

# Working the knowledge game?

The power of the everyday in managing truth in organisations

Julie Gustavs

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2005



knowledge knowledge  
economy



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## WORKING THE KNOWLEDGE GAME?

# THE POWER OF THE EVERYDAY IN MANAGING TRUTH IN ORGANISATIONS

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**Degree:** PhD

**Year:** 2004

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Part 1: Theories of truth and their management

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## CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of the candidate

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Julie L. Gustavs

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Theses are the product of numerous friendships and connections. First, I would like to thank Professor Stewart Clegg who generously shared his time, knowledge and craft with me. Second, I thank the innumerable people whose organisational stories were told to me, without whom this work could not have been achieved. Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to my family: my partner Tim whose encouragement allowed me the space in which to go on, my father Werner who instilled in me a deep curiosity and thirst for knowledge and my Mother Fay who helped me to see the power of storytelling.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on what I have called truth management. First it traces how modernist and postmodern theorists play their versions of what counts as true. A key critique I stage of modernist theorising is that it privileges decontextualised ways of knowing and silences agency. Drawn from postmodern concerns and my critique of 'normal science', two maps of 'thinking tools' (Bourdieu 1992) are proposed as the basis of my theorising of how truth is managed in organisations. The first map aims to position contextualism within the empirical gaze. It is made up of three contingencies - discourses, time and space. The second map of thinking tools aims to bring agency back into view. It is made up of four contingencies - identity, capital, practices and power. Each of the seven contingencies is used to frame the story of an inter-organisational partnership between an Australian university and a financial institution in part two of the thesis. The story traces their engagement in a negotiated postgraduate degree program - the Work-Based Learning (WBL) program from 1996-2003. In this way, I aim to demonstrate the power of everyday decision making in determining what counts as true. The management of truth is seen to be dynamic, multiple and contingent rather than causal, singular and able to be plotted on a linear trajectory.

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## INTRODUCTION

Each time I have attempted to do theoretical work it has been on the basis of elements of my experience, always in relation to the processes that I saw taking place around me. It is because I thought I could recognise in the things I was, in the institutions with which I dealt, in my relations with others, cracks, silent shocks, malfunctionings .... that I undertook in a particular piece of work, several fragments of autobiography.

(Foucault 1988c:156)

What does it mean to engage in postmodern ways of knowing an organisation? How can we bring contextualism back within the empirical gaze? What does it mean to say that organisations, as well as the people within them, have agency which determines their everyday understandings of what does and does not count as truth? *Working the knowledge game? The power of the everyday in managing truth in organisations* has as its main focus the addressing of such questions.

**What's in a name?**

### **Working the knowledge game? The power of the everyday in managing truth in organisations.**

The idea of 'working knowledge' was coined very earlier in my research. It flags that I am linking with a body of knowledge that is concerned with how knowledge is increasingly becoming connected up with work – both in various workplaces inside and outside the academy. Indeed, the empirical part of my research is located firmly within the idea of 'working knowledge' in that it is based on the story of work that I undertook in the Work-Based Learning (WBL) program – a negotiated degree program between the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) and its corporate client the Australian Mutual Provident (AMP), a prestigious insurance company.

The title of 'working knowledge', conveys the very practical questions and dilemmas which my work on the WBL program presented. For example, I had come to the university in 2000, employed as a Manager, Learning Development, a title which was

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more aligned with a sense made of work outside rather than inside the academy; the latter differentiates work in a binary mode - there are academics and support staff. Furthermore, WBL was located within a commercial educational unit within the Faculty of Business at UTS suggesting a foray into the 'businessifying' of the structure of the university – a move which located it outside the normal 'school' structure within the faculty. These structural differences provided the context within which we struggled to legitimise our practices including the establishment of what constituted knowledge in both the university as well as the corporate environment.

A key part of the legitimisation of new practices and questioning of what constitutes knowledge was our promotion of the so called 'new pedagogies' of self-directed learning and the negotiated nature of the curriculum of the WBL program, which suggested that knowledge needed to be more practice-focused and thus more relevant to the world of work than had traditionally been defined by the canonical disciplinary focus of teaching and curriculum in a university context. Furthermore, through our practice of portfolio development, by which participants in the WBL program could claim up to two-thirds of the credit points towards a Master's degree, we were suggesting that practitioners came to the university with significant knowledge equivalent to postgraduate levels of learning, but that such knowledge was gained from contexts outside the university, through life and work experiences. We were seeking to value what, typically, had not been accredited previously.

In constituting 'working knowledge' in various ways our practices seemed to rub against the very fabric of UTS as an academic organisation – not so much at the level of 'espoused theory', for UTS had always represented itself as being more practice focused than other universities – but more so at the level of 'theory in use' (Argyris and Schön 1974, 1996). Indeed, compounded with our perceived inability to earn the revenue anticipated, in practice, such issues became so problematic that on 2 July 2003 the WBL program was officially discontinued and on 1 September 2003 I began a new job as the only employee remaining from our team of four whose task it was to manage the dismantling of the program.

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The idea of the 'game' also positions me in a particular theoretical space. Along with Foucault, Bourdieu – social theorists, social constructivists and postmodernists – I was looking beyond a conception of the world as being an objective reality admitting of only one understanding of 'truth'. To my mind truths were multiple. Indeed, such a thought also led me to locate my research within a particular body of knowledge, which I called 'truth management'.

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The idea of 'managing truth' and the coining of the new body of knowledge 'truth management' happened rather late in my research. Initially, I looked to locate the focus of my study in various other bodies of knowledge. My ideas were various. I considered knowledge management, later change management but none of these ideas seemed right. I felt that using existing terms was problematic in that they were imbued with existing meanings. I did not want to have to grapple with that. The challenge then was to come up with a new term. The idea that came closest to that which I wanted to talk about was 'rationalities' – the idea that truth is multiple rather than singular and contingent rather than causal. But for me rationalities was such an academic word. I felt that it talked to no one but academics. By contrast, I wanted to use language which was more inclusive. That's how I came to the term 'truth management' – a term which for me talks not so much of what truth *is* and what are lies based on the viewpoint that a singular truth or untruth can be uncovered through diligent research but rather I maintain that truth is multiple and contested.

Because the quest for ultimate truth is futile, I shift the focus of my research questioning to one sympathetic with Foucault's project of how truth comes to be seen as such. Thus, my question is *how* is truth managed.

I tested the idea of truth management in various contexts. I talked to academics, practitioners, strangers, family and friends. My words were often met with an ironic smile or laugh which seemed to suggest to me that I had hit on a personal as well as an organisational nerve. It was that spark and sense of knowing that I was looking for in my research so the term stuck.

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The idea of the everyday was also important in that it made further theoretical allusions to how I was positioning my work. Along with Garfinkel (1967), Sacks (1972) and other ethnomethodological ethnographers I was exploring how everyday life, and that which counts as truth, is constituted.

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Furthermore, the context for my research interest was far from my original disciplinary home of linguistics and education. I had found the new home of organisation studies.

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And finally, how could any student who worked with such a persuasive thinker as Professor Stewart Clegg not come to see the significance of walking through life with a power compass? (Clegg 2004)

## **Structuring disparate thoughts theoretically**

A key challenge in progressing my research was to decide how to structure my ideas as a coherent story whilst simultaneously conveying the idea of disjuncture, ellipses, multiplicity and contingency which postmodern theorising suggests.

Initially, I worked hard to commence my thesis with the story of WBL and from there to expound on postmodern ways of seeing organisations as I went. However, after much deliberation I abandoned this structure for one that seemed to work better. I decided to divide the thesis into two parts. In part one I talk of 'Theories of Truth and their Management' which I subdivided into six chapters. The first three of these chapters are:

- Chapter 1: Truth games of modernity
- Chapter 2: The paradigm wars
- Chapter 3: Truth games of postmodernity

The key theoretical argument, which the first three chapters of the thesis raise, is that theorising itself is an act of power, with its own rules and versions of truth. I examine the different ways in which both modernists and postmodernists make sense of organisations and organising as well as to explore the implications of the so-called 'paradigm wars' where they publicly staked out their territory and strategised their version of truth into being through writing it into existence.

Drawing on postmodern theorising I stage a critique of modernist theorising that sees it as privileging decontextualized ways of seeing organisations in ways that silence agency. Therefore, I follow the first three chapters, which set the scene of my theoretical argument, with a further three chapters. In a chapter entitled, 'Bringing context back in' I discuss theoretically how to handle a sense of context empirically. Then I move onto an exploration of how to relocate the subject/object within empirical studies, in a chapter entitled, 'Bringing agency back in'. Finally, I explore how both context and agency are dynamically constituted in a chapter entitled, 'Bringing context and agency together'.

At the core of part one of my thesis is my development of two maps of 'thinking tools' (Bourdieu 1992), drawn from postmodern theorising. The first map is underscored by

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the postmodernist concern that the researcher needs to examine how phenomena are constituted within any specific context. So in my thesis I ask myself the question, 'what does it mean to bring contextualism back within the empirical gaze?' Drawing on the work of Foucault (1988a), I suggest that contextualism can be thought of by examining three contingencies: discourses, time and space through which truth is managed. The second map, underscored by a further postmodernist concern for the need to examine agency, positions itself against normal science, which as Clegg and Hardy (1996:434) remind us, 'silence the subject'. In the second map of thinking tools the subject/object is given voice by way of exploring postmodern conceptions of identity, capital, practices and power and in this way agency too is seen to be shaped by and to shape the contingent boundaries of what comes to count as truth.

Although conceived and written up as two separate maps, the contingent links between each map of thinking tools reflect a dynamic and iterative linking of one map of thinking tools with the other, rather than one that is a linear relationship.

The two maps of thinking tools are represented by the metaphor of DNA with its 'two ribbons of phosphate-sugar chains which form the shape of a double helix and the horizontal rods of basea holding the chains together' (Watson and Crick 1953). In my theorising I have two chains forming the shape of a double helix; however, rather than phosphate-sugar chains I have one chain representing map one of my theoretical model, contextualism: this is made up of the three contingencies – discourses, time and space. The second chain represents map two of my theoretical model: agency made up of identity, capital and practices. The chains are fused by horizontal rods which represent capillaries of power.

The beauty of the double helix as a representation of the sensemaking that I wish to convey in my theorising of organisations and organising is not only that it conveys the idea of life itself but also that the shape of the double helix is both regular and open and thus simultaneously suggests the concepts of patterning and contingency. Thus, in applying the metaphor to my own theorising it conveys the idea that the two chains of agency and contextualism intertwine in both patterned and contingent ways, suggesting that their social effects both shape and are shaped by each other. Furthermore, the relationship between each individual contingency and chain is contingent rather than causal.

The construction of the two maps of thinking tools is not an attempt to establish a totalising theory of truth and its management in organisations in that the thinking tools are not based on a 'single or fixed number of determinant forces' (Haugaard 1998:3) nor do they 'posit a hidden force which lies behind reality' (Haugaard 1998:3) which determines that which constitutes truth a priori. Rather, the thinking tools are seen to be one way in which to 'delve into how things are socially organised, or put together, so that they happen as they do' (Campbell and Gregor 2002:29). Thus, central to my theorising and its representation, is the idea that the way in which I have conceived and represented contextualism and agency is not the only way in which such concepts could be either conceived or depicted. Furthermore, such theorising also suggests that to ascertain the detail of how context and agency 'play out' in practice one needs to examine particular cases of everyday life in situ.

### **Telling the story**

The story of WBL forms the site of my examination of how context and agency is 'played out'. To give my empirical work a strong theoretical focus I use the seven contingencies discussed in part one as the lenses through which the story of WBL is told. Thus, the chapters in part 2 of my thesis, 'Managing Truth Theoretically' are as follows:

- Chapter 7: Truth is managed through discourses
- Chapter 8: Truth is managed through time
- Chapter 9: Truth is managed through space
- Chapter 10: Truth is managed through identity
- Chapter 11: Truth is managed through capital
- Chapter 12: Truth is managed through practices
- Chapter 13: Truth is managed through power.

Foregrounding the story of WBL in part two of the thesis, managing truth theoretically, is an in-depth discussion which aims to unsurface some of the methodological, theoretical and ethical issues that research after the 'postmodern turn' suggests.

Given my interest in postmodern ways of seeing organisations a number of key premises underpin the way in which I chose to structure the story of WBL:

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1. The story needed to move beyond the level of description. It needed to show how organisations can be seen through a lense of postmodern theorising. That is why I chose to organise the chapters of the story around the seven contingencies which I discuss theoretically in part one. Postmodern theorising also suggests the situatedness of knowledge. The author does not speak from nowhere but is rather an active constructor of truth and thus needs to step into view rather than position herself at an anonymous distance, outside the text.
2. I did not want to tell a clean, linear and tidy tale of WBL because I do not think that that is how truth is constituted. It certainly was not how my sense of this truth was constructed. Rather, I wanted to show how heterogeneous networks of stories and actors from both UTS and AMP positioned WBL.
3. I also wanted to tell tales of WBL by playing with tenses. The beginnings of each of the stories in part two commence in the present tense. This is a rhetorical device to draw the reader in and also serves to confirm in the readers' minds that many of the problems and stories which are recounted in the past tense in later parts of each chapter remain unresolved in our present time.
4. I also wanted to tell the tales in such a way that they combine micro and macro stories. By this I mean that we might get tiny vignettes of circumstances which have happened to particular individuals, juxtaposed and connected with macro comments on the positioning of the higher education sector or trends in corporate Australia, as well as reflections on the difficulties of engaging in interorganisational alliances.
5. Finally, drawing on the works of Bruno Latour and Michel Callon, I wanted to dissolve the boundaries between the subject and object as well as the living and the non-living such that not only humans but also everyday objects were potent actors having agency within a field. WBL is presented as a living and subsequently as a dying being which had an agency extending beyond that of the humans connected with it.

Such considerations have further structural implications for telling the tale of WBL in that for each of the seven chapters in part two of my thesis I weave three threads into the story of lessons learnt from the workplace. The first thread is made up by my story, now as a lecturer on contract at UTS, previously as a permanent employee and Manager at Insearch, the commercial arm of UTS. In this thread, at the commencement of each of the seven chapters, I give an account in the present tense of

how I grapple to engage in commercial activity to 'open up' rather than to 'close down' space between actors in my own institution and corporate organisations with the aim of creating alternative ways for both universities and corporate organisations to 'work the knowledge game'. Second is the significance of lessons learnt from the 'conversations' at an inter-organisational and individual level surrounding the WBL program. The second thread provides insights into the broad macro trends in both the higher educational as well as corporate sector that were influencing both UTS and AMP from 1996 when the contract regarding WBL was first signed until 2003 when the WBL was officially closed down. Third is the story of the lessons learnt from the WBL program as a 'learning innovation', which I represent by drawing on the perspective of the student/worker/learners, their managers and UTS advisers. Indeed, following Callon (1986) with his work on an approach which is sometimes called a 'sociology of translation' and at other times 'a sociology of enrolment' I abandon all *a priori* distinctions between the natural and social by suggesting that inanimate objects can have agency. The approach frames the third thread of the story, where the WBL 'learning innovation' speaks as a living being with its own 'voice' as it attempts to translate into academic as well as corporately acceptable terms the knowledge and experience of corporate employees and, in this way, aims to validate such knowledge and experience within a negotiated postgraduate degree framework. Thus, 'instead of a homogeneous narrative, each text is theorised as a network of fragments that refers to still other narrative texts' (Boje 2001:74). In this way, I aim to show that although narratives have been rhetorically marginalised as 'exploratory', narratives are a very rich way of 'knowing' in that they help us to see the complexity and subtle interconnections between levels of analysis and phenomena that more traditional genres of academic research screen out.



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The power of the everyday in managing truth in organisations



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Theories of truth & their management



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## WORKING THE KNOWLEDGE GAME?

### THE POWER OF THE EVERYDAY IN THE MANAGEMENT OF TRUTH IN ORGANISATIONS.

#### PART 1: THEORIES OF TRUTH AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

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## INTRODUCTION

The idea that there is a special scientific method, a realm where truth prospers in the absence of power is a myth.

Callon, M., Law, J., Rip, A. 1986:12

A barrage of questions stemming from postmodernist theorising and concerns is challenging management theory and practice. Central to such questions is scepticism about the self-evident status of scientific rationality. Indeed, the questions that postmodernist theorising raises are shaking the very ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions underpinning truth production.

The critique which postmodernists in organisation studies stage of the modernist project of science focuses on the way in which it analyses 'an ideal conception' of organisations modelled on the aspirations of 'normal science' and its mantra of 'predict and control', a form of normative decision making which implies that,

it is useful to think of the organisation as a unitary actor in its environment, that there is one best answer to the strategy in question, that everyone thinking rationally on behalf of the organisation will arrive at the same conclusion and that implementation follows the discovery of strategy (Van der Heijden 1996:25).

