes in student prior knowledge he was keen to stress that *'one of the things that has not changed is student perception and their sense of humour. I always believe if you can make it a little more humorous then they remember those things.* (T.5.11)

George does occasionally have to deal with uncooperative young students. He said his strategy was drawn from George Bernard Shaw *'if you want to muck up somebody's weekend you send them something unpleasant that arrives on a Saturday!'* (T.5.30) So if students play up he sends a recorded delivery letter to arrive on a Saturday or *'when they have gone home for Christmas vacation and they have been home a couple of days'* (T.4.30). The letter tells them they have not met their commitments and have been messing around so they must come and see him at the start of the next week, or term, for one of Uncle George's fireside chats. *'The net result of this is their family wants to know what is in the letter so by the time they see me they have already*

been bawled out by the family. One young man said to me 'please don't have a go at me George; my mother has already put me to task. So I said why is that, well he said she was giving me £400 month but not now. Well, I said what were you doing with it? Increasing brewery profits he said. T.4.30) Apparently this strategy is successful. He did not say what he did to chastise adult students.

G.3.3.   The academic research role

George has undertaken sustained historical research throughout his whole academic life. He did not allow it to get in the way of supporting students and was adamant about this point.

George has very strong reservations about the RAE. He said *'as soon as they launched the idea of assessing people by their research output, you immediately divided academics into two channels. Those people who put their research first and those people who want to do the research but want to look after their students as well. There is also a third camp, those people who are very good teachers and want to teach and don't do research.'* (T.5.8)

G.3.4. Mentors

George went on to point out the importance of mentors in his professional life. One of them was his father, one was his maternal Grandfather and the one was his paternal Grandfather who was a retired Headmaster. *'My father and I have always been very close and we have always been able to sit and discuss education and government policy and this sort of thing. He takes a great interest in the ongoing development of my career, even now, when he is 85. So when I have anything published he gets a copy and my Aunt reads through the chapter of a book I have just finished.'* (T.5.12) George clearly likes to be valued, for people to take an interest in his work, to which he gives

so much of himself. He also mentioned the importance of someone who 'believes' in him and his work, and said his new wife was just such a person. His PhD supervisor believed in him too. Looking at the emphasis he places on his work with students, and their belief in him, you might say that they are also his mentors who inspire him daily to do his best.

G.3.5. The use of time and trust

George talked about skills other than supporting students and research that were important in his role as an academic. He said you have to be good at time management, and be able to conquer fears and work out what is important. He stressed the importance of trust in this process. *'I have worked for five Heads over the years and they have all taken the same approach. They leave you to get on with it and trust you, which is the way it should be because if you cannot be trusted at this level then you shouldn't be doing the job.'* (T.5.13)

The way time is used is vital. *'the way in which I use time has changed over the years in the sense of I think we get slightly more work placed upon us that we used to get.'* (T.5.13) George attributed this in part to the growth of bureaucracy. *'I mean if I want some stationery I have got to fill in a form... we used to have someone here who was not very confident on the admin side and she said to me one day 'you are not allowed in the stationery cupboard!' So I said how long have you been here? I think it was about three years. I said I have been here longer than that, and if I cant be trusted to get some notepaper well I may as well just pack up and go.'* (T.5.13). Although this may seem a trivial incident it is representative of a whole raft of bureaucratic procedures that remove trust from academics and George felt that bureaucratic measures to check every thing that academics do in the name of quality assurance, illustrated this problem.

George felt his own professionalism should ensure he did not abuse his position and went on to say *'there is external pressure in terms of how we are expected to use our time, certainly, but I also think there is an inbuilt expected assumption, which I think is perfectly correct, that we need to account to someone in terms of what we are doing. ....all my years in the profession have been very enjoyable because I have never had a Head of Department breathing down my neck'.* (T.5.14)

George attributed the trust that had been shown to him to his own professionalism. He said he had heard 'horror stories' about the way some academic staff were been treated. He said he was free to come and go as he pleased as long as he did what was expected of him but *'it's when people don't do what is expected of them they end up on the carpet'.* (T.5.14) Here George is hinting that he feels some academic staff created their own dilemmas and said academic work requires *'self discipline...but also trust.* (T.5.14)

G.3.6.   Bureaucracy

George felt that bureaucracy has replaced trust. *I think that is where I have some reservations about the expansion of bureaucracy in the institution because that involves an element of suspicion or lack of trust. I mean when I started bureaucracy was there to support academic staff.....I get the distinct impression now that some bureaucrats think academics are there to support them! '* (T.5.14)

George felt that he was slowing down a bit now, in so far as there isn't quite the amount of time that there used to be to do what you are expected to do. Tasks had proliferated; he felt *'we were swamped by numerous pieces of paper'* (T.5.32) and that in his case it had left less time for research.

George felt administrative work has encroached on academic lives inexorably. Sometimes this becomes ridiculous as it creates pressures that are irresolvable. George gave an example of when registry finance telephoned him to ask him if he knew a student of his had not paid his fees and what was he going to do about it. He said very clearly *'I am not going to do anything about it. I am paid to supervise the man in order that he gains a higher degree so I suggest you go away and do your job and I will do mine.'*(T.5.14)

George said he once told a packed staff meeting, struggling with mounds of paperwork for the meeting that *'all this notepaper is symbolic of the fact that all empires expand their bureaucracy just before they collapse.* (T.5.14) He also said he once went to a presentation about the old College of Advanced Technology becoming a Polytechnic and on the flip chart of 'costs' the administrative costs were much higher than in comparable institutions although he has no evidence about this differentiation now.

However, he did say Redpath University was overloaded with administrative staff. He gave this evidence. *'In this Faculty we underwent Faculty reorganisation in 1985. It was extensive. We started in a Faculty with an administrative assistant and two support workers, plus the Dean. What have we got in Faculty office now? The Dean-plus twenty five administrative workers.* (T.5.15) Clearly George did not acknowledge the enormous growth in student numbers in the period 1985 to 2007. George said during frequent periods of financial crisis it had been suggested that the 'centre' devolve some administration to the faculties but he poked fun at this, and pointed out at meetings that would mean loss of jobs at the centre and this would never happen. It has not. Tasks have been devolved to Faculties but they are replicated at the centre because of lack of trust or poor organisation; it is not clear which or is perhaps both. For example, the way in which Faculty business is conducted is shaped by

university regulations. George thinks that local Faculty Boards and Boards of Studies are farcical as a result in so far as they are more and more prescribed in terms of what is permitted for discussion; the agenda has a set format. People just *'switch off'* (T.5.17) he said, as they know they will not be able to influence proceedings, or raise important issues. He said as a result these Boards were *'dysfunctional'* (T.5.16).

Talking further about how time is used, George said they introduced forms that had to be completed, showing what teaching you were doing, when you were in the office etc., in his department. He wanted to know who would be looking at these forms, and kept on asking this question. In the end the forms were withdrawn. So at this level of bureaucracy there is some indication of resistance, but it is minor. He said teaching contributions were in fact decided collegially between course tutors.

In fact George found humour in many of the administrative activities, such as three technicians arriving in his room with clipboards to 'check the electrical equipment'. He thought this must be a new job creation scheme.

For George *'bureaucracy expands to fill every space available and we don't really need a lot of it....one illustration of this is the telephone book. One day before I retire I will get a student to do a project on the internal telephone directory which is quite interesting. You find over time looking back over them that the number of academics has gone down and the number of bureaucrats has gone up.'* (T.5.33)

G.3.7. Restructuring the curriculum

We then moved on to discuss the way in which the curriculum had been reorganised by unitisation or modularisation. George was very clear about the impact of this on learning and teaching: *'I don't think that unitisation and credit ratings have developed me in terms of supporting people's intellectual development because when we had year long courses students could really get their teeth into it. Now they have got twelve weeks, two hours a week and that's it. It doesn't matter whether I like it or not, that is it.* (T.5.17) There was as sense here that George could not control the way learning was organised and therefore felt inhibited as a teacher as a consequence.

Neither did he think the rationale of flexibility given for all these changes was proven. *'at a time when student finance is placed under incredible difficulty, the least likelihood that would happen is people moving between institutions (to accumulate credit) or for overseas students to attend for one semester. As for accumulating all these records, what does it actually achieve?'* (T.5.17). He went on to say that on the last occasion of a quality review of History all the staff had to put their teaching materials in a Unit Box. These are kept in Departments as a record of what has been taught on a unit. Some staff had not put anything in their boxes for a while. He said some of these were brilliant teachers but nevertheless had been castigated for this 'administrative' error as if putting material in boxes was illustrative of good teaching and not doing it was indicative of bad.

He made an interesting point about why academics had not resisted some of these changes given most felt they were detrimental to learning in higher education. *'I have a friend who teaches at Sussex and he said you should be like us George, we were like peasants, and we just revolted and said we weren't going to do it.'* (T.5.18) However, academics in Redpath University did not revolt. The passivity of

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academics in the face of change is a theme already discussed in this study and has been commented upon recently by Nixon (2007:7)

> Many of the practices, systems and structures within which academics operate are manifestly not concerned with the advancement of student learning or of professional education.....academics practitioners routinely grumble about this sad state of affairs but without the complicity of academics, the audit culture would be unsustainable.

George said he found the standardisation of higher education processes, organisation of the curriculum, and audits was *'personally annoying, and professionally irritating because I could not see the purpose of it.* (T.4.18) Nevertheless, like others, he has complied. He has strong views on the nature of structural changes in higher education and thinks *'we have moved away from a situation where academia was academia to one where it is perceived as being a business.'* (T.5.23)

G.3.8.   Communications and technology

We then moved on to talk about communication and his use of technology or voicemail and email in his daily work. *'I don't have voicemail so I don't have a problem with it.....I do receive email but admit I don't answer them instantaneously because it is a tool, but we shouldn't become a slave to it. I prefer face to face communication or via notes. I think that is much more personal and productive....I have a chap next door who emails me and thinks emails are rather like telephones. And some people use them as a weapon and fire off anything at you.'* (T.5.21) Then the humour that George has bubbling away came through as he reminded me of the fact that the university introduced emails as the main channel of communication before every member of staff actually had a computer! *'So I was stopped on numerous occasions at that time and told 'you are very rude aren't you' and I said I beg your pardon and was told I sent you an email and you*

have not replied. Well if I had a piece of equipment on which to reply I would. When the PC arrived there were 56 emails on it! They went back a few months and one had a cryptic line 'I have eaten half the Christmas pudding.' (T.4.21)

George spoke of new younger staff at the cutting edge of their subjects who delivered lectures using all the advanced technology possible, but somehow did not always manage to reach the students. He said it was as if they were doing this performance on their own, if you looked at what the students got out of it, after the first flashy impression.

George did not use WebCt, Powerpoint or any other recent developments in education technology. He said *'I don't buy it at all. I think there is a great risk. I have watched three Powerpoint presentations and have not been impressed by one of them. I don't see the point of putting up a slide that has three lines of text on it and standing there reading the text to people. They can read, why not give them a handout. And the fact is the more technical it is means the more complex it is and the risk of something going wrong. I use simple Overhead Transparencies.'* (T.5.27).

When asked how he writes his books, by hand or computer, he said he didn't know how to 'write' on a computer, and writes all his books by hand. His wife does the word processing.

He did not think that academics could be good at everything, for example technology, administration, or all singing and dancing. In fact the HERA role analysis lists such a wide range of competences and skills it is sometime astonishing to contemplate one person having all them all.

G.3.9.   Scholarly work and professional development

In terms of professional development, George felt that after his fist two years in post as a lecturer he ought to get a Masters degree and applied to do an MA in Local History part time at Leicester University. He said it was the only place you could do it at that time, so even though it was a long way from home, he enrolled. Following that achievement he decided to register at T. University for a PhD. He said it took nine years to gain the PhD part time. He was seconded one day a week to do this.

Whilst he was completing his PhD he published a book in 1976, and gained the PhD in 1979. He said chance played a part in his advanced study in his subject in that *'I came across a man I was with had involvement with the East India Company and this led to a chance event to discover a huge archive and working on this has occupied me for the last 21 years.'* (T.5.22) He said his next professional milestone was being elected a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society in 1993.

George then said although he had managed to get 'almost to the top' of his profession in terms of his subject expertise, in Redpath University, it had taken him eight attempts to gain a Principal Lectureship, and he felt this was illustrative of the restricted view of senior staff about the value of the work he was doing. This raises important insights into the ways in which promotion systems work. An academic could be an internationally renowned scholar in his or her discipline, but not necessarily recognised in their home university. Although it is widely felt that research and publication were the key factors in a promotion in Redpath University in the past, this had to be combined with some form of administrative role either as course leader, or major committee work. Currently promotion includes excellence in teaching and learning and is judged by examining the

level at which you are working on the HERA scales or bands. Research and publication is not a specific skill in this scale so has to be catered for as a special case.

G.3.10. Job Satisfaction

George said that once he got the bit between his teeth he *'discovered this was what I was happiest doing. I think it is a matter of good fortune and luck – not drifting'* (T.5.2). He thought his eventual choice of career was the best decision he had ever made.

When asked about the Higher Education Role Analysis (HERA) development that seeks to place academics in a category related to their skill set and competences for the purposes of reward and promotion, he was not actually fully aware of the development although it was introduced two years ago and does affect pay scales. He did say, however, *'I think there is an argument for saying that people need to meet competences. The trouble with insisting people should be trained to teach is it actually deprives you of the opportunity to find out for yourself. I mean if you handle a class and it goes wrong you learn something. No amount of theorising will help you out with that one.* (T.5.12) Clearly George is a supporter of the 'apprenticeship' model of teaching.

'The other thing that makes the job enjoyable is I am a firm believer in student empowerment, because it gets students to make all sorts of decisions. I tell them the course does not belong to me it belongs to them. I only do this with second years. I say if you offer ownership and control and you perform as a team then that is fine. ...my colleagues don't grasp this and say 'you have got all these people doing dissertations, how to you get them to do it?' I say it is easy, empower them, form them into a team and call them Team George or whatever and you let them help set and agree rules for playing and producing and they will.' (T.5.25)

George has other ideas about democratising the learning process. He has consulted with his student year reps about when their assessments should be due, rather than present them with a fait accompli. His colleagues thought he was mad to do this, but it went ahead and the students complied. *'They did it and it made them feel good and feel ownership'* (T.5.25).