Normal science underpins the theorising of academics trained in rational debate and the search for truth: a stance on ontology whereby social reality is seen to have an existence independent of and external to individuals (a realist/objectivist position) (Burrell and Morgan 1979:4). Strong versions are to be found in the works of proponents of the Aston School (Pugh and Hickson 1976), named after the institution of the same name in Britain, along with various key theorists including Woodward (1958) and Burns and Stalker (1961). Their research agenda, known as contingency theory, is defined in terms of the concept of 'congruence or goodness of fit between structural

and environmental variables or types' (Pennings 2002:4). Contingency theorists in Britain dominated organisation studies in the 1960s and 1970s along with various American counterparts such as Blau and Schönherr (1971). Their focus on the formal structure of organisations conceived within conceptual parameters such as integration, differentiation and centralisation, attempted to establish organisation studies as 'normal science'. The idea was that in pursuing a normal science model of organisation studies their research findings would be of direct applicability to practice in that through the identification of a range of contingencies - size, age, technology, strategy and so on, they would be able to determine the optimum organisational structure. However, the problem with their thesis - as postmodernists would have it - was that organisations are not made up of stable categories for normative judgment and purposeful action. Therefore, amassing data to determine a 'fit' to a reality which does not exist statically has little practical purpose.

Although the death knell of normal science was tolled by postmodernists in many disciplines outside the field of management as early as the 1970s, in many respects structural contingency theorising remains the dominant frame which informs both management theory and practice. The works of Bolman and Deal (2003) with their four frames of organisational analysis (the structural, the human resources, the power/political and the cultural/symbolic) provide both empirical and theoretical evidence that structuralism is a dominant frame both in practice and in theory within the academy and management practice. Equally, recent co-citation studies conducted on the field of organisation studies still identify contingency theory as having a strong influence in the literature (Üsdiken and Pasadeos 1995:514-515).

Central to the tack that I adopt to the examination of the current status of normal science in organisation studies is the analysis of the works of Donaldson. Donaldson is relevant to such a discussion for a number of reasons. First, in defense of the normal science position he consciously entered the fray in a series of debates which, in retrospect, came to be known as the 'paradigm wars' - two warring camps of conflicting theoretical views, the modernists and the postmodernists. Furthermore, as Clegg (1990:70) argues, Donaldson is of interest to such debate because 'he presents a very self-consciously "orthodox" conception of organisational contingency theory'. By undertaking a genealogical analysis of Donaldson's work, starting with the question 'what made Donaldson's work theoretically and practically possible?' I trace and critically analyse the modernist truth assumptions underpinning a normal scientific

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approach to organisation studies and in this way shed light on the key arguments staged by organisation studies theorists from a normal science perspective.

Important too in critiquing rational assumptions of normal science in relation to truth production is the realisation that such assumptions are not exclusively the domain of academic theorists. In the domain of management practice the modern bureaucracy has been heralded as the hallmark of scientific rationality because it depended above all else on the application of what Weber termed 'rational' means for achieving specific ends. Therefore, in analysing modernist approaches to organisations it makes sense to analyse the bureaucracy as an organisational form. As Reed (1996:25), quoting Wolin (1961), puts it, bureaucracies as an organisational form 'were rationally designed to solve permanently the conflict between collective needs and individual wants that had bedeviled social progress since the days of ancient Greece'.

The new order would be governed not by men but by 'scientific principles' based on the 'nature of things' and therefore absolutely independent of human will. In this way, organisational society promised the rule of scientific laws rather than men and eventual disappearance of the political element entirely....(Organisation) is the 'grand device' for transforming human irrationalities into rational behaviour. (Wolin 1961:378-383)

In this light, bureaucracy was seen to be a moral project which positioned itself against the idiosyncratic vagaries of paternalistic management which had marked organisational life up until the turn of the twentieth century. Bureaucracies were purported to be designed purely from the point of view of fitness for a purpose: the better they fitted their purpose the more rational they were. Key actors who were proponents of such an ideal of organisations were technocrats akin to Taylor (1967) in his search for scientifically valid knowledge in his time and motion studies. Organisation meant the prescription and following of rules as well as the harnessing of time for the achievement of efficiency. Such rationality marked the death of the craftsman and the power he wielded through individualistic knowledge applied to a task at hand. Indeed, Taylor's mantra of 'deskilling' aimed to place power/knowledge firmly in the hands of the overseer or supervisor. The metaphor of the machine illustrates the design of such social architecture.

However, having a focus on design need not be exclusively 'mechanistic'. In their seminal study, Burns and Stalker (1961) found that different contexts called for different types of structures. Their study showed that those firms that operated in stable environments with predictable processes and known products were more likely to have highly bureaucratized structures. However, environments of change with dynamic processes and unpredictability favoured so-called 'organic' structures. Thus, they talked not only of organisations as 'mechanistic' but also of organisations as 'organic'. Such ways of making sense of organisations were elaborated on in Morgan's study of the metaphors of the organisation as 'machines' and 'organisms'. Morgan (1986; 1993) maintained that the metaphor of the organism was more sophisticated than that of the machine. First, it suggested that organisations bear relationships to the environment - a factor to which classical theorists of organisations paid little attention. Second, it saw that the organisations were 'open' rather than 'closed' systems. Thus, organisations were understood as 'ongoing processes' rather than defined as 'structures of parts'. Third, there was a focus on 'needs' rather than 'prescribed' and 'predetermined' goals. Finally, there was also an emphasis on differentiation in that it was acknowledged that just as organisms could be of different species, organisations too could bear both similarities to and differences from each other - allowing scope for innovation within a range of options.

Postmodernists position themselves firmly on the side of the organisation as 'organism' rather than the organisation as a 'machine' but in ways other than the contingency theorists of normal science would have it, given that for contingency theorists the image of the organism is still framed in a 'real world' conception of reality. Of the view that organisations and that which constitutes rationality are more complex than its rules and their rational calculation, postmodernists argue that the normal science approach is inadequate in explaining the social constructedness of organisations: they tend to block out the contextual contingencies and agency at work in how decisions are actually made and played out 'in situ' in everyday organisational life. Indeed, by bearing little resemblance to how things are experienced, they also call into question the practical as well as the ethical foundations of organising. As Clegg and Dunkerley (1980:226) put it, 'what is practical or scientific about knowledge of things which don't actually happen?'

Linked to the questioning of the practical and ethical applicability of scientific knowledge to our understanding of organisations and organising, postmodernists also

point to the problematic that modernist theorising constructs itself within 'grand narratives' or 'metanarratives'. Metanarratives are unifying theories with, some would say, implicit totalitarian consequences, in that science's self-understanding as the only legitimate form of knowledge - a transcendental activity 'beyond history, culture, values, subjectivity and power' (Heelan 1991:214) - eliminates other conceptions of knowledge that do not meet the canonical stipulations of science, however it is conceived. As Marsden and Townley (1996:410) explain, the self-evident status of scientific rationality in organisational theory and practice is based on reasoning whereby:

science became the adjudicator of truth of knowledge and positivism became the adjudicator of science. The more scientific the knowledge, the truer it must be, and the more true, the more practically useful it must be.

In *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) Bauman explores the devastating consequences of the application of science becoming the 'adjudicator of truth of knowledge', or as Bauman put it the ethical issues that emerge when science 'as a body of ideas, and a network of institutions of enlightenment and training ... (are achieved through) the emancipation of reason from emotions, of rationality from normative pressures, of effectiveness from ethics' (Bauman 1989:108). Bauman argues that the Holocaust was clearly not the first case of mass murder that we have experienced in history; however, what differentiated it from other cases was its use of the principles of science imbued in the organisational form of the bureaucracy to achieve its ends. As he puts it 'science wanted to be value free and took pride in being such. By institutional pressure and by ridicule, it silenced the preachers of morality. In the process, it made itself morally blind and speechless' (Bauman 1989:108). Quoting Fingold, Bauman makes his point of the link between modernity and the Holocaust clear:

(Auschwitz) was also a mundane extension of the modern factory system. Rather than producing goods, the raw material was human beings and the end-product was death, so many units per day marked carefully on the manager's production charts. The chimneys, the very symbol of the modern factory system, poured forth acrid smoke produced by burning human flesh. The brilliantly organised railroad grid of modern Europe carried a new kind of raw



material to the factories. It did so in the same manner as with other cargo. In the gas chambers the victims inhale noxious gas generated by prussic acid pellets, which were produced by the advanced chemical industry of Germany. Engineers designed the crematoria; managers designed the system of bureaucracy that worked with a zest and efficiency more backward nations would envy. Even the overall plan itself was a reflection of the modern scientific spirit gone awry. What we witnessed was nothing less than a massive scheme of social engineering ....(Bauman 1989:8)

In focusing his critique on modernity and normal science rather than 'focusing on the Germanness of the crime' Bauman suggests that one should see the Holocaust as fully in keeping with 'our modern rational society, at the high stage of our civilisation and at the peak of human cultural achievement and for this reason it is a problem of that society, civilisation and culture' (Bauman 1989:x). We should see it as such rather than treating it as a 'cancerous growth on the body of civilised society, a momentary madness among sanity' (Bauman 1989:vii). By seeing the Holocaust in this way he warns against complacency about the ethical implications of scientific rationality, which arguments that focus on the Germanness of the crime tend to produce, in that these arguments are imbued with the logic that 'the more they (Germans) are to blame, the more the rest of us are safe, and the less we have to do to defend this safety' (Bauman 1989:xii).

Such a theoretical, practical and ethical standpoint goes to the crux of epistemological debates concerning how knowledge is produced. Whereas proponents of modernist/positivist assumptions seek knowledge about organisations by looking for patterns of enduring actions and their underlying causes (Burrell and Morgan 1979:5) through the use of so called abstracted and objective language and methods, such a position is considered to be untenable by postmodern theorists in that it shows that science has become blind to human, social practice - one of many possible narratives (Lyotard 1984). This is not to say that for the postmodern position there are not certain undeniable facts. Lyotard takes pains to address this point, and, significantly for our discussion, he does so by using the example of the Holocaust. In talking of realities in *The Differend: Phrases in Disputes* (1988) Lyotard begins his text with an account of the so-called deniers of the Holocaust: people, generally Anti-Semites, who have argued that the Holocaust did not happen. Lyotard aims to show in the text how the

postmodern condition repudiates denial. Lyotard (1988:4) writes that reality 'is not "given" ... it is the state of the referent (that about which one speaks) which results from the effectuation of establishment procedures defined by a unanimously agreed upon protocol, and from the possibility offered to anyone to recommence this effectuation as often as he or she wants.' Thus, his point is that we work in 'phrases': by which he means something like Wittgenstein's 'language games', ways of talking and understanding with attention to genres. Each type of phrase has different rules and blind spots. He puts it that reality is established only when three sorts of definition coincide: when reality is 'able to be signified, to be shown and to be named' (Lyotard 1988:16). With any item, to be signified is to be given a context in which it makes sense; to be shown is literally to be shown it; to be named is to be given a designation and identity that fixes it.

Using postmodern concerns and techniques other researchers have exposed how such deniers construct their version of truth through focusing on how we know about the past: questions about who is creating history, and questions about the nature of language and writing itself. Many argue that the most insidious techniques used by the deniers are those that present their arguments in the form of scientific studies or reputable historical analysis and thus attempt to legitimise the veracity of their comments by linking to powerful discourses and genres. In this way, postmodernists focus on how 'truth' is produced.

My theoretical and methodological position is developed in response to postmodernist questions and challenges to both the dominant theory and practice of organisations. Central to the assumptions that underpin this thesis is that truth is not something which can be unmasked, uncovered or discovered as modernists would have it. Instead postmodernists argue that there is not one single truth but rather a multitude of truths. Truth cannot be recorded as a linear and causal trajectory. Nor is truth either static or a structure which can be grasped by virtue of an authoritative standpoint with which to know the world. Truth is not neutral but, rather, is intricately linked with power (Foucault 1970). Claims to truth have value or credibility only in that they posit one possible version or representation of what counts as truth (Clegg and Hardy 1996). Seen this way, truth is dynamically constructed in context - it is that which is at stake for actors in the game of organisation life. Such assumptions shift the focus of an inquiry about truth from the modernist concern for identifying that which is 'universally true' from that which is 'false' for the purpose of legislating how it

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'should be'. In its stead, the concern about truth written within a postmodernist frame pays attention to how the management of truth in organisations is produced and experienced.

Theorising truth and its management in organisations as a social process of ordering, which postmodernist theory offers, is a promising alternative to dominant modernist thought in that these postmodern approaches examine contested and contingent ways in which truth comes to be seen as such. Contingency takes on a new meaning for postmodernists - it is not the causal relationships which determine an abstracted knowledge of a fit between a structure and its purpose as the modernists would have it but rather the postmodernists go back to the ontological roots of the word. Contingency for postmodernists is concerned with uncovering the emergencies, the possibilities, the unforeseen events that link one set of circumstances to another. In contemporary organisation studies in the modernist frame, truth cannot be seen to reside outside the canons of that which counts as normal science. In the postmodern perspective, organisation is performed through the language, practices, and techniques with which people govern their own conduct and their relations with others (Hull 1997). In this way, research means moving 'from justifying ideals to understanding how modernity works in practice, and to implementing and practically defending ideals,...(in which)... we are better helped by ... practical thinkers of power' (Flyvbjerg 1998:2).

Inspiring the tack that I have adopted in my own theoretical and empirical work has been my analysis of one such 'practical thinker of power', the French philosopher of ideas, Michel Foucault. Although not a self-acknowledged organisational theorist nor even a self-acknowledged postmodernist, Foucault has made a significant contribution to both organisational studies and to the development of postmodern theorising, as the extensive empirical study conducted by Üsdiken and Pasadeos (1995:514) shows. Analysing the journal *Administrative Science Quarterly* as representative of the most highly prestigious American journal in the field of organisation studies and *Organization Studies* as the most highly prestigious journal in Europe revealed that Foucault is ranked as the seventh most frequently cited author in *Organization Studies*. (The study also shows that Foucault does not enjoy a high status in the American literature, which was dominated by the population ecology paradigm rather than more critical streams of organisation studies literature.)

What is perhaps most striking about the work of Foucault is his provocative curiosity about life and his fearlessness in tackling the big questions of truth, knowledge, death, power, experts, abnormality and the body in ancient and more recent times. In interviews such as the following we get a glimpse of the pivotal role his work plays in shaping his own life and way of seeing the world:

MF           What strikes me is the fact that, in our society, art has become something that is related only to objects and not to individuals or to a life. The art is something which is specialised or done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not our life?

(Foucault 1997b: xxx-xxxi)

Foucault makes his work and his life into an inextricably linked project: morality, ethics and ways of constructing the truth are put to the test in his examination of a wide range of organised forms of social life - leper colonies, factories, mental hospitals, prisons, churches, schools, village squares, families and so on. The impetus to write about many of the contexts which he examines stems from personal experience. As he puts it:

Whenever I have tried to carry out a piece of theoretical work it has been on the basis of my own experience, always in relation to processes I saw taking place around me. It is because I thought I could recognise in the things I was, in the institutions with which I dealt, in my relations with others, cracks, silent shocks, malfunctionings ... that I undertook in a particular piece of work, a few fragments of autobiography (Foucault 1988c:156).

For example, the questions of how mad people came to be seen as such and how the power of contemporary expert scientific knowledge of the physicians works in practice came to him as the topic for his PhD thesis whilst working and studying in a Parisian mental institution. There he comments that his hybridity 'with no clear professional status... in a position between the staff and the patients' afforded him the opportunity to

observe what went on in the institution as an outsider which he calls a type of 'malaise' (Eribon 1991:49). It was there, and in that frame, that he made the observations that,

The asylum is not a free realm of observation, diagnosis and therapeutics; it is a juridical space where one is accused, judged and condemned, from which one is never released except by version of this trial in psychological depth, that is, by remorse. Madness will be punished in the asylum, even if it is innocent outside it. (Foucault 1988a: 269-72)

Broad questions, personal experiences and painstakingly detailed archival vignettes work powerfully to juxtapose ancient and contemporary understanding of the diverse topics which come under his scrutiny. We see in his theorising an ability to look behind the façade of normalcy and to pay attention to the subtle power games and ordering that occurs and the bearing which it has on what comes to be seen as 'normal' and what is 'abnormal'.<sup>1</sup>

Foucault's work is important in progressing postmodernist theorising of truth in that, through the examination of a multitude of local stories, he shows us that,

Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its own régime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourses which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault 1980c:131).

With his concept of 'regimes of truth', Foucault explains that truth is not cumulative and continuous as 'normal science' would have it. Rather, that which counts as true is shaped by the 'general politics' of a particular time and place in which, even though

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<sup>1</sup> Paradoxically, Foucault's work and life collided perhaps too closely for comfort in that he died shortly after the publication of his three volume study of sexuality of neurological complications following acute septicemia, the result of AIDS, at the Hospital de Salpetriere, a renowned Parisian institute, in 1984.

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different subjects may hold different versions of what counts as true, some versions will simply be eased out of currency whilst particular discourses, which serve the purpose of powerful actors, will be made to 'function as true', and in this way 'sanction' that which counts as truth. As Haugaard (1998:43) puts it:

Foucault's method of critique takes the form of confronting us with the arbitrariness of everything that we take for granted in social life. By 'take for granted', I do not refer to our projects and aims - that could be construed as saying that we are victims of a false set of interests. More fundamentally, Foucault shows us that our taken for granted reality, the things that we see as beings-in-the-world, is essentially culturally-specific. It is a form of criticism which involves 'flushing out...thought and trying to change it: to show that things are not as self-evident as one believed, to see that what is accepted as self-evident will no longer be accepted as such'. (Foucault 1988:155).. Hence there is no 'true' or 'correct' interpretation based on the discovery of the truth.