George has obviously enjoyed his working life, and claims not to suffer boredom. He delights in his work. His sense of enjoyment is in a job well done. *'I think it is a series of challenges so there is very little time to get bored. I have enjoyed the whole of the time I have worked here, and if you turn that on its head, there are millions of people in this country locked in jobs they cannot stand.*(T.5.28) His job satisfaction and academic identity is rooted firmly in his relationships with students even though he has considerable standing in his historical discipline.

G.3.11.   Fellow academics

George is not so positive about fellow academics as he is about students. He said he felt there were staff (and some students) *'who were not happy unless they were being miserable!'* (T.5.25) George said he felt you had to have a disposition as an academic which was *'a spirit of enjoyment, and you have to like people, especially young people. If you don't like young people you should not be here.'* (T.5.26.) More than half of students in Redpath University are regarded as adult students, and not the typical 18-21 year olds but I think George meant younger people.

George did not think all academics liked people, he felt some preferred to work alone and did not enjoy social interaction. He was also very concerned that the RAE had caused academics to overlook students in their focus on research and had forgotten *'the basic precept that*

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without students none of use would be here in job. I think that point is sometimes overlooked. Our students are highly intelligent....they know when they are being short changed. (T.5.26)

George felt younger staff were more likely to fall into the trap of forgetting students as they became caught up in the whirl of the RAE.

G.3.12.   Working Environment

George was scathing about the way in which the university premises are timetabled, through central timetabling. *'I am teaching first year students this semester and only one hour is on this site (where his office is).* (T.5.36) He said that lugging all his handouts etc was an onerous and unnecessary task. *'Yesterday, at 1p.m I had to lecture over at B. building and had to physically struggle with two bags, a briefcase and 95 unit handbooks in the two bags. This has a knock on effect on time taken to get to another building, and get back. It knocks out effective time...And for the students too...one of my students has to go to five different sites and classes finish at ten minutes to the hour to allow for this transition, but it only wants one person to go over the time and you have got the Kissinger domino effect...all these poor youngsters turning up hopelessly late having missed some of their lesson. It is senseless'* (T.5.37) This point illustrates some of the difficulties of expanding higher education without sufficient additional resources. Buildings that were designed for relatively few students, taught on one site, are now used for thousands more students and this means space has to be used in a different way to accommodate them all.

Similarly resources are wasted because of space charging. George pointed out that *'we are charged for rooms we have not used because there is no really effective system for short term cancellations....I was timetables officer for about 6 years but I packed it in, in the end, because the whole thing became needlessly complex.'* (T.5.37)

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There are of course as always with George more humorous moments when speaking of sharing accommodation with other departments and external users. George said there were a couple of outstanding incidents. *'I was in an office that had been used by the probation service. Nobody told their clientele so I was in the middle of a tutorial one day and the door burst open and this chap stood there and said 'I am looking for probation mate...have you got the price of a cup of tea and a fag'*. (T.5.37).

Another example was when a lorry driver, who was looking for a particular building number, knocked on George's door. He wanted to deliver things to this building The lorry driver said *'I have been round and round and can't find it so I rang central administration for him and it turned out that the footings of the building had not even been put in.* (T.5.38).

Sharing scarce accommodation also has its lighter side for George. *'Another thing that sticks in my mind is when I first started here and there were six of us staff in M. House, with only four desks and chairs. We had to draw lots as people came in.* (T.5.38) One can imagine the scenario.

G.3.13.   Professional Values

For George the key essence of being an academic was knowledge of your subject, the capacity to enthuse and inspire students and help them achieve and believe in themselves, make them capable of producing things they would never have thought possible, with kindness and a sense of humour. The latter point is definitely not part of HERA.

His colleagues have often commented on how he is always with a student whenever they knock on his door. They said it 'can't be good

for you'. George said *'well they (students) have probably been all the way along the corridor, knocking on doors and getting no responses. That's the first thing. Second, they just want somebody to listen to them. I think this is an important question about academic and professional values. You have got to have sympathy and understanding if it is to work. I know it is an old fashioned view.'*(T.5.31)

George thinks these values are less prevalent in those academic staff on short term contracts, whereas *'if you have a lifetime contract the implication is that you have time for reflection about your role and your contribution is going to be spread over a number of years, so it will improve with time. If you only have a three year contract no sooner are you thinking crikey I have got to think about this role you have to think about your next contract.* (T.4.31)

George thinks being an academic is a privileged position. *'I mean I take the view that they pay us quite well for doing what we do and everybody should pull their weight, and again that is an old fashioned view now. We must put students first.'* (T.4.34)

He does not celebrate his own achievements in front of students, as some academics of his standing do. Instead he says students are not there to hear about his own publications, they are here for him to teach them. He has been informed by his Head of Department that he was too modest about his own work when applying for Readership.

G.3.1.4   The future

George did not talk much about the future, after retirement other than saying *'originally I was going to retire next year but my wife said if I was applying for this Readership and I got it you want a chance at enjoying it, so I shall not be going for a couple of years yet. I think it may annoy some people.* (T.5.41) He was aware of the need to keep intellectually active after retirement and said *'I mean national research*

shows the average life span of somebody who retires at 65 with no outside interests is about 18 months. So I have a major outside interest which I shall simply pursue. I shall also endeavour to write a few more books.' (T.4.41) Somehow when he said that I could not envisage George without students to be responsible for.

CHAPTER 6.   ACADEMIC IDENTITIES: CONSTRUCTING AND RECONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES.

It is important to keep in mind that constructing and reconstructing an academic identity is a complex issue that cannot be reduced to reactions and responses to change. After first reiterating the aims of the study, this Chapter seeks to explore some of the complexities of the process, comparing and contrasting difference between auto/biographies.

There is clearly more than one way to construct an academic self. The diversity of these academic lives is illustrative of this. It also shows how you cannot read off what academic life might be like by examining the context in which they construct identities. Individual responses take many shapes and forms. However, it may be possible to suggest common contextual issues that might have a similar effect on other academics in other higher education institutions. Such identity work is by definition disparate and complex to analyse, but what is definable in this study is a number of themes that help to bring together a wide range of factors. These are grouped under the following headings.

6.1.   Aims revisited

The aim of this study was to examine the effects of changes in higher education on the academic identity of participants over a period of at least 15 years in the period 1992 to 2007, using the auto/biographical method. In fact some of the auto/biographies go back to as far as 30 years and therefore pre-date some of the contemporary policy changes in higher education.

6.2   Making sense of academic life

These auto/biographies show individuals making sense of their academic identity in the changing world of higher education, but in

very different ways using very specific strategies to maintain, change or adapt their identities.

Whilst their academic identity was forged within a university organisation, the 'plurality of lifeworlds' (Berger et.al, 1967) in modern society suggests people will present different selves in different contexts. This factor was highlighted by more than one of the academics by stressing their other roles in life. Fred (T.4) for example was keen to emphasise a more accurate portrayal of him was as father and husband working in the home doing practical things. He is clearly aware of a public and a private self and was keen to highlight his private self as the significant one. However, another of the academics, Paul, (T.1) said very little about his private self. Feldman and Klich, (1991) suggest that the presentation of 'conformist' identities and the concealment of 'private selves' is a common feature in contemporary organisations. It was not possible, however, to discern whether Paul was presenting a conformist identity in his auto/biography.

What these life stories illustrate are people *composing* professional identities, conjuring them up, out of the material to hand and in a relatively constrained context. It is a process that is sometimes but not always guided by the logic of goal rationality, for example trying out how attractive the ends might be with the given means, all the while being influenced by a set of professional values that may be individual but are selected from a range of very shifting, declining, or emerging ones that shape the work of those in higher education. The work of the identity constructor is, indeed the work of a *bricoleur*.

6.2.1   Identity work

All the academics engaged in their work by defining and/or redefining their identities in forms they regarded as valid, to ensure they were

not totally shaped by the organisational pressures of the university. This might be regarded as 'identity work' (Goffman, 1983).

Two of the academics (Paul T.1 and George T.5) illustrated their responses to maintaining their identity by pointing out what they had to do to make their work meaningful to them. Paul spoke of having to engage in research which he saw as essential to an academic identity. George emphasised the importance of his subject knowledge and his standing in the wider history discipline community as a key feature of his academic identity.

Two others, Stan (T.2.), and Fred (T.4) saw their identities in a past context to some extent, although Stan had forged a multiple range of past and contemporary identities which he tried to make sense of as an academic identity and now found it difficult to reconcile each part of his self. Harold (T.3.) regularly reflected on his academic identity by engaging in 'identity work' with relevant outside others, who could be education policy makers, employers, or significant colleagues in his curriculum development field.

6.2.1.1   Identity work compared

It is perhaps easier to see the strategies employed by each of the participants in forming, maintaining and adapting their identities as academics, when making comparisons between them. The following summary statements offer this opportunity.

a) George (T.5) has steadfastly maintained continuity of his own academic professional values and identity in the face of many attempts to undermine them. His strategy could be seen as resistance to change to preserve his identity. His conception of what an academic is and how he or she should conduct him or her self is a strong reflection of his vocational approach to work and he holds a normative view of education. An academic role for George is a

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privileged one and he stresses educational achievement ought to be a more common aspiration than it is.

b) Paul (T.1.) has adapted his academic identity to ensure he is able to work with change to improve practices, rather than defend old ones. His major objective has been to maintain and improve standards of teaching and learning in schools and he has worked with each new education policy to ensure this, always retaining and emphasising his professional identity as a teacher. His identity in his academic role has in some ways, therefore, been secondary to his professional role as a teacher trainer and school development consultant although he has taken on the values of empirical research in education as an essential aspect of academic identity.

c) Stan (T.2.)has had to contend with quite a wide repertoire of academic work, given the uncertainties of his own academic professional life and identity. The core element of his identity has been his former self, the free living musician. It is almost as if, which Goffman (1958) highlights, he has a kind of 'role distance' in his performance of the academic role as if by doing this he cannot be seen to have failed in it. He is unsure what is required of him in a contemporary academic role, even though he is now Head of Department.

d) Harold (T.3) has adapted his identity as a professional, as he describes himself, by seeking ways of shaping change to his own values, rather than allowing change to determine him. Self management was a clear feature of Harold's career project, and he was evidently an 'entrepreneur of the self' (Rose, 1989:226). In some ways, however, he too has adopted an element of 'role distance' by repeatedly emphasising the primary importance of family ties in his decision making. He was very clear that the academic role he initially embarked on was very firmly chosen to fit in with family

responsibilities, and throughout his professional life he has given up opportunities to ensure he can stay loyal to family ties.

e) Fred's (T.4) identity is as an engineer and craftsman. He has not enjoyed the latter half of his academic life; feeling increasingly encroached upon by bureaucracy and managerialism in higher education. He feels very strongly that his autonomy has been eroded. His abilities to win industrial contracts, and generate income for Redpath University have fallen into disuse. He fits into the category that Bauman (2004) speaks of as having an 'absent identity' as the university has changed the ways in which it uses skills of Fred's kind. Fred is able to offer external consultancy expertise of an applied kind to engineering industries but expects to be rewarded for this with a share of some of the income generated. As this additional income was taken from him by financial changes at Redpath University relating to Knowledge Transfer he was, in his terms, relegated to the role of lecturer. Thus his identity as a man who made things work in a practical context, his cherished identity, was removed. For him, his identity is absent in his current role as lecturer.

6.2.2. Academic professionalism

Maclure (1993) reminds us of the self reflexive nature of identity formation, and the important links in this process with professional values and aspirations, and these have been used to examine current developments of identity in this study. The field notes in this study have recorded academics asking reflexive questions around 'how does this development fit in with my values and goals' as they have interpreted change. In other words, what do I have to do to lead a good academic life? In some ways this is an indirect plea for some kind of professional framework in which to forge an academic identity.

To discuss this issue in more depth it is worth mentioning Nixon (2001:183) who has very strong views on academic professionalisation and the nature of an academic good life. He argues:

> Professionalisation is a structural feature of our social and economic landscape. The definition of academic professionalism is therefore a matter of great moment not only for the academic but for society as a whole....any such definition requires serious consideration of the ends and purposes of academic life.

There seems to be a polarity in the literature on whether or not the academic is a gifted amateur in the absence of clearly prescribed routes of entry in academic life and no clear code of practice, or whether the growing managerialism of bureaucratically accountable higher education has created what Sachs (2001) calls *managerial professionalism*. These are professionals whose identity is forged within the confines of an organisational culture that is managerial, running education as a business, rather than one prescribed by a set of professional principles and codes of conduct.

Managerialist theory rejects as special pleading the idea there is any fundamental difference between the operation of a bottle making factory and the operation of an educational institution. In both the above cases managerialist's argue that the optimal policy is to design organisations that respond directly to consumer demand using generic management techniques applicable to all kinds of corporations.

Nixon (2001) does not feel that polarising of the debate about academic roles into those that hark back to the perceived traditional academic roles and values versus the managerial professional is at all helpful in clarifying the role of the academic. Instead he proposes a different strategy. Nixon (2001:184) suggests:

The insularity of those 'old values' is part of the problem, not part of the solution. The 'new' values have yet to be fully articulated.

Whilst the author of this study would agree with this view, and it is a point taken up in the concluding section of this study, it is a very ambitious statement. Not only do such values have to be widely articulated and shared, and evidence suggests there is ambiguity here in terms of the purpose of higher education, but the 'new' values have yet to be forged. Evidence from this study shows a great deal of variation in the values surrounding the academic work role and no clear consensus around what the role of academic should encompass nor indeed what the boundaries of higher education itself is (Barnett and DiNapoli (2008).

Nixon claims Bourdieu (1996:348) points a way forward out of the current abyss. Artists, writers and scholars, must:

> Assert themselves as an international power of criticism and watchfulness, or even of proposals, in the face of the technocrats....or get involved in rational action to defend the economic and social conditions of these socially privileged universes in which the material and intellectual instruments of what we call reason are produced and reproduced.

That would be a lofty aim for academics in some of the pre-1992 universities, and may not be a logical or feasible one for those working in professional vocational education and training of the kind many of the academics in this study, based in a post-1992 university, were engaged in. It seems there is so much diversity of purpose in higher education institutions, both within and between universities, the claim put forward by Nixon is unrealisable as a general statement of aims for an academic profession.