The opening paragraph of Foucault's early work - *The Order of Things: An archeology of human sciences* (1970) provides us with one such example of how he 'flushes out' the idea that reality is 'self-evident'. Quoting Borge he talks of a particular 'Chinese encyclopedia' in which 'animals are divided into a range of categories' including the following:

(a) belonging to the Emperor (b) embalmed (c) tame (d) suckling pigs (e) sirens (f) fabulous (g) stray dogs (h) frenzied (i) innumerable (j) drawn with a very fine camel hair brush (k) et cetera (l) having just broken the water pitcher (m) that from a very long way off look like flies' (Foucault 1970:xv).

What is remarkable about this way of ordering animals is that some categories, although different from our current ways of seeing reality, do make sense to us in the twenty-first century given what we know of Chinese dynasties. For example, given that dynasties were usually led by an Emperor the first category 'belonging to the emperor' makes sense. We also know that the animals were embalmed, that the Chinese were amongst the first cultures to tame animals and that animals were often the subject of

paintings which may have been executed with 'a very fine camel hair brush'. Hence, categories '(a) belonging to the Emperor'; '(b) embalmed'; '(c) tame'; and '(j) a very fine camel hair brush' have some meaning for us today. However, this knowledge makes it all the more disconcerting to read particular categories such as '(l) having just broken the water pitcher' as well as others such as '(g) stray dogs'; and '(m) that from a long way off look like flies'. For as readers we are now in a position whereby we are unable to dismiss the work in total as 'nonsense'. Coupled with the knowledge that an encyclopedia is a serious non-fiction genre we are confronted with the realisation that the ancient Chinese to whom such categorisation made sense saw things in ways that were not only different from our own sensemaking but, indeed, a significant amount of the knowledge which informed their sensemaking is completely lost to the sense we make of a given phenomenon today. In Foucault's terms different 'regimes of truth' were in operation. Seen in a postmodern light, such ways of categorisation make us think of our own ways of categorising animals as 'vertebrates' and 'invertebrates' which, prior to scientific classification systems, would have been equally nonsensical. In this way, we come to see the constructedness of what we see as reality through language. Indeed, in critiquing this same passage from *The Order of Things: An archeology of human sciences* Haugaard (1997:48-51) likens the idea of 'regimes of truth' to De Saussure's 'linguistic theory':

language should be considered systematically. Each word within a language derives its meaning from membership of a language. The word itself has no *intrinsic* meaning outside the linguistic system of which it forms a part'. 'meaning is systematically constituted. Words, the basic unit of language, do not derive their meaning from intrinsic positive content. Rather, they derive their meaning from each other through difference. This difference is a form of natural opposition where each word defers to the other.'

Haugaard illustrates the concept of how meaning is derived not so much from the intrinsic sense which is made of each individual word but rather through the tensions produced through the difference of words from each other with the example of the Inuit who have 'fifty words for snow' compared with English speakers who only have one word for snow. The example suggests that, given that the Inuit can differentiate between such a wide variety of different types of snow, they conceptualise snow

differently to English speakers with their single word conceptualisation. Thus, English speakers and the Inuit experience snow differently.

Conceptually, the notion of 'regimes of truth' is also akin to Wittgenstein's concept of 'language games' which is based on careful analysis of how people learn languages. Central to Wittgenstein's work was his constant questioning: how do language learners know how to go on and apply knowledge learnt from one case to new contexts and circumstances? Dissatisfied with the explanation of 'universal rules' or 'law like a priori' representative of scientific sensemaking of language, Wittgenstein examined numerous examples of everyday language and in this way showed that contrary to the theorising of language in his day, language does not mirror reality; rather words mean more than their definitions.

Similar to the research of Foucault and De Saussure, Wittgenstein's research on language learning was not an inquiry for its own sake. What is particularly pertinent about Wittgenstein's work to our discussion about theories of truth and their management is the way he built on the assumptions that he made about language learning to critique normal scientific methods of theorising truth. Based on his analysis of language and meaning, Wittgenstein made a number of pointed criticisms of normal science and its project of abstracting and decontextualising knowledge. Wittgenstein postulated that given that science is abstracted knowledge conveyed through language, and that the words uttered are undeniably imprecise in their meaning, it follows that the scientists' findings too may not mirror reality but rather be one possible interpretation or 'language game' of many possible interpretations. This idea shook the very foundations of normal science with its 'realist' assumptions. Indeed, 'language games' is the central method that Lyotard used in his seminal work *The Postmodern Condition: a report on knowledge*, first published in French in 1979, and considered by many to be the text in which postmodern ways of theorising knowledge were first comprehensively articulated.

The metaphor of the game is important too as part of this so-called 'repositioning' of science because it is clearly in opposition to a normal science view - the Popperian view of Science - taken up more recently by dominant structural contingency theorists such as Donaldson. For traditional theorising of organisations, science is really about truth with real problems and real strategies; thus, the idea that the knowledge it produces could be equated with the idea of a 'game' is abhorrent to such sensemaking

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because that would be seen to undermine the seriousness of their project of reflecting the truth that they hold of the world.

The metaphor of the 'game' is used widely by researchers to critique scientific ways of seeing reality. Examining the complex territory of the interplay between societal rules and acceptable behaviour, the metaphor of the game allowed Bourdieu to emphasise that rules exist, hence not everything is possible within a given, time or place:

(f)irst, a sphere of play is an ordered universe in which not everything can happen. Entering the game implies a conscious or unconscious acceptance of the explicit and/or implicit rules of the game on the part of the players. These players must also possess a feel for the game, which implies a practical mastery of the logic of the game... Such competence is shared unequally by the players and determines their mastery of the game in proportion to their competence. (Bourdieu quoted in Harker, Mahar and Wilkes 1990:7)

Bourdieu stresses that agents are neither all-powerful in determining the actions that they take, who they see themselves to be or are seen to be, nor what is valued in a particular field. Nor does Bourdieu see agents as 'powerless' dupes of the social structures and contexts in which they are situated. Rather, reality is made up by the complex interplay of agency and context. For Bourdieu the language that we use is both a product of the context in which we live as well as producing the way in which we see reality. Understanding how to play the 'game' does not imply that an actor must slavishly follow rules, nor can there be seen to be only one way to interpret rules. Rather, the metaphor of the game helps us to see the actor negotiating the tensions between 'rules' and emergent, dynamic and contingent ways of seeing reality. As Bourdieu put it, the space in which actors operate is one in which,

We have *stakes (enjeux)* which are, for the most part, the product of competition between players. We have the investment in the game, *illusio* ..., players are taken in by the game, they oppose one another, sometimes with ferocity, only to the extent that they concur in their *belief (doxa)* in the game and its stake; they grant these a recognition that escapes questioning. Players agree by mere fact of playing, and not by way of a "contract" that the game

is worth playing,... And this *collusion* is the very basis of their competition (Bourdieu 1992:98).

Bourdieu, similar to Polanyi (1966) with his concept of 'tacit' knowledge, emphasises that 'mastering the logic of the game' extends beyond rule-governed behaviour to include a somewhat intangible quality which he chooses to express as a 'feel for the game', suggesting that in theorising truth one needs to consider the dynamic interplay between actors and their contexts. Seeing the world in this way was an understanding that came to Bourdieu most strongly when, as a young soldier during the Algerian war, he was posted to live with a nomadic tribe. There he was profoundly confronted by the differences of social structures and rules which this society propounded, compared to those of French society. It was in Algeria that he became interested in developing a range of theoretical and methodological tools based on his anthropological training which he called 'thinking tools'. Therefore, not unlike Foucault, it was in the guise of the outsider that Bourdieu's world view was challenged which had the effect of enriching his theoretical and methodological understandings.

The tack that I take to frame my approach to theorising truth management in organisations is to use the concept of 'thinking tools' (Bourdieu 1992), a phraseology imbued with an intense skepticism for traditional ways of seeing theory. Thinking tools are not a rule-based 'theory' with an implicit quest to uncover an all-inclusive explanation of society which holds everything in place. Rather, thinking tools intricately link theory with method by way of favouring an 'idea' and 'practice' of truth that is 'not linked to that of consensus' (Lyotard 1984:66) nor correspondence (McHugh1971). 'Thinking tools' 'take shape for and by empirical work' (Bourdieu 1992). The thinking tools in this study are designed to bring into focus that which has been marginal to the gaze of the empiricists of 'normal science': the importance of the interplay of contextualism and agency in shaping how truth comes to be seen as such.

The concept of 'thinking tools' is consistent with postmodern theoretical and methodological concerns in that it points to the impossibility of any theory, either in research or practice, of determining objectively that which *is* 'The Truth'. Indeed, it suggests that theory is a practice. Such thinking about the linkage between truth and theorising lies in sharp contrast to the context-independence of 'normal science' because it points to the impossibility of carefully controlling and contriving environments so that all features of the context and agency other than those sought

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experimentally are screened out for the purpose of discovering generalisable rules that govern a particular phenomenon.

Central to my theoretical approach is the construction of two maps of 'thinking tools' with the aim of using postmodernist theoretical concerns to frame empirical work in organisation studies. The first map is underscored by the postmodern concern that the research needs to examine how phenomena are constituted within any specific context. It explores how conceptions of space, discourses and time are shaped by and shape the contingent contextual boundaries of what comes to count as truth. The second map, underscored by a further postmodernist concern for the need to examine agency, positions itself against normal science, which, as Clegg and Hardy (1996:434) remind us, 'silences the subject' but paradoxically in so doing prevents the final and vital 'translation' which would mark the success of their project: that of 'fusing theory with practice'. In this second map of thinking tools, the subject is given 'voice' by way of exploring conceptions of identity, capital, practices and power and in this way agency too is seen to be shaped by and to shape the contingent boundaries of what comes to count as truth. Although conceived and written up as two separate maps, the contingent links between each map of thinking tools reflect a dynamic and iterative linking of one map of thinking tools with the other, rather than one that is a linear relationship.

The construction of the two maps is not seen as the only way in which truth can be conceived and managed in a field; rather, the maps are one possible way in which truth can be examined. Furthermore, the construction of the two maps of thinking tools is concerned not so much with the official story of truth in organisations, for as Smith comments, 'these official accounts do a considerable disservice to the actual lives and relations as experienced by the people on a first hand basis' (Gardiner 2000:184). The thinking tools are constructed in such a way as to allow for the juxtaposition of official stories with micro, local stories. The aim is to get to the very 'lifeblood' of how we manage truth in organisations: a quest to represent that which counts as truth and its social effects in all its contextual and human messiness. In this way, the conceptualisation of the thinking tools returns to critique some of the debates which have raged throughout the field of organisational studies as well as sociology, philosophy and anthropology in an attempt to reconcile various dualities which have often served only to divide theorising into two warring camps including

structure/agency, theory/practice, causal/contingent, micro/macro studies, objectivity/subjectivity, observable/non-observable, and so on.

In this section of the thesis, I examine theories of truth from both modernist and postmodernist perspectives, and describe the so-called paradigm wars that divided theorists of many disciplines (including organisations studies) into two warring camps. I then elaborate on each of the two maps of thinking tools which make up my theoretical approach in turn. First, I examine how postmodern theorising is bringing context back into the empiricists' gaze with its composite parts of discourses, space and time; then I turn my attention to exploring agency, previously silenced by modernist theorising. I conceptualise agency as being made up of identity, capital and practices fused within capillaries of power. In elaborating each map, I explain how I have come to such a theoretical stance by drawing on postmodernist concerns and critiques of postmodernist theorising as well as consideration of major debates which have influenced theory development in organisation studies. I also explore how such thinking tools have helped me, as a theorist, to challenge traditional rational theories of organisation studies.

## CHAPTER 1: THE TRUTH GAMES OF MODERNITY

Their first act was to gallop in a body right round the boundaries of the farm, as though to make quite sure that no human being was hiding anywhere upon it; then they raced back to the farm building to wipe out the last traces of Jones's hated reign. The harness-room at the end of the stables was broken open; the bits, the nose-rings, the dog chains, the cruel knives ...were all flung down the well. All the animals capered with joy when they saw the whips going up in flames. Snowball also threw onto the fire the ribbons with which the horses' manes and tails had usually been decorated on market days.

George Orwell (1945:14)

*The concept of 'the truths game of modernity', as with the term 'modernity' itself, is a postmodern frame of reference. Indeed, for those that it represents - the positivists, the functionalists, structuralists, cognitivists - the very idea of equating the ideals of normal science and its pursuit of truth with a 'game' is abhorrent. Proponents of normal science maintain that truth is gained through the rigorous adherence of the principles and rules of the scientific method. Thus, for such theorists truth is a serious pursuit far removed from ideas of 'play' and 'games'. Furthermore, the coining of the term 'modernists' exemplifies a very powerful use of a 'language game' by the postmodernists in that it describes the various dominant theorists of normal science against whom they wished to position themselves. It is not a term which proponents of the so-called 'normal sciences' use to describe themselves and, when they do, they use it only ironically. In this chapter, I will define what is meant by modernity and examine the 'truth games' in which modernist theorists engage. Of particular focus is the way in which modernist thought has constituted the boundaries of truth and its management.*

Similar to Power (1990) and Featherstone (1988), Cooper and Burrell (1988) trace the origins of modernity to Enlightenment thinkers of eighteenth-century Europe including Hume (1999), Smith (1952) and Wollstonecraft (1996) who produced an impressive body of social ideas which broke away from the dogma of Greco-Roman and Christian traditions in favour of scientific principles and methods. Similarly, they point to the influence of Kant (1924) in that the steering rule of modernity was reason: the search for the established reliable foundations for generalisable knowledge through the requirement of proof to create unity and order. According to Kant's thesis, 'we discover reason when we cease to depend on any external authority as a basis of belief' (Hassard

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1993:4). Enlightenment thinkers heralded reason as the highest of human attributes. Indeed, as Parker (1992:3) argued:

reason became elevated to a point whereby the world was seen as a system and, one that comes increasingly under human control as our knowledge of it increases. The common term for this kind of belief system are positivism, empiricism and science. All share a faith in the power of the mind to understand nature; that which is 'out there' [... at the core of versions of modernism] is a rationalism that is unchallengeable and a faith that it is ultimately possible to communicate the results of enquiry to other rational beings.

Hence, Enlightenment thinkers maintained that it was through reason that the vision of a scientific world view would triumph over prejudice.

It is also widely acknowledged that it was not until the nineteenth century that the cultural collision between the religious, metaphysical, and scientific world views reached a climax. It was within the context of intense cultural turmoil brought about by increasing industrialism and civil unrest in postrevolutionary France that Comte, a French theorist who came to be known as the father of sociology, proposed that he had discovered a generalisable law that governed the human mind. Comte's sociology was designed to provide a diagnosis of the contemporary crisis and to suggest a remedy: the consolidation of the positive/industrial/scientific order. Comte outlined the essence of his thesis in *The Course of Positive Philosophy* (1830-42) and further elaborated on his ideas in a second theoretical work, *System of Positive Polity* (1851-4). A key tenet of his theorising was that the human mind progresses through three stages. First, in the theological stage the human mind seeks to explain phenomena with reference to speculation and the supernatural. Second, in the metaphysical phase explanation in abstract forces is sought. Finally, in the third stage, the positive, which represents the era of modern science, explanation is sought in facts where 'reason and observation duly combined' (Comte 1853:1-2) to create scientific knowledge. According to Comte's thesis, social change is a linear progression and underlying its trajectory is the belief that it is through the pursuit of scientific knowledge that truth is attained. Underpinning such theorising was the notion that nothing happens by chance, nor by divine intervention. Rather, science aimed to achieve the determination of causal relationships between distinct events as a factual relationship which rests on a firm

bedrock of observation and facts. The power of science was thought to lie in its capacity to liberate humankind from material want, from illusion that wired us in fear and ignorance and from a world that felt beyond human control. Comte's sociology was, broadly speaking, modern and liberal.

The genesis of a modernist trajectory to theorising organisation studies is traced by Clegg (1990) to the works of Max Weber. Writing at the close of the nineteenth century and birth of the twentieth century, Weber's social vision blended individualism with an equally passionate commitment to nationalism and an intense interest in scientific rationality. His sociology was primarily an attempt to examine the shift from traditional to rational scientific action. The central question in his thesis was: What is it about the West, that is causing the shift from traditional to scientific rational action? In developing his thesis about such shifts, Weber examined the religious and economic systems of many civilizations. In his seminal text *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1976), Weber's thesis was somewhat ironic and indeed counter-intuitive, in that he found that entrepreneurial behaviour correlated strongly with Calvinist Protestant beliefs - although overt displays of wealth were discouraged in Calvinist communities, hard work was taken as a sign that you were one of God's elect, thereby providing indirect encouragement for members to apply themselves rationally to acquire wealth.

For Weber the rationalisation process is the practical application of knowledge to achieve a desired end. It leads to efficiency, coordination and control over both the physical and the social environment. It is a product of 'scientific specialisation and technical differentiation' that seems to be a characteristic of Western culture. It is the guiding principle behind bureaucracy and the increasing division of labour. Indeed, Weber maintained that the 'modernness' of contemporary bureaucracy, constructed as a model of organisation distinct from private ownership has led to the unprecedented increase in both the production and distribution of goods and services. It is also associated with secularisation, depersonalisation and oppressive routine. Increasingly, human behavior is guided by observation, experiment and reason (*Zweckrational*) to master the natural and social environment to achieve a desired end.