Only one of the academics in this study, Harold (T.3) described himself as a professional rather than an academic. Others

conceptualised their identity in terms of their subject, e.g. (T.5) George (T.5.) and Paul (T.1), or had no clear perspective on the whole role of an academic but did see their role as teacher; this seemed to be (T.2) Stan's view and in part Pauls (T.1.), although Paul did have a clear view that an academic identity must embrace the research function. Fred (T.5) saw his academic role as a vocational trainer closely allied to industry.

What is very clear, however, is that in each of the academic auto/biographies there is a distinctive set of educational values that shape their identity and professional practice and their teaching and tutoring relationship to students. The particular constellations of these values are to some extent unique to each individual but it seems likely that they form, together, a partial common professional value framework for academic life in general. It is this area of the academic role that has received recent attention in terms of professional training for teaching and learning e.g. U.K Higher Education Academy as a successor to the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE). Taylor (2006:23/29) claims that academics need more wide ranging roles but should acknowledge the central role of teaching in academic work.

6. 3. <u>Order and disorder, certainty and uncertainty</u>

Individual academics have embarked upon strategies to create order, where there has been disorder. They have also contrived to make meaning for themselves and generate a feeling of certainty in an era in higher education that is currently still uncertain of its purpose and moving inexorably towards a more overt economic purpose.

In some senses the concept of the academic 'career project' (Grey, 2001:1465) is useful here in considering how academics have drawn together and ordered all the elements of their role into a meaningful whole. Although Grey discusses the way in which *career projects* play a part in transforming subjects' experience and understanding of

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workplace surveillance, the concept of career project has wider application and is useful in this study. Career projects are not career trajectories, as in a bureaucracy where you 'work you way up', but they are according to Grey, a way of creating milestones, and key stages in a working life. Academics in this study had indeed undertaken career projects of their own making. They reported on milestones they had generated for themselves within the organisational framework. For example, getting to teach a subject area they liked; finding ways to produce conference papers and publish some of them; taking on more responsibility in order to achieve goals and possibly secure promotion; and networking with other colleagues in their discipline and forming alliances, nationally and internationally. These career projects illustrate how each have made their own academic identity.

Self management is also a defining feature of contemporary subjectivity, as discussed above, and it is through self management academics become *who* they are. Rose (1989:226) puts it like this:

> Individuals... become, as it were, entrepreneurs of themselves, shaping their own lives through the choices they make among the forms of life open to them.

There is evidence in these auto/biographies of a struggle to ensure agency or choice in the course of forming and reforming professional identity. Whether this choice is formulated as professional autonomy and its potential erosion is mourned through the range of audit strategies and practices; or is conceptualised as an element of academic identity that is becoming encroached through a process of constraint whereby the curriculum is so closely regulated and proscribed through learning outcomes, each of the participants has talked about choices they made in relation to these factors. Not all of the stories indicate the same level of autonomy, or perceived choice to seize the day and change in ways that suit them, but each participant in the study mentioned the importance of a measure of autonomy as a

positive element of their academic role. They were not referring to academic freedom to express ideas, but the sense in which they could shape their own practices, manage their own time, according to recognisable and shared values. Making judgements and choices was a considerable element of this process.

It was interesting to note Bauman's (2007:119) view in relation to the consequences of making choices. He argues that choice in today's society may have consequences that lead to self blame:

> At no other time have the acts of choosing become so poignantly self conscious as they are now, conducted as they are under condition of painful yet incurable uncertainty, under the constant threat of 'being left behind' and of being excluded from the game with any return barred because of the failure to rise to the new demands.

Although Bauman was referring to wider societal factors, individual responsibility is a feature of organisational life in Redpath University. Academics go about their personal and working lives with the spectre of personal failure relating to choices. These choices may have led to a position where they are excluded from further participation in the *game*. This may be because of unwillingness to conform, or related to willingness to be flexible. Examples of this have been recorded in the auto/biographies. It is clear many academic staff wanted to comply with policy changes for fear of being left behind, or made worthless, in the rapid rate of change.

The *game* of living, where decisions made, strategies pursued, are related to our social value, our personal worth, is one that is played out daily in all kinds of occupations. If you lose at this game you no longer have a recognisable identity or an *absent identity*. 'Society wants from you nothing but to stay in the game and have enough tokens on the table to go on playing.' (Bauman, 2004:52)

In relation to this study, it evokes the image of Harold (T.3) who has indeed stayed in the game and gone on playing, making sure each

time he has had to change roles that he has the skills to 'go on playing'. His particular strategy has been to spot the changes in Redpath University in advance of their being imposed on him and ensuring he is well versed and 'useful' when they come, as he knows the new rules of the game.

It seems that the old, perceived certain identity of the academic has been stirred up, undermined, ravaged even by the social and economic changes and such processes have left academics with only 'bits of material' (Bauman, 2004) with which to construct their identity, rather than a defined space or role in the higher education organisation. Bauman refers to this as 'liquid life'. The academics in this study have all done this; put together their identities with the shifting material to hand. The resultant different academic identities illustrate the different strategies, values, meaning systems they have chosen in the process. They have all done so using 'academic capital' as they did not enter higher education with 'scientific capital' or via the research route (Bourdieu, 1988). Academic capital can be seen as the skills in teaching, academic networking, generic leadership roles and working within disciplinary boundaries.

Choices in this context are informed by a very narrow perception of factors and 'one does not know what is in store and has no way to count the risks' (Bauman 2007:127) Risk, according to Beck, (2000) is an increasing element of contemporary life. At least one of the academics in this study, Stan (T.2), made the choice to be flexible in his department, agreeing to undertake a wide range of teaching tasks. This resulted in his not being firmly rooted in anything big enough to be indispensable when the loud knock of 'restructuring' arrived at the departmental door. His very flexibility meant he was easily highlighted as someone who could be made redundant as he had no obviously defined job, unlike Harold (T.4) who anticipates and seeks solutions for himself in relation to change, Stan had to go and search

for remnants (bits of material) of work to rebuild his professional identity.

Some of the auto/biographical stories suggest this constant state of uncertainty in higher education has generated considerable self doubt. (Stan T.2 in particular) However, another strategy is to ignore some of the major elements of change. For example George (T.5) has, to some extent, created his own reality and worked 'as if' his values of academic life as a vocation or service should be, and are, shared by others despite mass expansion of higher education. Fred (T.4) did not comply with the Redpath University's new model of consultancy work, and withdrew from this role. As a result his identity as someone who liaised with employers and generated income ceased to be real.

6.4. <u>Communities of practice</u>

Universities are made up of several communities of practice, which can also be seen as layers. Each academic interacts with more than one layer, either as a core person, or as a peripheral one. This point is raised because the academics in this study have their core layer in which their work is central but interact with other layers.

An interesting example is Harold (T.4), who has interacted with many layers, and crossed subject boundaries in his work in academic development which is difficult to achieve in terms of acceptance. Wenger (1998.163) also reminds us that the identity of a professional combines multiple forms of membership, and these have to be reconciled across different boundaries. In Harold's (T.4.) case it has enabled him to widen his understanding of change in higher education and locate his identity in a broader framework; his actions can be seen as goal-oriented rational action (*zweckrational*).