Central to Weber's (1978) interest in bureaucracies as an emergent form of organisation at the turn of the nineteenth century was the idea that members adhere to

the rules of that organisation. Weber developed fifteen dimensions of bureaucracy which he saw as expressing the heart of bureaucracy's moral purpose:

1. Power belongs to an office and is not a function of the office holder
2. Power relations within the organisation structure have a specific authority configuration, specified by the rules of the organisation
3. Because powers are exercised in terms of the rules of office rather than the person, organisational action is impersonal
4. Disciplinary systems of knowledge, either professionally or organisationally formulated, rather than idiosyncratic beliefs, frame organisational action
5. The rules tend to be formally codified
6. These rules are contained in files of written documents that, based on precedent and abstract rule, serve as standards for organisational action
7. These rules specify tasks that are specific, distinct and done by different formal categories of personnel who specialise in these tasks and not in others. These official tasks would be organised on a continuous regulated basis in order to ensure the smooth flow of work between the discontinuous elements in this organisation: thus, there is a tendency towards specialisation.
8. There is a sharp boundary between what is bureaucratic action and what is particularistic action by personnel, defining the limits of legitimacy
9. The functional separation of tasks means that personnel must have authority and sanction available to them commensurate with their duties: thus organisations exhibit an authority structure
10. Because tasks are functionally separate, and because the personnel charged with each function have precisely delegated powers, there is a tendency towards hierarchy
11. The delegation of powers is expressed in terms of duties, rights, obligations and responsibilities: thus, organisational relationships tend to have a precise contract basis.



12. Qualities required for organisation positions are increasingly measured in terms of formal credentials
13. Because different positions in the hierarchy of offices require different credentials for admission, there is a career structure in which promotion is possible either by seniority or by merit of service by individuals with similar credentials
14. Different positions in the hierarchy are differentially paid and otherwise stratified
15. Communication and control are centralised in the organisation.

(Cited in Clegg, Kornberger and Pitsis. 2005:51-52)

Kafka (1999) provides us with evocative vignettes of the workings of the bureaucracy in his novel *The Castle* which clearly display the characteristics imbued in Weber's theorising. In the story we meet K., a land surveyor, who is initially filled with his own self-importance as a professional office holder. He then experiences how the organisation works in practice as a series of formalised texts and offices. Let us consider, for example, the following extract where K. first comes into contact with the Superintendent of the Castle:

..You've been taken on as a Land Surveyor, as you say, but, unfortunately we have no need for a Land Surveyor. There wouldn't be the least use for one here. The frontiers of our little state are marked out and all officially recorded. So what should we do with a Land Surveyor?' Though he had not given the matter a moment's thought before, K. was convinced now at the bottom of his heart that he had expected some such response as this. Exactly for that reason he was able to reply immediately: 'This is a great surprise for me. It throws all my calculations out. I can only hope that there's some misunderstanding'. 'No, unfortunately', said the Superintendent, 'which isn't for me to decide, but how this misunderstanding became possible, I can certainly explain that. In such a large governmental office as the Count's, it may occasionally happen that one department ordains this, another that; neither knows of the other, and though the supreme control is absolutely efficient, it comes by nature too late, and so every now and then a

trifling miscalculation arises. Of course that applies to the pettiest little affairs, as for example your case. In great matters I've never known of any error yet....(Kafka 1999:61)<sup>2</sup>

Not translated into English until after World War II, from their original German, the works of Weber (Clegg 1996:248) did not become influential in countries outside Germany until the fifties. Erroneously in the English-speaking world Weber was widely seen to be a proponent of bureaucracy and rationalisation. Indeed, his critique of bureaucracy and rationalisation was largely overlooked in the literature. However, his dismay regarding the nature of bureaucracy and its impact on society is clearly embodied in the metaphor of the 'iron cage', which he used to describe the stranglehold that bureaucracies were forming on all sectors of Western society, as well as comments such as the following in which he forcefully conveys his critique of bureaucracies in his own words:

It is horrible to think that the world could one day be filled with nothing but those little cogs, little men clinging to little jobs and striving toward bigger ones - .... This passion for bureaucracy ... is enough to drive one to despair. It is as if ... we were to deliberately become men who need "order" and nothing but order, become nervous and cowardly if for one moment this order wavers, and helpless if they are torn away from their total incorporation in it. That the world should know no men but these: it is in such an evolution that we are already caught up, and the great question is, therefore, not how we can promote and hasten it, but what can we oppose to this machinery in order to keep a portion of mankind free from this parceling-out of the soul, from this supreme mastery of the bureaucratic way of life.(Weber cited in J.P. Mayer 1956: 126-127.)

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<sup>2</sup> K. struggles tirelessly with the system and dies worn out by it. Significantly Kafka himself had begun the text in the first person and symbolically died before its completion. However, he left notes cited in the introduction to the text (1999:7) as to how it should be completed:

round his death-bed the villagers were to assemble, and from the Castle itself word was to come that though K.'s legal claim to the Castle itself was legal claims to live in the village was not yet valid, yet, taking certain auxiliary circumstances into account, he was to be permitted to work and live there.

Although Weber argued that bureaucracies were the dominant emerging form of organisation, he also stressed that they were neither the only possible form nor necessarily a desirable form of organising. Paradoxically, Weber's work on delineating the ideal types of the 'new' form of organisations constituted the cornerstone of the theoretical work of contingency theorists who dominated organisation studies in the 1960s and 1970s. The contingency theorists' project was not concerned with Weber's critique of bureaucracies. Rather, it was dedicated to refining further the instrumental-rationality of bureaucracies as an organisational form through application of the scientific method to practice. In this way, Weber's theorising was instrumental in further perpetuating the theorisation of bureaucracies as an organisational form.

The Aston studies (Pugh and Hickson 1976) took five of Weber's initial fifteen variables; specialisation, standardisation, formalisation, centralisation, and configuration on which to base their extensive empirical studies of forty-six organisations located in the industrial environs of the university. The Aston researchers were concerned with analysing organisational structures to identify those which best 'fit' given performance criteria. Their aim was to establish the structure that is optimal as varying according to certain factors such as organisational strategy, size, technology and so on. The data sets of the Aston researchers were extensive. Organisations with as many as twenty-five thousand employees were surveyed with the smallest sample employing three hundred. The studies showed that size was the major determinant of organisational structure. Thus, they maintained that size is positively correlated with increasing levels of bureaucracy.

Other contingency theorists proposed alternative interpretations regarding the determinants of optimal structure. Woodward's (1958) seminal study in the south-east of England established that the complexity of the technology in an organisation was a major determinant of structure. In a similar vein, Burns and Stalker (1961) argued that task uncertainty was positively correlated with structure. They identified two organisational structures - the mechanistic (centralised-formalised) and the organic (decentralised-non-formalised). Burns and Stalker's main thesis was that organisations seeking to innovate necessarily face uncertain tasks and because of this require an organic structure whereas an organisation performing routine operations faces more certain tasks which are best suited by a mechanistic structure. By contrast, for Chandler (1962) strategy leads to structure. Through case studies he identified the organisational structure that can be adopted to fit each strategy. He also

showed that structures may lag behind their strategy and argued that his studies demonstrated empirically that in cases where organisations delay the adoption of needed structures, poor performance results.

Donaldson's approach to organisational analysis typifies a contemporary manifestation of the modernist project. Following the tradition of the Aston School, Donaldson treats organisations as an objective reality. Thus, his theorising is premised on there being a 'right' fit between an organisational structure and various contingencies including size, technology, environment, strategy and so on. Donaldson largely looks to the analysis of organisational charts to theorise the functioning of organisations. He argues that 'with organisation studies, contingency theory has provided a coherent paradigm for the analysis of the structure of organisations. The paradigm has constituted a framework in which research progressed, leading to the construction of a scientific body of knowledge' (Donaldson 1996:51). Donaldson's thesis (1985) linking structures and contingencies is based on four key premises. First, it discusses the degree of product diversity, second, the degree of geographic diversity, third, the relationship between products and fourth, the degree of product innovation. Donaldson puts it that 'a small organisation, one with few employees, is organised effectively in a simple structure (Mintzberg 1979) in which there are few levels in the hierarchy. ....As an organisation grows in size, especially in the number of employees, the structure becomes more differentiated. Many more levels are added in the hierarchy, creating tiers of middle managers' (Donaldson 1996:55-56). However, based on the bureaucracy as an organisational form, contingency theory does little to explain the plethora of new emerging forms of organising such as 'intelligent, chaotic, improvisational, boundary-less, collaborative, empowered, horizontal, self-designed, and minimalist organisations; clusters, shamrocks, spiders' webs, starbursts and consortia; circular, front/back, cyclical and modular organisations; spherical, stable, internal and dynamic networks; organisations that are spun out, intersected, infinitely flat, inverted, fuzzy, fractal, federalist and virtual organisations' (Palmer and Hardy 2000:11-13).

Furthermore, the scientific theorisation of organisations and organising that underpinned modernist assumptions was not confined to the academy. Taylor (1967), an American industrial engineer who advocated a new form of management practice which he called Scientific Management, is widely acclaimed in the organisation studies literature as having developed the most celebrated example of organisational practice

as a 'rationally constructed artifice directed to the solution of social order and administration management' (Reed 1996:29). It is not by chance that Taylor dubbed his method of management 'scientific'. For in this way Taylor was able to legitimise his methods by linking to the strong discourse of science. Taylor claimed to have identified universally valid principles for eliminating the 'irrationality of custom and practice from established methods of management' (Alvesson and Wilmott 1994:44); through a process which he described as formally 'deskilling' jobs. The four elements of Scientific Management, by which Taylor purported to achieve these ends were as follows:

1. the proper design of the work task such that the absolute amount of work can be extracted from a given worker (using time and motion studies)
2. the selection of the proper workers (finding workers that are highly motivated and controllable)
3. the "inducement" of workers into participating in the system (getting workers to internalise their rationalisation for the system); and
4. the training and controlling of workers, with the concomitant use of surveillance and subversion (to derail the workers' "natural tendency towards sabotage, conspiracy, and "systematic soldiering" concealing from management the speed at which work can actually be done).

(Boje 1995:60)

The elements are based on a number of assumptions about what constitutes organisations and indeed organising. To maximise efficiency, work processes were documented and routinised with the result that there was no space for individual creativity or craft. Time was highly regulated and standardised; as Hassard (1996:330) puts it, 'in Taylorism we reach the high point in separating labour from the varied rhythms experienced in craft or agricultural work: clock rhythms replace fluctuating rhythms; machine-pacing replacing self-pacing; labour serves technology.' Certain assumptions were also being made of workers' integrity in that their workflow was not to be left to their own discretion but rather a high level of management control was proposed through rigorous supervisory oversight.

In his seminal text, *The Macdonaldization of Society* (1993), George Ritzer, a professor of sociology, has taken the central premises of the works of Max Weber and applied them to the analysis of our current society. For Ritzer (1993:1):

McDonaldisation, ... is the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world.

In this way, Ritzer points out that the bureaucracy as an organisational form is far from dead. Ritzer outlines five dominant themes within this McDonaldisation process: efficiency, calculability, predictability, increased control, and the replacement of human by non-human technology. In this way, he shows that the patterns of bureaucracy and Taylorism are clearly imbued in fast food outlets such as McDonalds and replicated in a wide range of other organisations including toy stores (Toys R Us) bookstores (B. Dalton's), newspapers (USA Today) and so on.

While organisational theorists such as Donaldson have remained true to the normal science project of organisation studies, and many organisations such as McDonalds have pursued the mantra of rationalisation and standardisation that mark a modernist approach to organising, at the same time, a number of contrary positions emerged both in the academy and in practice in what has become known retrospectively as the paradigm wars. Similarly, the assumptions underlying the idea of a 'fit' between structure and isolated determinants such as size, strategy, uncertainty of task and technology are giving way to more holistic ways of seeing organisations and organising. In organisations such views are often articulated as shifting from a 'strategy-structure-systems' doctrine to a 'purpose-process-people' mindset.

In summary, this chapter traced various theorists' concepts of the origins of modernity as well as modernist thinking. It also examined a number of seminal studies which adopt a 'normal sciences' approach to the theorising of organisational studies as well as exploring how science is imbued in the practices of contemporary organisations. In the next chapter, I will discuss the so-called paradigm wars in organisation studies which challenged the ontological, epistemological and methodological foundations on which modernity is based.

## CHAPTER 2: THE "PARADIGM WARS"

An uproar of voices was coming from the farmhouse. They rushed back and looked through the window again. Yes, a violent quarrel was in progress. There were shoutings, banging on the table, sharp glances, furious denials. The source of the trouble seemed to be that Napoleon and Mr Pinkington had each played an ace of spades simultaneously.

George Orwell (1945:102)

*In the academy the paradigm wars have been marked by the problematic that science's self-understanding was that if something cannot be objectified through its method, then there can be no science of that something. Scientific knowledge represented the (disinterested) pursuit of the truth of what is. Hence, scientific knowledge was distinct from, or counter-opposed to, power. Equally, since its self-understanding recognised no limit to objectification then science can understand itself as having potentially limitless reach. Critics argue that the stance that normal science adopts to organisation studies lacks reflexivity: its own version of truth may not be the only possible version. Indeed, it also does not consider the most fundamental issue – that the stable environments that natural scientists study are not shared by the dynamic nature of organisations. In organisational practice the paradigm wars have been marked by a consciousness that the organisation extends beyond the traditional form of the bureaucracy as well as a questioning of the human and environmental effects of scientific progress.*

Liotard, considered to be the father of postmodernist thought, was a key whistleblower shedding doubt on the modernists' game of science as 'The Truth' in that he argued that science's notion of itself as standing outside narratives is highly questionable. In a foundational postmodern text, the *Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Lyotard (1984) drew on the concept of 'language games' derived from Wittgenstein's seminal text *Philosophical Investigations* (1968) to argue that science is 'in' language and, indeed, is one 'language game' of many rather than a theory which stands outside reality and explains the world as it is. With the concept of 'language games', Wittgenstein refuted the claims that he had made in his earlier published work

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Part 1: Theories of truth and their management

Working the knowledge game? The power of the everyday in managing truth in organisations.

*Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (1949), originally published in 1921, in which, consistent with logical positivism, he had stated that language was 'a picture of reality' (1949:63), and a 'model of reality as we imagine it' (1949:63) whereby language is none other than simply the 'naming of objects' (1949:69) with a focus on propositions which 'restrict reality to two alternatives: yes or no' (1949:67).

Wittgenstein's later theorising of language marks a significant departure from such a conception of language in that through examining a number of examples of language in everyday use he shows that meaning is constructed in use and as such meanings are both dynamic and incomplete and thus can never give us a definite way of knowing. The shift in ways of thinking about language from his first to later works, brought him to the conclusion that the understanding of language that he had talked of in *Tractatus*, was 'primitive'. Equally, the shift in thinking had broader philosophical implications because rather than satisfying himself with the argument:

that which is "higher" the beautiful and the good - cannot be talked about in a meaningful, sensible way'. For '(m)eaningful talk consists only of propositions, and propositions can express nothing of what is higher. Hence, 'what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must consign to silence (Wittgenstein 1949:3).

In his later works, Wittgenstein sought to explore more complex ways of representing language to talk about that which had previously been 'consign(ed) to silence'. Furthermore, a key premise is that 'words are also deeds' (Wittgenstein: 1968:para 546). Indeed, 'different words, like different tools, are used in different ways ... The language game is 'the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven' (Fenichel Pitkin 1972:37-39).

In Lyotard's analysis of Wittgenstein's concept of language games (1984:10) he made three observations:

Their rules do not carry within themselves their own legitimation, but are objects of a contract, explicit or not between players (which is not to say that the players invent the rules). The second is that if there are no rules there is no game, that even an infinitesimal



modification of one rule alters the nature of the game, that a “move” or utterance that does not satisfy the rules does not belong to the game they define. The third remark is ... every utterance should be thought of as a move in the game.

With the concept of language games Lyotard was concerned with showing that commonly accepted understandings of rationality are, in fact, just one possible way of seeing reality, and there are many other possibilities, constructed through language ‘lurking underneath the smooth surface of textbook knowledge and scientific jargon’ (Clegg, Kornberger and Pitsis 2005:60). In his text, Lyotard then made a language move of his own in that he juxtaposed what he termed ‘the nature of the social bond: the modernist alternative’ where he explored various theorists of ‘normal science’ including Talcott Parsons and Marx with a subsequent chapter entitled ‘the nature of the social bond: the postmodern perspective’. The differences he drew between the two theoretical positions are that modernism ‘legitimizes itself with reference to a metadiscourse... making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth’ (Lyotard 1984:xxiii), whereas postmodern perspectives express the need to understand social relations ‘as a theory of games which accepts agnostics as a founding principle’ (Lyotard 1984:16). In a further chapter he then examined what knowledge is, its relationship to learning and narrative. In this discussion he maintained:

Knowledge (*savoir*) in general cannot be reduced to science, nor even learning (*connaissance*), learning is the set of statements which, to the exclusion of all other statements, denote or describe objects and may be declared true or false. Science is a subset of learning. It is also composed of denotative statements, but imposes two supplementary conditions on their acceptability: the objects to which they refer must be available for repeated access, in other words, they must be accessible in explicit conditions of observation: and it must be possible to decide whether or not a given statement pertains to the language judged relevant by the experts.

Thus, given that science relies on language to describe its meaning and language is imprecise, it could not be that science, conceived by the rules of scientific method,

which is constructed within language, could be the only truth. Rather, science is one language game of many. The implication for 'normal science' was devastating in that through the power of persuasively using language, which as modernist theorists would have it was 'neutral', Lyotard was able to reposition science to a lesser role of 'one truth story of many' (Lyotard 1984). Indeed, Bauman, commenting on the significance of the postmodernist debate to the positioning of dominant scientific methods, argues that it is with postmodernity that 'modernity's self-confidence; its conviction of its own superiority over alternative forms of life' is challenged by the 'new self awareness' and 'lack of self confidence' (Bauman 1987:119).

The effects of such theorising rippled throughout various disciplines including organisation studies joining with and fuelling an already growing body of dissident voices in the literature which had become dissatisfied with the dominant scientific sensemaking of science in explaining organisations and organising. Culminating in what has become known as the 'postmodern turn' or 'paradigm wars' there was a marked onslaught of new 'language games' which contributed to the 'undoing' of science's position as the only way of theory building. Indeed, as Wolvin argues, the advent of such new language games was not surprising giving that 'theories.... (c)ontest ground that is already held and so they must not only establish their own legitimacy but de-legitimate the prevailing theory and its practitioners' (Wolvin 1981:402). In fact, the very formulation of the words 'modernism' and 'postmodernism', which framed much of the theoretical debate which took place in organisation studies in the 'paradigm wars' of the late 1980s to early 1990s could be seen as representative of a 'language game' denoting the battlelines which were drawn up and which divided theorists of organisation studies into two warring camps. By constructing the theoretical and methodological landscape of organisation studies into two 'warring camps' rather than representing 'it' and 'themselves' as various small and differentiated schools of thought, postmodernists were better able to talk their own version of truth into being and to discipline, control and close down the legitimacy of the theorising and methodology of proponents of the dominant frame and in this way to talk scientific theories and methods of organisations and organising out of currency. On the part of the postmodernists, the use of such an analytical language device was a highly effective problem-solving strategy to reverse their marginalised theoretical position. This is akin to Foucault's advice (Foucault 1994:283):

When one encounters a difficulty, one goes from the level of analysis, which is that of the statements themselves to another, which is exterior to it. Thus, faced with a change, a contradiction, incoherence, one resorts to an explanation by social conditions, mentality, worldview, and so on.

Such a strategy was powerful, as the postmodernists well knew, given that one of the key tenets of their theorising was that 'rationality is dependent upon specific knowledges and techniques of rendering something knowable and, as a result, governable' (Townley 1993:520).

In playing their part in repositioning 'normal science' as one language game of many in the field of organisation studies, Clegg and Hardy (1996:434) staged a vehement and convincing case against modernist thought in organisation studies. They pointed out that, despite its aim to produce a coherent model for guiding decision-making, the work of the Aston School and their followers studied organisational forms and highly idealised concepts drawn from Weber's work on bureaucracy, and in this way 'prevented managerial discretion from contaminating the results'. Similarly, in an earlier text entitled 'Offence and Defence: A Symposium with Hinings, Clegg, Child, Aldrich, Karpik, and Donaldson' published in the prestigious journal *Organization Studies* (1988, 9/1:1-32), a debate raged on the topic of Donaldson's publication, *In Defence of Organisation Studies* (1985). Donaldson's text was a reply to the critics in which he attempted to critique the works of various theorists who had staged alternative positions to that of the functionalist normal science view of organisation studies. The responses to his work in the symposium ranged from the support of fellow proponents of contingency theory such as Hinings to ardent critics such as Clegg. What is clear from the range of responses to the discussion is that theorising is integrally linked to one's own world view and thus pointed to the unlikelihood of Donaldson achieving the outcome to which he aspired in his work: to forge a single unified discipline of organisation studies underpinned by normal science. Aldrich's analysis of Donaldson's tactics seems apt where he comments that theorists engage in the game of theorising at a level of 'ideas', 'economic and political interests' or 'driven by hypothesis testing, replication or failures to replicate and the accumulation of empirical generalisations'. Donaldson's tactics, he adds (1988:19), are staged at the level of the final tactic. Indeed, from Donaldson's perspective his work represented a total success in that it represented a 'routing of the critics'.

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Nevertheless, the voices of the critics of positivist research have grown stronger in more recent years. They have questioned the point of seeking scientific status through high levels of abstraction and quantification at the cost of application to real world issues. Knights (1997:6) argues that 'positivist emulations of the natural sciences always leaves the social sciences in a position of inferiority, marginality, of subordination to the positivist ideal they can never quite fulfil.' Flyvbjerg, too, stresses that 'we must drop the fruitless effort to emulate natural science's success in producing cumulative and predictive theory; this approach simply does not work in social sciences' (Flyvbjerg 2001:3). These voices which challenge the application of 'normal science' in the analysis of organisations have broader application in highlighting the ill fit of positivism to research in the social sciences.

In the face of criticism, mounted since the 1970s, against 'normal organisation science', Donaldson has been joined by the plea of Pfeffer (1993), a leading North American organisation analyst. Pfeffer urges his colleagues to accept the imposition of a consensus about what is authoritative research in order to restore their place in the marketplace for ideas and funding. According to Pfeffer, it is only through the creation of a ruling elite whose members ardently dictate the fundamental questions, enforce a set of research standards and generally defend the boundaries of acceptability that 'orderly development' of 'scientific knowledge' can be resumed. However, such comments staged by such dominant theorists were aptly dismissed by Clegg describing them as the actions of:

(g)atekeepers of management as a discipline... sounding a retreat from... more theoretically reflexive concerns ... in favour of fortifying the intellectual keep, hoisting the draw bridge, and rallying, opportunistically, to the flag of pragmatic paradigm consolidation as a political rather than an intellectual end-in-itself. (Clegg 1996:235)

Flyvbjerg, also commenting on the idea of the 'paradigm wars', concedes that scholars who 'aspire to the normal-science ideal' fear that in the proliferation of 'new paradigms' the door may become open for scientific relativism and nihilism' (Flyvbjerg 2001:48). This is clearly suggested in Donaldson's description of postmodernism as 'bankrupt as an avenue of new organisational theory' (1994:198). However, Flyvbjerg stresses these fears are misguided because:

In reality, the door is already wide open for relativistic and nihilistic tendencies, insofar as epistemically oriented social scientists ignore the fact that epistemic theory can not serve as a bulwark against relativism and nihilism since such a theory, ... does not exist and can probably never come to exist. (Flyvbjerg 2001:4)

In this chapter I highlighted the sense of unease and dissatisfaction with established theoretical positions that has prompted a growing interest in the 'postmodern turn' in organisation studies. The 'postmodern turn' is a means of creating alternative theoretical approaches in organisation studies which are able to move beyond the 'formalised', or worse, an 'ideological mystification' of modernist scientific thought (Hassard 1993:6). In the next chapter we will take a more detailed look at how postmodernists play their versions of 'truth games'.

## CHAPTER 3: THE TRUTH GAME OF POSTMODERNITY

"Tactics, comrades, tactics!" skipping round and whisking his tail with a merry laugh. The animals were not certain what the word meant, but Squealer spoke so persuasively, and the three dogs who happened to be with him growled so threateningly, that they accepted his explanation without further questions.

George Orwell (1945:43)

*Postmodernist theory abandons the quest for 'grand theories' and a unified grasp of objective reality. Central to the abandonment of this quest is the understanding that language 'does not act as a mirror for reality, but rather ... linguistic and discursive conventions .. are inseparable from the meaning of the text' (Rhodes 2001:4). Equally, as Nicholson (1990:11) points out, 'postmodernism must reject a description of itself as embodying a set of timeless ideals contrary to those of modernism; it must insist on being recognised as a set of viewpoints of a time, justifiable only within its own time'. In this way, we come to see postmodernism as a 'state of mind' or a particular 'sensibility' which, when applied to the analysis of organisations, allows us to see them as 'discursive locales of competing calculations. Places where talk gets done, texts produced' (Clegg 1994:31). Furthermore, that such talk dynamically constructs what counts as truth in a particular time and space.*

Lyotard, the father of postmodernity, conveys a somewhat cryptic definition of postmodernism – 'A work can become modern only if it is at first postmodern. Thus understood postmodernism is not modernism at its end, but in its nascent state and this state is recurrent' (1992:22). Similarly, in seeking to define postmodernism, Bauman stresses that in many ways the term is an unfortunate misnomer in that its composite parts of 'post' and 'modern' suggest that it comes after modernism and thus may imply that it has superseded modernity. For Bauman postmodernity not so much marks the end of modernist sensemaking as rather:

Rearranges our knowledge and redistributes the importance assigned to its various characteristics. It also brings into relief such aspects of modernity which went unnoticed when looked upon from

the inside of the modern era simply because of their uncontested status and consequent taken-for-grantedness (Bauman 1997:1).

In this way, such definitions of postmodernism suggest an intensification of the sort of dynamism, restlessness and quest for novelty, experimentation, and constant revolutionising of life that was associated with modernist thought at the advent of the Enlightenment. Therefore, it is the 'spirit' of scientific thought at the time, rather than the actual knowledge claims made, that they wish to recapture in their definitions of the term postmodernism.

Similarly, Chia (1995:579), elaborating on the distinction between postmodernist and modernist, critiques views that have interpreted each as an 'epoch' preferring instead to 'distinguish postmodern from modern in terms of a 'style of thinking'. He goes on to explain that:

Modernist thought style relies on a 'strong' ontology (the study of the nature and essence of things) of *being* which privileges thinking in terms of discrete phenomenal 'states', static 'attributes' and sequential 'events'. Postmodern thinking on the other hand, privileges a 'weak' ontology of *becoming* which emphasises a transient, ephemeral and emergent reality. From this thought style, reality is deemed to be continuously in flux and transformation and hence unrepresentable in any static sense.

Postmodernist thought asserts that there is no 'truth', only differing viewpoints and perspectives. Given that the social world is seen to be constructed rather than existing as 'fixed' and 'true', in postmodern approaches to research the boundaries of the phenomenon studied are seen to be ill defined and blurred, thus suggesting the need for multi-level rather than uni-level analysis of organisations, to reflect the dynamic and complex nature of relationships between various actors and social effects operating in contexts within, and without, the organisation. Both the construction and sensemaking of local stories of truth are seen to be central to the repositioning of what is considered to be 'truth'. Drawing on the work of Foucault, Haugaard (1998:169) puts it that:

A regime of truth production is a set of structural constraints constituted as a set of local conditions of felicity and infelicity. What

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happens in the transition from one episteme to the other is that conditions of felicity and infelicity surrounding statements change. The same utterances which in one period meet with felicity, meet with infelicity in the next. Not only does the same statement made in one episteme have a radically different meaning from the same utterance made in another episteme but their seriousness and truth status also change.

The eternal question central to Foucault's inquiry into truth is not mirrored in the modernist project of determining what constitutes 'truth' and 'untruth'. Instead Foucault shifts the focus of his inquiry to an examination of how truth is constituted. The reason for such a shift and the implications this has for the ways he goes about his research are clearly illustrated in an interview debate he engaged in with Noam Chomsky on Dutch television in 1974. The topic of the interview was 'Human Nature: Justice Versus Power'. Noam Chomsky, a political activist and renowned structural linguist, clearly argues from the standpoint of an archetypical modernist theorist; hence the assumptions that he makes about the world and also the interests which frame his research are different to those of Foucault. For Chomsky 'there is a human nature ... His aim: a testable mathematical theory of the mind. His lineage: Cartesian rationality' (Rabinow 1982:3). In response to the interviewer's questions, Chomsky's tactic is to focus on identifying that which is true but, not surprisingly, given his political activism, in ways that may not necessarily be determined as such by the state. He emphasises that a person may do something which 'the state regards as illegal', as a form of 'civil disobedience'. However, the state 'may be wrong in doing so' (Chomsky in Davidson 1997d). He goes on to explain the idea with an example whereby a person may drive through a red traffic light and thus break the law but do so for a morally justifiable reason such as to prevent a murder. Furthermore, he provides another example where he purports that it is justifiable 'to derail an ammunition train that's going to Vietnam.....because it's legal and proper and should be done' (Chomsky in Davidson 1997d). Foucault, is not drawn into debate with Chomsky about the veracity of these various cases, rather he challenges Chomsky's argument at a broader philosophical level by examining the way in which Chomsky criticises the 'functioning of justice' (Foucault in Davidson 1997d). By maintaining that Chomsky's theorising smacks of 'ideal justice' which is premised on 'a purer justice', Foucault shifts the debate to the strategies Chomsky himself is using to make assertions about what constitutes truth. For Foucault, his own inquiry into truth focuses on 'justice' being 'at



stake in a struggle' and hence a concept which operates as 'an instrument of power'. He goes on to assert that '(r)ather than thinking of social struggle in terms of "justice", one has to emphasise justice in terms of the social struggle' (Foucault in Davidson 1997d). In seeking answers to the question of *how* truth is constructed rather than *what* constitutes truth the theoretical territory Foucault traverses involves examining who is creating history which also points to questions about the nature of language and writing itself.

Foucault dedicates much of his work to examining innumerable small stories from everyday life in antiquity as well as more recent times, which show the ways in which the 'transition from one episteme of truth to the other' has challenged the 'conditions of felicity and infelicity' of one local context from the other. Of particular interest in the telling of these stories is his focus on representing them in such a way that they show *how* such changes were experienced. An analogy makes the point clearer. In discussing the social practices that have influenced how the criminal and mentally ill have been thought about, talked about and dealt with, Foucault (1991b:68) stresses that:

... it wasn't as a matter of course that mad people came to be regarded as mentally ill; it wasn't self evident that the only thing to be done with a criminal was to lock him up; it wasn't self evident that the causes of illness were to be sought through the individual examination of bodies, and so on.

Such an approach contrasts to a 'pure scientific' approach based on the assumption that science offers a uniquely privileged view of the everyday world. The focus of Foucault's inquiry thus challenges the very foundations of science represented by the words of the Nobel prize winner, Max Perutz, when he approvingly quotes Nehru:

It is science alone that can solve the problems of hunger and poverty, of insanity and illiteracy, of superstition and deadening custom and tradition, of vast resources running to waste, of rich country inhabited by starving people ... who indeed could afford to ignore science today? At every turn we have to seek its aid ... the future belongs to science and those who make friends with science.(Nehru cited in Perutz 1991:vii)

Furthermore, in contrast to discussions of 'causal connections', which involve direct attribution of an event with a particular outcome or result, suggesting a 'rule-governed' world regulated by law-like a priori, Foucault's emphasis on contingencies rather than causal connections evokes the understanding that the 'emergence of a particular historical event was not necessary, but was one possible result of a whole series of complex relations between other events' (Kendall and Wickham 1999:5); hence, he talks of 'accidents of history'. The distinction between causal and contingent connections is central to moving beyond the assumptions of causality that undergird rational, systemic theorising of organisations, with its theoretical roots grounded in the works of classical eighteenth century philosophers of scientific reasoning, such as Kant and Hume, who, supported by the success of the natural sciences, reasoned that every event has a deterministic cause. Given that unlike modernists, postmodernists do not believe that the truth of an objective world 'out there' exists waiting to be discovered, but rather, propose that the sense we make of our world is socially constructed, the analysis of organisations within a postmodern frame focuses on the need to problematise systems of thought and organisation and to question the very notion of systematic explanation. Similarly, as Lovlie (1992:120) suggests, postmodernism is an analytical position which 'in fact makes difference itself its point of view'. It aims to undermine 'taken-for-granted' assumptions and is particularly suspicious of that which is considered 'self evident'.

In making sense of organisations postmodernists examine multiple voices; official as well as unofficial accounts to explain how a given phenomenon came to be, with the view to tracing how what comes to be seen as true is contextually dependent, contested and linked to power. The local stories of the actors themselves are juxtaposed with each other as well as those of the researcher. Thus, the role of the researcher is also repositioned in postmodernist theorising in that she is seen to be an 'author' or 'interpreter' of a particular version of truth rather than a distant and 'objective observer' and 'legislator' of 'The Truth' as modernists theorists would have it. Perhaps the most compelling way of engaging us, as readers, with such concepts has been for the author to explore new ways of writing a theoretical text. Rather than words being anchored exclusively in canonical theoretical concepts drawn from authoritative voices in the literature, some postmodernist writers let us in on the secrets of their lives, their thinking processes, even differences of opinion as to whether the arguments and flow of the words in their text should take this turn or that. Such writing tactics not only

point up the constructedness of what counts as truth, in that they demonstrate that research involves the writer making decisions about what is relevant and what not, resulting in what becomes part of the text and what is eased out of the final version. But such writing tactics also involve taking the risk of attempting to develop a closer relationship with their readers by engaging in a conversation rather than leaving us at a safe distance; a standpoint from which we have to make our own connections between that which is said in the text and our own conceptions of reality. Changing the relationship between author and reader by attempting to engage in a form of 'translation' is clearly a strategic move, and not one borne from sentimentality, because it acknowledges that meaning making does not rest with the words that the authors prescribe, but rather in the sense that we as readers make of them.