This is unlike George (T.5), who has to some extent remained in his disciplinary history subject layer, both locally, nationally and

internationally. His professional allegiance is there. This point raises issues of which community of practice is the one where academic identity is fully realised. Clearly in George's case it is the discipline community. However, as James (2007:139) argues, some academics occupy diverse positions and with them different communities of practice and not all of these are warm, belonging, harmonious places; 'experienced practitioners in one field who enter adjacent communities of practice as newcomers may (encounter) particular difficulties'. There may be gatekeepers who resist the academics entry to a new community of practice, or the values and ideology of a new community of practice may not chime with their own. In the case of Fred (T.5.) his entry to the academic community in general meant he had to address new sets of values and ideology that he found conflictual. He was able to do this but retained his view that the engineering subject and industry was his real community.

6.4.1. Discipline and identity

Becher and Trowler (2001) have explored how academics have perceived themselves within their disciplinary contexts. Each discipline was seen to have a recognisable identity and to create a sufficient sense of belonging as to be capable of being described as an 'academic tribe'. Certainly George (T.5) was clear that he was in the historical studies academic tribe, and this played a large part in his own identity as an academic historian. What the academic tribe or historical colleagues thought of his endeavours was important to him; probably more important than the university hierarchy.

However, different academics have dissimilar identity locations; not all identify with their subject. Henkel (2000) found in her study of academic identities that some academics found their department a key source of disciplinary identity. Fred (T.5) for example clearly saw his own Engineering Department as originally a source of considerable collegiality, whereas Harold (T.4) saw his identity residing in his

capacity to act as a broker between the world of work and higher education rather than in his original Sociology discipline or department. Harold very much valued and enjoyed his identity and status with employers and it has formed his academic identity.

6.5. Landscapes of practice

Another aspect that influences academic identity is the type of academic work that is valued in a changing university. For Harold (T.4) the 'relevant others' for him were employers. He was a well respected curriculum developer and work based learning degree expert outside of Redpath University and had many colleagues in this field nationally. However, inside Redpath University he was initially not valued, and seen as a radical who could be left out on a limb. Lave and Wenger (1991) discuss this when noting the differential status of academics in terms of status and autonomy within different landscapes of practice. Academics have to integrate different aspects of their work that take place in different locations and landscapes of practice.

6.6. Biographical baggage and vocabularies of motive

All occupational groups bring to their work an element of biographical baggage. The entry point into Higher Education differed for each of these academics. Their various previous work or study experiences generated particular 'vocabularies of motive' (Mills, 1940) which can be seen in the narratives when explaining both their motives for entry to higher education, and their continuing attempts to forge and maintain an academic identity. Similarly their expectations differed about what an academic role would entail or offer, or what an academic identity was.

An example of this is in Fred's (T.5) auto/biography where he clearly enjoyed much higher status in industry than he does now in Redpath University. He brought ideas from his past role in industry as a

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railwayman and craftsman into higher education, and there was a clash of cultures along the way. Fred has a clearly articulated purposeful rationality (Weber) within his academic identity. Purposeful rationality, in which both goal and means are rationally chosen, is exemplified by the engineer who builds a bridge by the most efficient technique of relating means to ends. Fred's auto/biography reveals his scepticism about whether Redpath University is employing the most efficient techniques of relating ends to means

Harold (T.3) brought with him a sociological imagination as a vocabulary of motive to his academic role. He used sociological understanding of the social construction of reality as well as his understanding of life as theatre to construct and maintain his identity. His approach could be likened to a value oriented purposeful rationality in Weberian terms.

Stan (T.2) was keen to highlight his former identity, as a school art teacher, artist, musician and gardener prior to his entry to higher education. His vocabulary of motive on entering the academic role was constantly iterated as an unusual progression from that pre-entry biography, so much so that he questioned whether he really belonged in higher education. Stan's identity seems to link to Weber's concept of affective action, which is anchored in the emotional state of the actor rather than in the rational weighing of means and ends.

Paul (T.1) also entered higher education from the teaching profession, a pre-entry biography that was significant in shaping his identity in higher education as a teacher trainer, but his vocabulary of motive constantly argued for and justified his role as an educational researcher in higher education. Paul has very strong educational professional values and his identity seems related to Weber's concept of value-oriented rationality, characterized by striving for a substantive goal, a goal that is self defined.

George (T.5) had very clear images of what his academic identity should be and this was modelled on past or traditional conceptions of an academic and this was his vocabulary of motive. Traditional action in Weber's theory is guided by customary habits of thought, by reliance on "the eternal yesterday" and to some extent George's story could be cast in this light. Yesterday, for George, the academic values to which he subscribes were better than those currently in evidence.

6.7   Past and present and time

Narratives tell us how we construct, experience and structure time. They tell us the subjective sense of life as a being in time. They reveal and measure the sense of a life in terms of things that have happened to us or which we remember e.g. that was before, that was after, measured in terms of key events. These events are then structured so they appear organised. Each of the academics has done this, by prioritising, positioning and highlighting certain events in their lives.

Each of the academics recalled past actions and values as contributing to their current identity. The way they did this is was via a project of self management, which refers to the way in which we manage the production of our identity as a project within the narrative of our lives.

As Grey (2001:1468) says:

> the project of self-management links home and work, leisure, dreams and daydreams. Perhaps most significantly it links past, present and future through the vector of the self.

It is clear from some of the auto/biographies that the past and present have coalesced in forming and negotiating their current identity. Some, like George (T.4) were keen to show how their academic life

could be seen as a clear trajectory beginning with an early interest in historical archives to his current position as Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. Stan (T.2) on the other hand has had a fragmented professional life and this has led him to constantly reiterate and sometimes resurrect his past self within his current identity. He is still negotiating his current identity. Fred (T.5) however, never really reconciled his initial craftsman status with academic status to form an integrated academic identity. His past has dominated his present. He not only reiterates his past identity as an engineer, he clings to it. The past is in the present but the past is not coalesced with the present, it dominates it.

However, there are gaps or *silences in time* in the auto/biographies. For example, Stan (T.2) mentioned he had worked as an Art Teacher for 15 years prior to commencing his academic role but very little of this time was detailed.

The past is in the present in terms of how previous events, practices, values have been shaped and coalesced, or otherwise, to form the current self-identity, including the 'silences'. Lummis (1987:128) points out that individuals do dismiss quite long time spans, by carrying on with their narrative, moving to the next significant event, travelling through their narrative journey as if it were a series of staging posts. There is much that is hidden in between. The 'silences' that occur in auto/biographical accounts have been discussed by Passerini (1979) who suggests they are there because individuals may not yet have fully explained or theorised a particular event to themselves, so leave them out. Passserini shows that in some historical case studies, past experience or events witnessed, are so traumatic as to render it hidden within the narrative of the self.

One more point worth mentioning is the issue of memory. The past is not recalled in a simple factual way. Instead life events were

interpreted by each participant in terms of its significance for them. This tells us something about how we construct narrative self-identity. Narrative self-identity is conceptualised here as a self construction, it is not the sum of factual events in life.

Narrative stories converge to a form of narrative integrity in the telling of the story. For example, there are always comments about the rationality of actions and links are proposed between behaviours and values in life. However, this is often not revealed until the story is told; and if an issue has not been reflected upon and resolved sufficiently to articulate to another it can be left out, silenced. It may be asked how the interviewer judges there is a 'silence'? This was undertaken by considering the scale and extent of a life event in terms of working life and practices, and some external social and economic factors that could not fail to have been 'noticed' by the individual, but which receive no mention. Passerini (1979) used this method.