Clegg and Hardy (1996:422-423) provide an exemplar of a discussion of such concepts through engagement with 'new' ways of writing in a chapter entitled 'Representations'. The text - presented in the form of a dialogue between three speakers - appears in the last chapter of their *Handbook of Organisation Studies*, a body of work that stands as a valiant attempt to 'map' the field of organisations both theoretically and in practice. The focus of their chapter is to make the point that sensemaking of organisations is manifest in multiple representations. The authors begin their discussion of this concept by examining a number of theoretical arguments and then cut abruptly to the dialogue in question. The dialogue is between a 'Voice' - 'entering from off stage' and two authors; 'Author 1' and 'Author 2'. The dialogue appears in itself as a representation of a conversation which may be taking place in 'real time' between the two authors of the text we are reading; Clegg and Hardy and 'the Voice', the latter perhaps in anticipation of the scrutiny of that same text by you and me, their critical readers:

Voice: (entering from off-stage) The same thing? What do you mean? Is it like music? I know that you like music because I hear music playing in the background. Something about 'snowdrops on kittens' isn't it, by John Coltrane? Isn't this the same as 'My Favourite Things' sung by Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music*?

Author 1: I guess that you're talking to me since I'm the jazz buff. Well, I think that I'd have to say, not really. Don't you think

there is a difference between this version by Coltrane and the song by Julie Andrews?

Voice: Yes, but doesn't the difference between these two versions of 'My Favourite Things' make one more real, less fake and more true to the original? Isn't there a genuine article, that all other representations should seek to emulate?

Author 1: No, 'My Favourite Things' ceases to exist as anything other than its representations once it is represented.

Voice: This is all very well. I know we started talking about music, or at least I did, but where does that get us?

Author 2: That's right. What are we talking about music for? It's just some background music while we work. So, let's get back to the real work. In any case, organisation studies are closer to science than art, aren't they?

Author 1: It depends. It depends on precisely what sense of 'science', what sense of 'art', what sense of being 'closer', what sense of 'getting somewhere', and most importantly, the translation between them....

Author 2: No, this isn't a book about music, it's a book about organisation studies. So let's get back to the chapter. Forget your jazz obsession.

Within this short conversation, we see mirrored many postmodernist concerns. Author 1, works hard to point to the relevancy of the metaphor of music and parallels which can be drawn in making sense of organisation studies. There are questions of whether the 'original version' of a particular phenomenon may be 'more true' and thus the one that others should seek to emulate. In this way, the conversation makes clear reference to the concept of the authenticity of 'grand narratives' in theorising organisations as opposed to the counter-argument that postmodernists would suggest of the value of exploring 'local stories'. Similarly, the idea of the 'language games' that surround that which is seen to count as 'background' and by implication 'foreground', as well as what counts as 'real' and irrelevant are brought out into the open. Indeed, the response that Author 1 gives to the Voice's inquiry as to whether organisation studies is more like 'science' or 'art', with the comment that the 'it depends' on the 'sense' that is made of a particular discipline or phenomenon, seems to be getting

exactly to the point of a postmodern sensemaking of organisations in that it challenges the assumption that a discipline or other phenomena can ever be an objectified reality. Nevertheless, at the conclusion of this statement the 'Voice' remains unsure as to 'where this is getting us' and Author 1's words are in fact impatiently interrupted by Author 2, who had until this time remained silent, but now elects to intervene with brutally dismissive words designed to stem the flow of the co-author's words and in this way to seek to reposition them from words of wisdom to a 'jazz obsession' which Author 1 should 'forget' and focus instead on the task at hand; that of writing some concluding remarks of the sense made of organisations. The abrupt termination of the conversation represents a move on the part of Author 2 to determine what counts as 'foreground' and 'background', as well as, what counts as 'real' and irrelevant. Thus, the abortion of the 'translation between them' which stands as Author 1's last words in the conversation represents the very issues that the authors have already reminded us of earlier in their introduction that:

when we map we miss. We miss the gap between representation and image represented. We miss the contrivance of the representational practices that produce the effect of representation. We miss the point if we think that what we see is what we see.  
(Clegg and Hardy 1996:422)

The conversation suggests in a somewhat ironic way that such 'gaps' in our 'maps' may exist between the relationships which are closest to the text - the two authors and their readers. The conversation works at a symbolic level too given its positioning at the conclusion of the introduction: an end and a beginning - the very embodiment of postmodernism. Furthermore, it seems to hang on a somewhat tenuous thread within the text neither explicitly introduced nor rounded off with the usual theoretical analysis and in this way further reinforcing the tensions it both explicitly discusses and implicitly represents - a translation that has not yet taken hold.

The text goes on in a different tack, still explaining the relevancy of representations as a way of theorising organisations, but returns to a more theoretically anchored argument by which to do so - a further attempt to translate meaning with an audience which is presumed to be academics. However, peppered throughout the text are numerous small glimmers of other representations of ways of meaning making which the conversation between Author 1, Author 2 and the 'Voice' had alluded to. For

example, the inclusion of five stanzas of James Brown's song 'It's a Man's, Man's, Man's World' (1996:429) ironically calls into question whether organisation studies has been able to move towards a greater appreciation of gender issues. Furthermore, a novel by De Assis (1996:433) draws a parallel between the failed attempt that the organisational theorists of the Aston School made in translating their meaning to managers with an equally inconclusive conversation that Dom Casmurro engages in with maggots to discover the meaning they make of the texts which they eat, to which enquiry the maggots retort:

My Dear Sir ... we know absolutely nothing about the texts we eat.  
We do not choose what we eat, neither do we like or detest what we eat. We just eat..

There are also references to the movie *Blade Runner*, Disneyland, Michael Jackson Elvis Presley and so on. The chapter concludes with a second dialogue between 'the voice' and 'the authors' who are now no longer represented as two separate parts of dialogue but rather are conflated into one. Hence, optimistically the text suggests through both questions asked, comments made and through the authors representation of speaking as 'one voice', that the translation attempt has been successful.

Central to another key stream of postmodernist theorising within the field of organisation studies is the question, 'What does the postmodernist organisation look like?' (Parker 1992). Clegg (1990:181) posits an answer by arguing that:

Postmodernism points to a more organic, less differentiated enclave of organisation than those dominated by the bureaucratic design of modernity.

He suggest exemplars of such ways of organising: Benetton, the Italian knit company, and many contemporary Japanese organisations as well as Swedish organisations which 'work through institutions of bargained corporatism' (Clegg 1990:183). Common to such organisations are a range of factors. First, employees are organised in small self-managed teams rather than hierarchies as in the modernist bureaucracies. Second, there is an explicit articulation of organisational values which align with recognition and reward systems and thus have the effect of shaping the performativity

of individual employees. Third, is the incorporation of learning mechanisms such as 'quality circles' into the routines of the organisation in order to ensure that the learning from mistakes is explicitly used to develop better individual and organisational performance. Similarly, Palmer and Hardy (2000:266) in seeking to describe that which 'differentiates the postmodern organisation ... from the modern or bureaucratic organisations' propose two main 'streams' in the literature. The first focuses on 'the blurring of boundaries' and the second, on the conceptualisation of organisations as the 'spiderless web'. In this way they talk of how organisations operate in ways other than an organisational chart would have it as well as challenging sovereign views of power. Importantly, Clegg too stresses that, 'postmodernism does not signal the end of politics or the creation of forms which are emptied of political content' (Clegg 1990:181). In this way, such theorists position themselves apart from a raft of other influential organisational theorists such as Drucker (1992), Senge (1990) and economists such as Reich (1992) who celebrate the emancipatory effects that the knowledge economy is bringing to individuals, organisations and nations without talking of how power relations are being reconfigured. Postmodern theorising of organisations, by contrast, recognises that the so-called 'new' organisational forms do not abolish power relations rather they provide mechanisms and alternative arenas by which to make themselves and others accountable. Such a way of talking about power is akin to Foucault's concept of 'productive power' whereby employees are not totally free but rather, shaped by the contexts in which they operate, they 'discipline' themselves, thus making it not as necessary to resort to the overtly physically punitive techniques of sovereign forms of power imbued in modernist ways of organising.

Central to my thesis is an alternative question to that which Parker poses in that rather than looking for a tangible postmodern organisational form I am interested in asking the broader question 'What do organisations look like when viewed through a postmodern frame?' This alternative question has at its basis an ontological difference in that it focuses on reminding us that postmodernism is more a way of thinking or viewing reality than a tangible practice.

In this chapter I examined the broad theoretical underpinnings of postmodernism and looked at ways in which such thinking is applied to the theorising of organisation studies and organisational practices. In the following two chapters, 'Bringing context back in' and 'Bringing agency back in' I will seek to answer the question that I posed at the conclusion of this chapter, 'What do organisations look like when viewed through a

postmodern frame?’ I do this by developing two maps of ‘thinking tools’ based on my understanding of the central concerns of the postmodern project with the intent of facilitating the translation of postmodern thought into the analysis of organisation studies. The first map of thinking tools is designed to help researchers to bring contextualism back within an empirical gaze. The second map explores a second central concern of postmodernity – how agency of both human and non-human phenomena are shaped by and shape concepts of truth and how it is managed. My analysis also seeks to address some of the criticisms of postmodernism, namely that much postmodernist theorising has been highly conceptual and has not extended to detailed field work and clear empirical studies (Alvesson 1995; Thompson 1993). The thinking tools frame the empirical organisational analysis in part two of the thesis: ‘Managing truth theoretically’. In the next chapter I focus on the first map of thinking tools: contextualism. I foreground the discussion with an examination of why contextualism is a significant concern to both the theorising and practice of organisations and organising by drawing on postmodernist thematics.



## CHAPTER 4: BRINGING CONTEXT BACK IN

Give me a laboratory and I will raise the world.

Latour, B. (1983)

*Like the word 'text', the etymological roots of the word 'context' can be traced to the classical Latin verb for 'to weave' contextere, and the noun contextus which was used in the sense of 'connection'.*

*Taking a tack that is akin to the postmodernist call to adopt more rigorous approaches to researching organisational contexts, this chapter examines the first 'map' of thinking tools which underpins my theoretical approach to the study of truth and its management. Derived from questions such as; 'How do we bring context back within empirical gaze? And in so doing 'What do we mean when we say context?' the map aims to help researchers to explore the broad 'macro patterns' on which one can focus to allow us to locate the boundaries of our study and to help us to see the macro within the micro and visa versa.*

Normal science is anti-contextual in the sense that its proponents, fascinated by the geometrical method, are concerned with formulating laws of nature and society, generalisations that would be valid whatever the circumstances of time, place or discourse. Within such a theoretical framework we see the emergence of experiments as a way of discovering the truth of a phenomenon. Such experiments are conducted in a laboratory space which is sterilised and 'empty' of all adornment other than that which relates directly to the terms of the experiment as formally established by the researcher. The experiment is therefore seen to be conducted in a so-called 'non-space' or 'neutral space'. Equally, such experiments often track in minute detail changes which take place over a given timeframe but without mention of the broader context of the time in history in which the experiment takes place. Furthermore, there is often a record made of the 'talk' which takes place during the space and time of the experiment, in the form of an interview between researcher and subject. The concern

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Working the knowledge game? The power of the everyday in managing truth in organisations.

of such talk is specific to the content of the researcher's aims. It does not consider the conduct of the experiment or interview as a social phenomenon in itself nor of the discourses that indeed made the study possible or of interest to the researcher at that place or time in history.

The aim of portraying science as a social phenomenon, in contrast to its positioning in the dominant scientific literature as 'factual' and 'the truth' divorced from its social context, shaped the impetus for postmodern theorists such as Latour to spend over two years watching and recording how scientists actually do science in practice. Latour's observations and theorising were published in the evocative tale, *Laboratory Life* (Latour and Woolgar 1979). In a chapter entitled 'From Order to Disorder' Latour and Woolgar dramatically explain the impetus for their work:

Since the turn of the century, scores of men and women have penetrated deep forests, lived in hostile climates and weathered hostility, boredom and disease in order to gather the remnants of so-called primitive societies. By contrast to the frequency of these anthropological excursions, relatively few attempts have been made to penetrate the intimacy of life among tribes which are much nearer at hand... whereas now we have fairly detailed knowledge of the myths and circumcisions rituals of exotic tribes, we remain relatively ignorant of the details of equivalent activity among tribes of scientists, whose work is commonly heralded as having startling or, at least, extremely significant effects on our civilization. (Latour and Woolgar 1979:12)

Latour and Woolgar are among a number of researchers dedicated to uncovering the messiness of science by exposing 'the complex activities which constitute the internal workings of scientific activity' (Latour and Woolgar 1979:17). Through a method which they call an 'anthropology of science' (Latour and Woolgar 1979:27), science moves beyond the pages of its canonical textbook knowledge and is shown to be made up of various small marginalised stories. Furthermore, so that the stories gathered from the laboratory could not be dismissed as idiosyncratic of a particular institution Latour's more recent work sought to take on a number of renowned scientists, including Pasteur. For example, in the *Pasteurization of France* (Latour 1987b) within evocative chapter headings such as 'War and Peace of Microbes' - 'Strong Microbes

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and weak Hygienists', 'you will be Pasteurs of Microbes!' and Medicine at last', Latour tracks numerous micro stories and contestations of knowledge which lead to significant findings in the scientific world:

We would like to feel that somewhere, in addition to the chaotic confusion of power relations, there are rational relations (Latour 1987b:5).

In his tale of the impact Pasteur's discovery had in France we learn of the struggle for dominance between Pasteur and Pouchet regarding the generation of micro-organisms in which Pasteur is identified as the victor:

Pouchet, engaged in a bitter struggle against Louis Pasteur's claim that there is no spontaneous generation (of micro-organisms), built a nice counter-experiment. Pasteur argued that it is always germs introduced from the outside that generate micro-organisms. Long swan-necked open glass flasks containing sterilised infusion were contaminated at low altitude but stayed sterile in the High Alps. This impressive series of demonstrations established an incontrovertible link between a new actor, the micro-organism, and what Pasteur said they could do: micro-organisms could not come from within the infusion but only from the outside. Pouchet, who rejected Pasteur's conclusion, tried out the connection and forced the micro-organisms to emerge from within. Repeating Pasteur's experiment Pouchet showed that glass flasks containing a sterile hay infusion were very soon swarming with micro-organisms even in the "germ-free" air of the Pyrenees mountains. The micro-organisms on which Pasteur depended were made to betray him; they appeared spontaneously, thus supporting Pouchet's position. In this case the actants change camps and two spokesmen are supported at once. This change of camp does not stop the controversy, because it is possible to accuse Pouchet of having having unknowingly introduced micro-organisms from outside even though he sterilised everything. The meaning of "sterile" becomes ambiguous and has to be renegotiated. Pasteur, now in the role of dissenter, showed that the mercury used by Pouchet was contaminated. As a result Pouchet was cut off from his

supply lines, betrayed by his spontaneous micro-organisms, and Pasteur becomes the triumphant spokesman, aligning “his” micro-organisms which act on command. (Latour 1987b:84).

From this account we come to see that ‘normal science’ is established through personal struggles of different versions of truth by which one version comes to be seen as ‘the truth’ with the result that others are seen to be ‘false’ and as such are eased out of currency. Thus, rather than being ‘neutral’ truth is integrally linked with power.

Similarly, Foucault’s project is designed to unsettle that which counts as normalcy. Foucault reveals the ‘untidiness’ of what counts for context in his work on a wide range of social phenomena. What Foucault’s work demonstrates powerfully is an intense interplay between three key contingencies: the discursive, the spatial and the temporal. By analysing one of Foucault’s key works, *Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison* (1988a) I would like to demonstrate how Foucault brings such an interplay of contingencies to life.

As its title suggests, in *Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison* (1977a), Foucault is interested in examining one particular truth; that of the disappearance of the practice of ‘torture as a public spectacle’ (1977a:7) and its replacement by the institutionalisation of criminals within the site of the prison system through the practices of discipline and punishment. Foucault’s body of work does not theorise that which constitutes the contextual boundaries of truth in organisations, so much as unfolds it before our eyes as a series of rich and changing tableaux. The technique relates powerfully to the way in which Foucault tells the story of shifts of rationality within the prison system in that he organises his text around the examination of the three practices that form the focus of his study; part one is concerned with torture, part two with punishment and in the final part of the text he examines discipline. Through his use of powerful tableaux which juxtapose one ‘truth’ and way of being with another, Foucault renders the significance of shifts in the rationality which makes each practice possible at a particular time and place.

The first tableau dramatically unfolds within the first few pages of the text. It explains in graphic detail the brutal physical torture of Damians, condemned in Paris in 1757 for his crime of regicide. We can smell Damians’s flesh as ‘the sulphur was lit, but the flame was so poor that only the top skin of the hand was burnt’ (1977a:3). We feel his

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excruciating pain as '(the) executioner found it difficult to tear away the pieces of flesh that he set about the same spot two or three times, twisting the pincers as he did so' (1977a:4). We hear his cries of pain and see his struggle for dignity as 'at each torment, he cried out, as the damned in hell are supposed to cry out, "Pardon my God! Pardon Lord."' (1977a:4). As readers, each of our senses is affronted by the account of one 'botched' act of torture at the executioners' hands after another.