6.8.   Research and scholarly activity

Post-1992 universities appear to have more concerns about the RAE than do pre-1992 universities. There is evidence in this study to show how much of an impact the RAE has exerted on academic professional lives in a post 1992 university and continues to do so. Teaching and learning practices in Redpath University have been relegated to second place in some subject areas and contexts in the competitive environment and in the run up to each cycle of the RAE.

Although none of the academic auto/biographies have suggested their own research work does take precedence over teaching and learning, there is a culture and discourse in some disciplines/departments where they were located in the university that does prioritise research. The academic auto/biographies illustrate a clear awareness of this.

Paul (T.1) for example makes reference to the fact that although he would like some support for his research, the smallness of his

department and the lack of any research group that he can join, means he has to be excluded from the RAE although his own research profile would be eligible.

George (T.5.) made reference to the fact that new and younger academic staff paid much greater attention to their position in the RAE than they did in their teaching and learning role.

Harold (T.4.) was keen to point out that his conception of research was work based, and that industry actually did more research in total than universities. Using his criteria, Harold has certainly undertaken a great deal of applied research in curriculum design and delivery but this kind of research does not count in the RAE and therefore was often taken for granted and not directly rewarded.

Also in relation to applied research, it could be argued that Fred's (T.4) work in collaboration with industrial partners was indeed research, and involved important test procedures as well as fit for purpose criteria for evaluation. Again, this kind of research does not always fit neatly in the RAE.

Stan's (T.2) academic work is also interesting in the research arena discussion. He has published many articles in the field of art and design education, as well as producing a recent one man art exhibition, and has just published a book on cricket which he regards as an important aspect of culture. However, these kinds of research do not fit easily into the RAE criteria. They are not focussed straightforwardly into the RAE subject box.

Finally, there is also a lingering belief amongst academics that promotion is very much influenced by capacity for research and publication, despite arguments to the contrary in the promotion literature at Redpath University. Therefore it could be argued that the RAE exerts an indirect and sometimes negative influence on professional identity and practice.

6.9. A good academic life.

Values about what constitutes a good life, what goals are seen as those that might make up a coherent academic life in general terms, seemed to be in constant flux in the rush for the new, the innovative, and the latest trend in higher education. Each of the academic auto/biographies has some vision of a good academic life, although not clearly articulated in these terms. These emerged after reflecting on their academic lives with the interviewer.

Harold (T.4) was clear that he saw a good life as being one characterised by autonomy and to some extent power; power to intervene and own change. He also saw a good life as one that contained a family life. So his role as father, husband, and son were as important to his good life as being a professional.

Stan (T.2) is still searching for that good life, but is clear that his teaching relationship to students is an important element in it. He expressed some bewilderment that his values and strategies are not always appreciated by contemporary students. He also valued his home life and his extensive social networks and social capital he has worked hard to develop.

George (T.5) saw the good academic life as one characterised by respect, for students and for knowledge, and a growing belief in his own professional standing. His pride in being made a Reader, which is public acknowledgement of his subject knowledge, illustrates his delight in being an academic.

Paul (T.1) has ensured that any educational environment that he has engaged with is left in a better state or at least retains its quality. His values concerning his educational development work have an ecological-education character of preservation, enhancement and development. His idea of a good life is one where he is striving to

develop and improve education, not just accepting agendas that others have put forward.

Fred (T.4) sees the good life as one where he enjoyed respect for his skills in making things. He also felt that being well rewarded financially was a sign of such respect and entered higher education with that in mind. He very much valued collegiality and team effort working in an Engineering department. However, although he enjoyed his early academic life he feels the good life has already been eroded by bureaucratic and other changes in higher education.

6.10.   Trust

Trust has been a significant theme running through the field notes and this study. Academics have felt they enjoy less social respect, less authority and with it less trust in the period following the 1988 Education Act. Quality assurance frameworks have required more and more evidence of practice according to the rules and regulations laid down by the university. There has also been a general sense of not being trusted to work without constant surveillance of procedures. The absence of trust has therefore been a *leitmotif* in the lives of this group of academics.

One of the auto/biographies, (George.T5) placed a great deal of emphasis on trust as a concept in his work. He felt that academics had to have legitimate authority and to achieve this, be seen to be honourable and trustworthy in their dealings with others. He has very strong values about the form of the traditional role of a professional academic, and has successfully resisted attempts by the university to undermine these, at some risk to the rate of his own personal progression. Despite achieving many externally defined accolades, he has only just been made a Reader, toward the end of his academic career. Some of the academics in the study found the absence of trust in their judgements most irritating in the growing iteration of methods to standardise assessment practices.

6.11. Concluding comments

It seems that there are a number of themes in common in these auto/biographies. However, it is the academic role itself and possible future academic identities in all their diversity, which forms the central motif of the conclusion.

There are clearly a much wider range of academic and academic related roles now that *mass* higher education has become lodged in the culture of HE. As Barnett and DiNapoli (2008:15) remind us:

> In times of turbulence each of many groups (not just academics), have been trying to define itself, its role, its domain and it boundaries in relation to others.

Such turbulence has inevitably led to some academics casting a nostalgic eye on the past so much so that some are still clinging to past practices. Indeed this kind of idealisation of the past appears to be a common theme in sociology of work study (Stranglemen, 2007). Other academics in this study have relocated their identities in the new, pluralistic range of roles. It is however a complex process and the nature of academic identities are still contested, as is the form of higher education. Barnett and DiNapoli (2007:125) point out:

> There is no single legitimising idea of the university, no grand narrative, but a plurality of ideas and a growing diversity of universities and institutions of higher education.

This has led to a 'patchwork of communities of identity' (Barnett and DiNapoli, 20008:5/6) which in themselves do not necessarily cohere to form a profession. This patchwork is clearly illustrated in the Redpath University study.

Long term employment is a generic feature of all the participants in this study. However, there are trends in society that are beginning to

have an effect on higher education. These are those relating to the organisation of work (Sennett, 2000, Bauman, 2004, Beck, 1992) and its growing flexibility. Younger academics may be less likely to enjoy such long permanent periods of employment in higher education. Brown and Gold (2007:26) highlight the fact that:

> Impermanence is now a feature of academic life; 33.7% of academics are in non-permanent posts. In 2004-5 they taught up to 1/3rd of undergraduates.

These academics could be said to be 'portfolio workers' (Handy, 1994) as they earn a living through combining various types of employment, not all of it academic (Brown and Gold, 2007).

The organisation of work in wider society is fragmenting, in terms of shifts in employment forms over the past two decades (Kallinikos, 2003, Sennett, 2000). It seems logical to speculate that this will grow in influence in higher education organisations.

Whilst the academics in this study did not seem to suffer currently from these wider shifts in employment forms, for example contract work and increasing flexibility, there is evidence of this aspect of change impinging on Redpath University. Short term research contract employment has grown significantly over the past 10 years in Redpath University. Greater flexibility is also seen as desirable and many writers cited in this study have commented on the shifting forms in the work of academics in higher education.

However, currently the very diversity of the academic identities in this study illustrate there is still considerable freedom to manage the 'entrepeneurial self' (Rose, 1989). There are clearly diverse communities of practice in HE within which individual academics can locate themselves. Not all of these are equally harmonious in terms of entry and the potential for identity development as Hughes et. al. (2007) illustrate.