Indeed, it is through an affront to our senses, not just an appeal to our mind that we are compelled to look up from our text to ask, 'Was there no humanity in 1757?' As we come to understand, such feelings of disbelief, which the reading of the brutality of Damiens's treatment produces in us, is exactly that which we would be expected to experience from our standpoint as readers located in rationalities and ways of being privileged in the twenty-first century. We come to see that a different rationality and way of being marked life in 1757. 'Humanity' was not linked discursively in meaning to 'treatment of the criminal' and 'the crime'. Indeed, it was the antithesis. The embodiment of evil – in this case, Damiens, named as perpetrator of the crime – had to be seen by all to feel bodily pain, dismemberment and finally annihilation so that 'humanity' could be restored to the sovereign state. Key to bringing such a truth to bear was the executioner's expertise in that he had to ensure that Damiens's body was visibly and publicly kept living throughout the entire ordeal until justice had been seen to be done. In this way, what we now see to be 'botched' was perhaps the executioner's demonstration of 'expert knowledge' of what the body can physically bear without life being extinguished rather than rigorously following the rules of torture as decreed by the sovereign state. However, it is an ordeal that realistically no human body could survive. It is here that the executioners, confessors and the public are conjoined to talk into being the truth that he lives (Foucault 1977a:5):

It is reported that when the four limbs had been pulled away, the confessors came to speak to him; but his executioner told them that he was dead, though the truth was that I saw the man move, his lower jaw moving from side to side as if he were talking. One of the executioners even said shortly afterwards that when they had lifted the trunk to throw it on the stake, he was still alive.

Our insistence that the account is not true for a torso cannot possibly live is of no importance, for that was truth – an accepted part of the everyday – as people knew it in 1757.

The account is juxtaposed with an extract of a timetable from a house for young prisoners in Paris (Foucault 1977a:6). It documents a rigorous regime, but one that is far more familiar to our senses than that which we had experienced in reading the report of Damians's public torture. Each of the twenty-eight articles of the timetable documents in minute detail the rules of conduct by which the young prisoners lead their daily lives; from their rise 'at six in the morning in the winter and five in the summer' to their bedding-down 'at half-past seven in summer, half-past eight in winter' (Foucault 1977a:6-7). Recurrent themes of their days are work, order, cleanliness, prayer, silence, timeliness, school and inspection, each punctuated by a drum roll.

First, in seeking to explain the significance of the discursive shift from one practice to another, Foucault poses the question (Foucault 1988a:16):

If the penalty in its most severe forms no longer addresses itself to the body, on what does it lay hold?

His aim in posing the question in this particular way with its emphasis on 'on what does it lay hold' immediately challenges the reader to think about the significance of the two discourses in power terms. This, in itself, is an immediate affront to the reader with taken-for-granted assumptions that the first tableau is a clear case of 'power over' whereas the second is not one generally associated with power but related instead to principles associated with humanistic ideals of 'order', 'progress' and so on. Foucault suggests that from 'about 1760 there 'opened up a new period that is not yet at an end' In this period the focus of societies' signification of the offender switches from the body to the soul: no longer is the body to be destroyed but the soul must be remade.

In posing his question and answering from the theoretician's point of view, Foucault seeks to rupture the taken-for-granted assumption that the later form of punishment is more humanistic. Indeed, by stressing that the new target of the penalty is 'no longer the body' but suggesting it is the 'soul' - a far more intangible essence or 'spirit' of the person aimed at internal processes as opposed to externality of the person, we

see that the discursive shift from physical torture to disciplinary forms of punishment 'does not remove power, it reinscribes it' (Edwards and Usher 1994: 82-83). In this way, Foucault maintains that humanistic discourses veil the effects within themselves through 'normalising' them and making them part of the everyday accepted way of doing things. We come to understand that Foucault produces a profound critique of the humanistic discourses of progress, emancipation and betterment that govern modernist power formations. As Foucault explains, the shift has been attributed too readily and too emphatically to the process of 'humanisation', thus dispensing with the need for further analysis' (1977a:7).

Second, Foucault has also carefully selected and juxtaposed the two tableaux in ways which point up their temporal significance. By alluding to the theoreticians of the 1760s he is of course referring to the new proponents of the Enlightenment whose discourses of science heralded new rationalities which challenged the truth of the Church and State. Significantly, we learn that the first tableau of Damiens takes place three years before this time, hence still within the boundaries of pre-modern time, whereas the second takes place eighty years later. By choosing two scenes, which are temporally proximate, we are unable to dismiss the change in practices as something which has evolved over a long time period. Hence, evolutionary theories must be dismissed as a possible explanation for the phenomenon. Equally, he has allowed enough time for the new rationalities to take hold. Hence, by juxtaposing the temporality of each scene with the other, Foucault points to discontinuity rather than continuous change of rationality. Additionally, it is stressed that the event of the public torture is conducted over a few hours. This contrasts temporally in other ways with the text of the timetable, in that through its rigorous regime of timeliness it operates as a mechanism, which measures and controls the boys' every moment and action year-in-and-year-out; to have an effect on the soul is clearly a more disciplining experience.

Furthermore, in contrasting the spatiality of the two scenes one notices that the first is located in a public square, the second in the cloistered environment of a boys' prison. Foucault ensures that we, as readers, understand that this represents a significant feature of change in practices; a shift from public to private space. Indeed, this second scene is so private that no person is named, in contrast to the first scene whereby Damiens is directly named.

Other tableaux follow which further explore so-called 'humanistic' forms of punishment including Bentham's panopticon (an architecturally designed prison in which prisoner-guardians can overlook inmates without being seen themselves; the consequence being that prisoners become ever watchful of their own behaviour and in this way learn to 'govern themselves'). Humanistic forms of punishment culminate in the examination of the Carceral which is described as 'the model in which are concentrated all the coercive technologies of behaviour.... Cloister, prison, school and regiment' (1988a:293).

The tableaux operate as strong literary devices in that they shock us, his readers, into the realisation that the everyday that we experience today is not necessarily that which others at other times have experienced. Different truths operate, which influence how time and space will be conceived and measured as well as what is spoken about in a given field. As Foucault (1996:41) put it himself in a book of interviews published after his death. His aim was:

To establish limits, where the history of thought, in its traditional form, gave itself an indefinite space ..... I would like to substitute the notion that the discourses are limited practical domains which have their boundaries (frontières – borders, frontiers), their rules of formation, their conditions of existence .... To which one can affix thresholds, and assign conditions of birth and disappearance.

By focusing on contextualism in this way, I have derived 'thinking tools' which allow us the facility to look 'for continuity and change, patterns and idiosyncracies, the action of individuals and groups... (to) give history and social process the chance to reveal their untidiness' (Pettigrew 1985:1). Drawing on such tableaux, the discursive, the spatial and the temporal form the contextually contingent boundaries within which I examine the social effects of truth in organisations.

Figure one below is a diagrammatic representation of the three contextual contingencies; the discursive, the spatial and the temporal in which the social effects of truth and how it is managed is both a product and produced.





**Figure 1: Map one - contextualism**

Having established how the contingencies of discourses, time and space have been derived as a means of bringing contextualism back within the gaze of empiricism, I will now examine the nature of each of the contextual contingencies in turn.

## TRUTH IS MANAGED THROUGH DISCOURSES

Foucault, in the manner of Wittgenstein, suggests that the way people talk can 'create objects', in the sense that there are lots of things that would not exist unless people had come to talk in certain ways. Drawing on the works of Foucault, Haugaard (1997:187) defines discourses as:

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Working the knowledge game? The power of the everyday in managing truth in organisations.

Micro-systems of meaning which are, to the reproducers of the discourse formation, local ways of life. These micro-systems exist as local interpretive horizons. As discursive consciousness knowledge, they are the statements which are actually made. As practical consciousness they are the body of knowledge or rules of formation in which discursive statements float...discursive statements presuppose a tacit knowledge of 'the way things are done'.

Similarly, Grant and Hardy (2004:6) define organisational discourses as 'structured collections of texts embodied in the practices of talking and writing (as well as a wide variety of visual representations and cultural artefacts) that bring organisationally related objects into being as these texts are produced, disseminated and consumed.'

Seen this way, discourses are equivalent to a cultural code, system of thought or network that a society values. Discursive formations organise knowledge and in addition are inseparable from knowledge. They determine the kinds of communicative practices societies will engage in. Therefore they allow some forms of discourse while they prohibit other forms. Discursive formations are subject to rules. Speakers express their knowledge through the articulation of utterances that conform to a specific set of rules. Rules that govern discursive formations may (in addition to many other things) permit certain statements to be made while excluding or silencing other possible statements. For example, in his work on discourse and discursive formations, Foucault describes the mechanisms through which themes of discourse (discursive objects) become established and 'real' in public communication - a prime example is the 'creation' of sexuality as a theme of public debate in the 19th century (Foucault 1981).

Foucault stresses that discourses are visible in language forms but are also perpetuated through social practices and embedded in institutional structures. Discourses act both to combine and divide practices. It is through discourses that a field represents itself to itself – and others. Indeed, discourses or serious statements are seen to provide the justifications used to perpetuate particular ways of organising activities, and to construct identity as well as constituting what is at stake in a field. However, such justifications can be, and indeed are, constantly challenged. The

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potency of the discourse is dependent on whose voice it represents and what influence their voice has in being counted as 'truth' in a particular space and time. Truths, he hypothesised, are systems of 'ordered procedures' for producing, distributing and operating statements which stand in a circular, indeed inseparable relationship with the systems of power (Foucault 1980c:133). Thus, discourses provide us with ways to discuss 'truth games', which are being talked in and out of being.

Foucault objects to the representation of discourses as coherent and cumulative as the grand narratives of science would have it. He also warns us that it is notoriously difficult to think beyond discourses related to a given body of knowledge. As he puts it:

One cannot speak of anything at any time; it is not easy to say something new; it is not enough for us to open our eyes, to pay attention, to be aware, for new objects suddenly to light up and emerge out of the ground. (Foucault 1972b: 44)

Given this difficulty Foucault recommends that one engage in an 'archaeology of knowledge' in order to understand the genesis and development of discursive themes. Archaeology involves a detailed study of the meaning of statements in context. The researcher needs to examine particular statements in relation to what Foucault refers to as epistemes. Central to understanding such statements is the concept of 'difference: a form of self-reference in which terms contain their own opposites and thus refuse any singular grasp of their meaning' (Cooper and Burrell 1988:98). By arguing that some statements qualify as statements, or are heard within one episteme and not another, what is being said is that they constitute truths within one episteme but not within another. In examining statements, in this way Foucault's aim is to 'trace where particular instances of discourses have occurred, to make connections between these instances, and to bring them together to identify a particular discursive formation' (Danaher, Shirato and Webb 2000:33).

## TRUTH IS MANAGED THROUGH TIME

Foucault (1970:50) helps us to problematise our everyday understandings of time by posing the question:

We may wish to mark off a period; but have we the right to establish symmetrical breaks at two points in time in order to give the appearance of continuity and unity to the system we place between them?

In posing this question Foucault was interrogating modernist sensemaking of time which suggested that social life was on a cumulative and evolutionary path of progress. Rather than thinking of time as a singular, fixed entity, complete unto itself, 'hence independence from events' (Clarke 1990:142) whereby time is synonymous with the clock as Newton would have us believe. Foucault encourages us to think of time in terms of multiple overlapping and contested histories. History is concerned with 'slicing', that is with creating discontinuities. Foucault's theorising helps us to answer the questions which Heath (1956) introduces as central to the analysis of time.

First, at the level of ontology, he asks whether we should regard time as an objective 'fact' located 'out there' in the external world, or as a subjective 'essence' which is constructed via a 'network' of meanings; that is should we think of time as real and concrete or as essential and abstract? Second, he asks whether we should think of time as homogenous (where time units are equivalent) or as heterogeneous (where time units are experienced differentially); is time atomistic and divisible or continuous and infinite? And third, he asks whether we can have more than one valid time; should time be regarded as a 'unitary quantitative commodity' or as a 'manifold qualitative experience'? (Hassard 1996:327-328).

For Foucault time is not an objective fact but rather constructed locally and socially 'via networks of meaning'. Thus, 'time is experienced differentially'. Returning to the example of Foucault's critique of discourse that our penal system is marked by a cumulative and evolutionary path of process, we can see how Foucault uses temporality strongly to point to the constructedness of time. What makes sense as

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punishment in 1757 (the year of Damians's punishment) no longer makes sense in 1837 (the year of the publication of the timetable in a Parisian boys' home). Foucault points to changes in discourses and more subtle uses of power rather than humanity as an explanation of discontinuities in penal practices.

Ethnographic studies have also pointed to the social constructedness of time that is embedded in everyday organisational sensemaking. Focusing on the mundaneness of everyday organisations, Sudnow points to the constructedness of temporality in that he showed how concepts of time are shaped by the practices and norms of a particular institution. In Sudnow's research, conducted in a public hospital in the US, he noted something which at first seemed inconceivable - many more patients died in the early hours of the morning than at night. In probing the reasons which could explain such a phenomenon, such temporal markers became understandable only in the context of norms within the hospital as an organisation. Death involved a great deal of paperwork. Paperwork which was often delegated to the morning rather than the nightshift workers. Thus, the time of death was not reality but rather constructed to meet the everyday practices of hospital workers.

Other ethnographers have been noted for their work which shows how informal sensemaking of the passing of time can shape the way in which organisational life is experienced. Roy's (1960) seminal study entitled 'Banana Time; job satisfaction and informal interaction' documents how a team of machine operators on a production line invented various temporally based rituals which extended beyond the formal temporal markers of their organisational life. The way that they constructed their time transformed their twelve hour shift into the 'game of work' - a series of social interactions and events ; 'peach time', 'banana time', 'window time', 'pick up time', 'fish time' 'coke time' and so on. Such rituals were designed by the workers themselves to make the mundanity of their work bearable.

Morgan's influential works on metaphors is also useful in pointing to the constructedness of time. Applying the concept of metaphors to the analysis of time, Hassard (1996:327-344) puts it that conceptions of time have changed throughout history, which in turn has impacted on how time has been experienced. Drawing on two metaphors of time; the cycle and the line, Hassard explains that the cycle 'developed out of (man's) struggle with the seasons' whereas linear time is related to Christian beliefs as well as the rise of industrial capitalism. Talking of linear time

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Hassard (1996:328) explains that 'in this tradition, ... the past is unrepeatable, the present is transient, and the future is infinite and exploitable. Time is homogeneous: it is objective, measurable, and infinitely divisible; it is related to change in the sense of motion and development; it is quantitative.' In this way, he describes how the concept of time was altered from one which emphasised the reproducibility 'through the cultural notions of the eternal return' to the commodification of time as a valuable and scarce part of the industrial production process.

According to Foucault, history can be thought of as made up of both continuous and discontinuous change. As Chan and Clegg (2002:261) explain, one needs to work:

on the assumption that the 'past' is not privileged as something already elapsed and 'just so', fixed as it were, but that it remains relevant 'to contemporary understanding' (Burrell 1997:5). The past is not so much another continent but a landscape constantly redrawn in terms of contemporary aesthetics, techniques, and concerns.

The implications that this holds for organisations and organising are that it problematises the assumption that a definite break with the past can be made. Rather, any new practice which is introduced to the organisation is seen and experienced within the context of past practices.

In his attack on traditional sensemaking of history, Foucault uses the temporally-based methodological tool of genealogy which he draws from Nietzsche's work. Genealogy is based on the understanding that the present needs to be examined within the context of both its continuity and discontinuity with the past. As he says, his aim is to 'introduce into the very roots of thought' the notions of chance, discontinuities and materiality' to help us to discount the notion that more recent and inclusive thought is automatically closer to the real (Foucault 1980d:82). Foucault achieves this by examining a series of events juxtaposing what 'we know' and are living in our everyday world in our current times with 'what we do not know' and what others have lived, by drawing on events from the past. Indeed, his aim is to use the past to critique the present and through this critique to expose the social effects of shifts in knowledge and power. The past is seen to be reshaped from a particular 'now' position. We progressively reconstruct the past in order to serve the interests of the present.

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In this way, genealogy helps us to explore the networks of what is said and what can be seen in a set of social arrangements. In the conduct of a genealogy, one finds out something about the visible in 'opening up' statements and something about the statements in 'opening up' visibilities. As Foucault puts it (1980d:83):

What it really does is to entertain the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchise and order them in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science and its objects. Genealogies are therefore not positivistic returns to a more careful or exact form of science. They are precisely anti-sciences.

Thus, genealogies trace 'a body of knowledge, that is, observing how the concepts of a discipline or human science came to be constructed' not in order to chart a path of scientific progress, or to establish their truth. Rather, we need to see Foucault as trying to write history in a way which will destroy the notion of historical progress. Indeed, genealogy attempts to dissolve the binary divide that traditional historians construct by exploring both what people think and how they act within a historical period Foucault (1988d:14):

What I react against is the fact that there is a breach between social history and the history of ideas. Social historians are supposed to describe how people act without thinking, and historians of ideas are supposed to describe how people think without acting. Everybody both acts and thinks. The way people act or react is linked to a way of thinking, and of course thinking is related to tradition. What I have tried to analyse is this very complex phenomenon that made people react in another way to crimes and criminals in a rather short period of time.