Of course mass higher education differs from earlier, more elite forms. As Barnett and DiNapoli (2098:198) say 'the academic scholar may be an endangered species...as may be the study of a discipline for its own sake'. They argue the academic scholar is probably now an outmoded form of academic life. Nevertheless, at least one of the academics in Redpath University (George, T.4.) seemed to hold the academic scholar model of the academic as an ideal.

Academic roles have become much more differentiated and widened in scope. Diversity and differentiation have been accomplished by academics in a climate of scarce resources, and there is evidence in this case study that they have done so in ways that have involved restructuring their identities. They have, as Barnett and DiNapoli (20007:201) say, done so with 'imaginative improvisation' or 'pragmatic adjustment'.

Does this mean the academic role has been *transformed* within mass higher education? Certainly the culture of higher education provides ever widening role scripts or portfolio identities, where over time academics can take on different roles and within these, adapt their identities. But as earlier discussed, identities are not the same as roles. Identities involve the very meaning of our being. Barnett and DiNapoli (2007:201) say that 'transformations to a higher education system are often a matter of force majeure; transformations to a higher education system are not just changes in systems but are changes in ontologies, in modes of academic being'. It is suggested there is evidence in this study of individual academics changing their mode of academic being.

So will future academics forge their identities in an increasingly fragmented university sector, where mission statements and corporate management define their portfolio identities or they might become managed professionals as discussed above? It seems from the evidence presented that more diverse roles for academics will emerge,

as sub-communities within institutions. New communities of practices will appear within these sub-communities providing a range of new homes for academic identities, although there is no guarantee that they will be harmonious or favoured communities in which to develop identity. Whether academics will be conceptualised as managed professionals depends on the extent to which corporate forms of management proliferate in higher education and how far academics derive their identities from such frameworks. Whether more academics will be forced to adopt portfolio identities will relate to how far higher education as a system uses academic labour more flexibly.

There are of course many differences between higher education organisations. These are linked to their distinct purposes and traditions, as well as their relative wealth and whether they are pre or post 1992 universities. Forming an academic identity in a university whose reputation lies in its research status may be a different experience from that of a university whose main function is vocational education; in any case the university sector as a whole has a crisis of identity, as discussed above, because its boundaries are so fluid.

6.12. Reflections on further research in this field.

These auto/biographies show individuals making sense of their academic identity in the changing world of mass higher education. They have done so in a variety of ways to construct their academic selves. What is evident is you cannot read off what an academic life is like purely by examining the context in which it is lived. However, it is possible to suggest that similar contexts may generate comparable identities in other institutions. However, within each university there are different communities of practice, and academics may interact with each of these layers in distinct ways, to form their identities.

Further research in the form of auto/biographical studies in pre and post 1992 universities would offer insight into some of the above

issues. The focus could be to explore how these five auto/biographies are typical or atypical of other higher education contexts by replicating the research design; or how the conceptual framework and themes used in this study are effective as tools for analysis in other contexts. Other approaches might be to examine the emerging identities of quasi-academic roles that have burgeoned in the past 20 years; to some extent Barnett and DiNapoli (2007) have begun this process with their series of case studies of a range of academic related occupations.

These are just some of the ways in which it is suggested insight from this study could be used as a platform for further research and investigation in other universities, around the formation and maintenance of academic identity

This study has shown that there is no easy way to conceptualise academic identity; it is not possible to collapse it into a 'profession' with clear boundaries for work and codes of practice. The academic role is wide ranging, diverse and complex and this study has shown this through the auto/biographies of five long serving academics.

Most significantly, this record of their academic lives has provided a rich historical picture, a *thick description* (Geertz, 1973:5-6) of what it has been like to live through educational change and how each of them has crafted an identity within that context. I am grateful to the participating academics for offering this opportunity to share their insights, understanding, and humour concerning their academic life stories and identities. They do appear to have inhabited a border country between the older, more elite forms of higher education and the new mass higher education.

APPENDICES

Appendix (1)

QUESTION AREAS FOR AGREEMENT

This document was sent out to participants prior to the first interview to advise them on what was to be discussed.

Name..

Please read these questions and consider whether they are

acceptable to you. If not, strike out those which are

unacceptable.

If there are other areas of your professional life you would

like included please list these at the end of the document.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Contextual Framework

1.   Life outline leading to career/profession, which will include commentary on parents, home, schooling etc.

2.   Professional identity.

      a. Type of work/role.

      b. Rewards.

      c. Status.

      d. Autonomy.

      e. Independence

      f. Knowledge expertise

      g. Change(s) of role

3.   Pace of life.

      a. What was happening in the wider world during different periods of your professional life.

      b. Any changes in work/role over time.

      c. How was time spent at work.

          i. 20 years ago.

          ii. 10 years ago.

          iii. 5 years ago.

iv. a typical week in time currently.

d. how do you perceive time at work - as something you control or as something others manage.

4.   **Bureaucracy and accountability.**

a. in what way have you felt more or less accountable as a professional during your academic life.

b. what part has bureaucracy played in regulating your professional activities.

c. how much administrative work form a part of your current activities – has this increased or decreased over time.

5.   **Enjoyment**

a. What were the best parts of professional life.

b. What were the least enjoyable.

6.   **Perception of change in academic life.**

a. what is your perception of change in education over the past 20 + years.

b. how do you think changes have affected people – yourself, students, pupils, the wider community.

ANY OTHER QUESTION AREAS YOU WOULD LIKE

INCLUDED? Please list them below.

Appendix (2)

PRE-INTERVIEW

Outline of research and method.

The purpose of this research is to provide a record of academic professional life over the past 20 or more years: an academic life story. It is being conducted as part of a PhD. It is a piece of research within the autobiographical/oral history tradition. As such it will be a record of your professional life in the context of rapid change in Higher Education.

It will require tape recordings to be made of interviews with each subject following a pre-interview, where possible question areas and issues of ownership and copyright will be agreed. The pre interview will last for up to half an hour each and it is anticipated that it will require four to five hours of interviewing subsequently over the period of one year. All interview dates and times are negotiable with the subjects.

Ethical issues.

It is intended that the subjects will be anonymously described, as will the university in which they work, to preserve privacy.

Voice recording and transcripts.

Voice recording will be made on a tape recorder if you agree. The subsequent

transcript will also be made available to you, at a later date.

All subjects can listen to the tape they have recorded either at the time of the

interview or subsequently and ask to have any items discussed removed or amended.

Copyright.

The recording or part of it made during the interviews may be reproduced in written

form as part of the PhD and subsequently as part of a publication. *No data will be*

published without the agreement of the subjects. Subjects need to agree copyright or

copyright waiver for this data should it be published. Please consult the following

websites for details of the law in this respect before coming to your decision about

this matter.

http://www.oralhistory.org.uk

http://www.esrc.ac.uk/public/guide.html

www.hmso.gov.uk/act.htm

Note

A follow up email was sent in 2006 to all participants with a complete transcript of the interview inviting them to comment, delete, and amend any aspect of the transcript should they so wish. None did so. A further email was sent in 2007 with a reminder that their words may be cited for the purposes of this study and to request if they were unhappy with this they should advise the researcher prior to Feb 2008. One did so offering clarifications of what had been recorded in the transcript, generated largely by typing errors.

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