What Foucault helps us to see is that our present times are 'related to tradition' - not as a cumulative body of knowledge on a trajectory of truth, as dominant rational theorist would have it, but rather as a series of continuous and discontinuous stories. Such thinking about time encourages us to see links between the analysis of time and

concepts of memory, forgetting and power. Organisationally, it also helps us live in a more critical frame – looking suspiciously at suggestions that the ‘new’ is automatically better or more truthful than older versions. Rather, in the ‘new’ we also see potential ‘new’ machination of the ‘old’. Genealogy also helps us to guard against ‘organisational amnesia’ as eloquently explored in Orwell’s novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the tale of Winston Smith, hidden away in the Records Department of the Ministry of Truth, who skilfully rewrites the past to suit the needs of the party whilst he inwardly rebels against the totalitarian world in which he lives:

The party said that Oceania had never been in alliance with Eurasia. He, Winston Smith, knew that Oceania had been in alliance with Eurasia as short a time as four years ago. But where did this knowledge exist? Only in his own consciousness, which in any case must soon be annihilated. And if all others accepted the lie which the Party imposed if all records told the same tale – then the lie passed into history and became truth. ‘Who controls the past’ rant the Party slogan ‘controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.’ And the past, though of its nature alterable never had been altered. Whatever was true now was true from everlasting to everlasting. It was quite simple. All that was needed was an unending series of victories over your own memory. ‘Reality control’, They called it: in Newspeak ‘doublethink.’ (Orwell 1949:40)

Although Foucault’s work on genealogy provides strong methodological tools which help us to use the past to critique the present, his work does little to help us to understand how concepts of the future can also be analysed to critique the present. I agree with Liedtka (1998) who proposes that ‘strategic thinkers link past, present and future’. Drawing on the research of major US policy decisions undertaken by the biographers Richard Neustadt and Ernst May she argues:

Thinking in time, (has) three components. One is recognition that the future has no place to come from but the past, hence the past has predictive value. Another element is recognition that what matters for the future in the present is departures from the past, alterations, changes, which prospectively or actually divert familiar flows from accustomed channels...A third component is continuous



comparison, an almost constant oscillation from the present to future to past and back, heedful of prospective change, concerned to expedite, limit, guide, counter, or accept it as the fruits of such comparison suggest. (Neustadt and May 1986 in Liedtka 1998)

In this way Liedtka points not only to how the past but also to how the future shapes what we come to see as 'meaningful' and 'truth' in the present.

Theoretically Schutz (1967:65) provides the concept of the 'future perfect' to explain how the analysis of time can incorporate future perspectives by examining an 'action before its execution'. Schutz puts it that 'while the action has yet to take place it is phantasised as that which will have taken place, that is, in the future perfect tense as something already performed.' Schutz's concept of future perfect is akin to Foucault's concept of genealogy in that he shows how what we hold to be true in the present is not stable but rather 'the meaning of an action is different depending on the point in time from which it is observed' (Schutz 1967:65). However, it differs in that he uses future projections rather than reflections on the past to critique the present.

With the methodology of scenario planning, the strategy literature elaborates on how analysis of the future can be used to shape our understanding of our present concepts of organisations and organising. Scenario planning distinguishes itself from other more traditional and rational approaches to strategic planning which often propose one 'correct' future. Rather, scenario planning engages in an 'explicit approach towards ambiguity and uncertainty in the strategic question'. As Van der Heijden (1996:7-8) puts it:

The most fundamental aspect of introducing uncertainty into the strategic equation is that it turns planning for the future from a once-off episodic activity into an ongoing learning proposition. In a situation of uncertainty planning becomes learning, which never stops. We have an in-built urge to try to pin down situations, and to try to reach a point where we have got it sorted out in our mind. If uncertainty is acknowledged it is not any longer possible to take this position of "we have done the planning, we can now get on with making it happen". The idea of continuous learning is less comfortable as it does not give us this feeling of problem closure.

Scenario planning involves the interrogation and reframing of mental models held by organisational actors through engaging in strategic conversations throughout the organisation. It can be thought of as providing organisations with a tool by which to identify realistic change scenarios.

Thus, drawing on Foucault's concept of genealogy as well as Schutz's concept of 'future perfect' and the methodology of scenario planning which looks to how future change scenarios are conceived one, is in a strong position to critique the present in terms of its relationship to the conceptions that people in a field hold of both the past and the future.

## TRUTH IS MANAGED THROUGH SPACE

Tracing the history of conceptions of space Lefebvre (1991) argues that orthodox geometrical, mathematical and scientific notions of space are imbued in the works of dominant theoretical approaches within the social sciences. In such works we see traces of the 'scientific' meanings of space shaped by Kant who clearly separated space from the gaze of empirical inquiry by maintaining that it 'belonged to the a priori realm of the consciousness (i.e. of the subject) and partook of that realm's internal, ideal and hence transcendental and essentially ungraspable structure' (Lefebvre 1991:2). Within such a theoretical frame it made sense to examine organisations and organising within the confines of a laboratory, a space conceived to be devoid of meaning other than that which was explicitly sought empirically. For according to such a conception of space it is possible to construct a space which is neutral and empty of meaning rather than, as Hillier and Hanson (1984:2) put it, that the 'ordering of space in buildings is really about the orderings of relations between people.'

As a first tactic in repositioning space, I draw on the work of Bourdieu. For Bourdieu, the boundaries of that which we study are not to be taken for granted. Bourdieu introduces the concept of 'field', which he takes to mean 'networks of social relations, structured systems of social positions within which struggles or manoeuvres take place over resources, stakes and access' (Bourdieu 1992:101), Bourdieu dispels notions of a field as a bounded and easily identifiable space such as a 'field with a fence around it' (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes 1990:8). In relating the concept of space to the practice of research we note that our concepts of space are constructed and as such

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shifts in their categorisation and conceptualisation significantly shift the nature and focus of what we see and what we do not see, what we take to be important and what we choose to ignore. As Harker, Mahar and Wilkes (1990:9-10) comment:

This concept views social reality as a topology (space). In this way the social space may be conceived as comprising multiple fields which have some relationship to each other, and points of contact. The social space of the individual is connected through time (life trajectory) to a series of fields, within which people struggle for various forms of capital.

Space is not thought of as exclusively bound by the concrete walls of a building but it is rather embedded in the everyday and carries a superfluity of meaning. Such thinking compels the researcher to examine institutions, key stakeholders, their inter-relationship and forums for expression. In this way, Bourdieu's concept of field is useful in that it breaks with understandings of space anchored in organisational structures and relations based exclusively on codified rules or institutional charts. It is a conception of space which requires examination of the minutiae of life as well as reflection on the social meaning that it carries. For example, it may be important to recognise who has an office and who does not, and also aesthetic features such as size, location, furnishings, architecture, and to ask where meetings are conducted, and who they involve. Seen this way, the analysis of space involves extending beyond physical conceptions to include mental and social aspects (Lefebvre 1991). Furthermore, as Hernes puts it (2004:5):

If we enter into the micro-cosmos of organised reality ... we will see that there are myriads of sub-organisations that are being formed all the time. What is important to note is that these sub-organisations exist not only in the organisation. On the contrary, they form across organisational boundaries as well as outside them.

In this way, he suggests many more spatial categories of concern; including both informal and formal ways in which members make meaning of the organisational spaces in which they operate.

Bourdieu's concern for the examination of boundaries is evident in his empirical examinations of the physical and social aspects of the Kabyle society. For example, in explaining the relevance of physical space Bourdieu goes into detail of how Kabyle society defines their houses in terms of 'wet' and 'dry' spaces and how this is integrally linked with power and status within the social structure of their society. Women and animals are located in the 'wet' areas. Men are located in the 'dry' spaces.

By drawing on spatial metaphors to challenge our thinking about the debate on macro and micro level studies, Collins (1998:21) provides further insights into thinking about spatial boundaries:

The macro-level of society should be conceived not as a vertical layer above the micro, as if it were in a different place, but as an unfurling of the scroll of micro-situations. Micro-situations are embedded in macro-patterns, which are just the way that situations are linked to one another; ... agency, if you like – flow(s) inwards as well as outward. What happens here and now depends on what has happened there and then.

Rather than thinking of 'macro' and 'micro' in terms of 'above' and 'below' which sets up a hierarchy in our minds, Collins flattens the three-dimensional space. We now see macro and micro on one plane – rolling before us - interconnected, interlinked and contingent. Space is integrally linked with time – both the present and the future. Space, rather than abstracted is constituted through countless incidents and practices of everyday life.

Foucault's analysis of everyday life in a wide range of institutional contexts provides us with numerous exemplars for the examination of space and its relation to the truth and its management. The use of architecture and environment is clearly central to Foucault's thesis, a point also noted in Goffman's (1959) concept of 'total institutions'. In *Discipline and Punish: Birth of the Prison*, for example, Foucault (1977a) examines how the design of the modern prison removed the need for physical restraint by placing patients within a system of self-restraint. The notion of judgement becomes paramount, with the individual objectified for scrutiny by others. For Foucault what this initiates is a system of 'moral imprisonment' whereby the patient disciplines himself. Indeed, Foucault, like Bourdieu, stresses that space extends beyond physical

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boundaries such as walls. Of interest to Foucault in his analysis of space is the way that it is integrally linked with power and knowledge. Foucault shows us 'how institutional transformations are results of "body politics"' (Hernes 2004:60).

In this chapter I started with the problematic of how 'normal science' marginalises context. I explore the implications that this has for theories of truth and management. Of concern in this chapter is also a discussion of various theorists, most notably Foucault (1977a), who have disrupted the value of engaging in decontextualised ways of talking of organisations and organising. I went on to propose the first map of 'thinking tools' of my theoretical model which comprises the contingencies of discourses, time and space. I argued that the 'thinking tools' are a way of helping us to 'bring contextualism back' into the theorising and practices of organisations and organising. In the following chapter I turn my theoretical analysis to a discussion of the second map of thinking tools in my theoretical model, which is concerned with 'bringing agency back' into the gaze of empiricism.

## CHAPTER 5: BRINGING AGENCY BACK IN

Our imaginations are inhabited by ghosts ... The past haunts us, but from time to time people have changed their minds about the past. I want to show how, today, it is possible for individuals to form a fresh view both of their own personal history and of humanity's whole record of cruelty, misunderstanding and joy. To have a new vision of the future, it has always first been necessary to have a new vision of the past.

Zeldin, T. (1994:vii)

*The word 'agency' is widely used in the literature with at times confusing consequences. Often combined with the term 'structure', agency generally points to a bipolar debate in the literature about whether a given phenomenon is determined by the structure or by its agency. In such debates, structure is typically represented by the 'objectivist' position, embodied in dominant theoretical approaches such as functionalism. The functional position is underpinned by an ontology whereby the social world is composed of objective structures which constrain the actions of individuals or groups. In contrast, the interactionist or phenomenological position maintains that the social world is fundamentally composed of the reality construction of social actors. Agency, when used in this context, generally points to the human dimensions of a particular phenomenon with a focus on action: what the agents can bring to bear on a particular circumstance. However, I agree with Layder (1981:94) when he says, 'Neither position is able to embrace the ontological pluralism necessary for a non-reductionist theory of interaction, that is a theory that neither reduces interaction to the exclusive and mechanical effects of structure nor reduces structure to the accomplishments of actors, or the outcomes of their interactions'. Of concern in this chapter is the way in which science has silenced agency in the literature. I will examine agency as heterogeneous networks of actors who relate to each other in patterned and contingent ways. Furthermore, as we will see from the following discussion, agency can also mean the actions of the living and non-living, human and non-human (Callon 1986).*

Normal science takes a particular tack on agency. For some the idea is that agency was silenced because it was related to discretion, that which is idiosyncratic and

unprofessional, emotional and irrational or indeed imbued in religious dogma. The idea was that agency should defer to scientific knowledge. Deferment of such knowledge to an objectivist position enabled specialist actors to be the caretakers of social justice, progress, truth, beauty and humanity. Such specialist actors were akin to the legislators of Bauman's seminal text *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Postmodernity and Intellectuals* (Bauman 1987). Legislators embody a sovereign view of power. They legislate what counts as truth. Truth is singular and bounded by their rationality. However, looking at Bauman's alternative metaphor of interpreters takes us forward in our discussion of agency. Interpreters as Bauman sees them embody a new self-awareness. They simultaneously penetrate and translate between various communities and forms of life, and in this way give rise to the articulation not just of a singular rationality but of multiple diverse modes of rationalities. Seen this way, agents are essentially strategists. As Haugaard (1998:120) puts it:

'Our' agent is not a cultural or structural dope who is merely an effect of the social system of which he or she is a part. Our actor is a purposive actor who pursues discursively known goals - knows what it is that they want and why it is that they act the way they do - but, at the same time, is very much part of the social environment.

In this way, we come to see that agents have a degree of autonomy. However, not everything will be possible or even conceivable at any given time or in any space or discourse because agency is integrally linked with context.

The second 'map' of thinking tools in my approach comes into focus in critiquing the way in which modernist theorists silence agency in talking of truth in organisations. Taking a tack that is akin to the postmodernist call to adopt more rigorous approaches to researching agency in organisations, the second map of thinking tools is based on the question, 'If organisations are constituted by living beings and are in themselves living (De Geus 1997) what would help us to think about how they are struggling to position themselves at both an individual and organisational level?' How do we bring agency back within the empirical gaze?

Garfinkel (1967) was a key proponent in bringing concepts of agency to the fore in his theory of ethnomethodology. Ethnomethodology, as Heritage (1984:4) explains, focuses on 'the body of common-sense knowledge and the range of procedures and

considerations by means of which the ordinary members of society make sense of, find their way about in, and act on the circumstances in which they find themselves.' Preoccupied with the micro-interactive conditions of social order, Garfinkel viewed social action as 'fundamentally organised with respect to its reflexivity and accountability ... (thus) intersubjective intelligibility of actions ultimately rests on the symmetry between the production of actions on the one hand and their recognition on the other' (Heritage 1984:179). Given their constructedness, social institutions and the actions which they constitute are 'inherently precarious, at least when compared to natural processes, because their continuation relies upon the willingness of human beings to subscribe to, account for, and (re)enact, their existence' (Willmott 1996:26).

To demonstrate his point of how reflexivity and accountability work in practice to determine what counts as 'truth', Garfinkel (1967) conducted a number of studies. One such study was the case of Agnes, a nineteen-year-old patient in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1958. Agnes was born a boy with normal-appearing male genitalia and was recognised as a boy until the age of seventeen when she commenced procedures to undergo a sex-change operation. What was interesting about this case from Garfinkel's perspective, as a researcher of everyday phenomena, was how Agnes constructed her gender identity in such a way that she could 'pass' as a woman. In 'passing' as a woman Garfinkel makes note of a number of challenges and everyday decisions and practices that Agnes faced. Swimming was to be avoided, but excuses or compromises such as sitting on the beach were acceptable ways of dealing with the situation. Clearly Agnes's sense of identity relied not only on seeing herself as a woman but also on how her identity was conceived and articulated by others including acquaintances that she encountered in everyday life as well as people who knew her from the past such as family friends and her boyfriend and medical doctors who had access to her case history. To 'pass as a woman', Agnes needed to pay particular attention to her physical appearance, so she learnt how to walk like a woman and dress like a woman. Talking like a woman provided a particular challenge because she did not have adequate experiences to draw on. Agnes spent a lot of time with women to learn how to present talk appropriately. To convince family, friends and medical doctors Agnes also needed to return to past experiences as a 'boy' in order to narrate her life history in a different way. For example, she told the story of the many female traits which she had had as a child which had also been confirmed in the accounts of others. For example, her brother had always said that she carried her books like a girl. Agnes used such stories to



construct her biography as a woman. The outcomes of the research posed a significant challenge to traditional concepts of gender identity as conceived by Parsons (1940) and Durkheim (1982) who had posited that conventional categories of 'male' and 'female' are treated as a 'social fact'. Garfinkel, by contrast, viewed gender identity as a produced and reproduced fact, hence stressing the constructedness of identity formation.

Garfinkel is also famous for conducting so-called 'breach experiments' as class activities with his students at UCLA where he lectured in sociology. In one such experiment he asked his students, on returning home to their families, to spend a period of between fifteen minutes and one hour pretending that they were boarders. As a further class exercise, students were then asked to report on the reaction that such a seemingly minor violation of everyday roles and expectations produced. However, rather than inconsequential results, students talked of the dramatic reactions that their actions caused:

Family members were stupefied. They vigorously sought to make the strange actions intelligible and to restore the situation to normal appearances. Reports were filled with accounts of astonishment, bewilderment, shock, anxiety, embarrassment, and anger, and with charges by various family members that the student was mean, inconsiderable, selfish, nasty or impolite. (Garfinkel 1967:47)

What these experiments showed was that those which are 'routinely assumed to be the natural facts of life are also through and through moral facts of life' (Garfinkel 1967:35)' (cited in Willmott 1996:28). Indeed, Garfinkel argued that everyday life is made up of a series of complex interactions which for the most part pass as appropriate, rationally accountable and intelligible but what people are seen to be, as well as what they are seen to do, is not so much factual as constructed. In undertaking breaching experiments, Garfinkel also pointed out that what is quite extra-ordinary is the seldom occurrence of breakdowns in understandings, viewed as the capacity to go on. This he explained by people's ability to be constantly making sense of what goes on around them by drawing on common sense explanations of any given phenomena; a practice whereby various anomalies are accommodated for and normalised. Such thinking was in many ways akin to the emergence of social constructivism (Berger and Luckmann 1966) as well as phenomenology (Schutz 1967) in that each of these theories

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**Part 1: Theories of truth and their management**

placed the emphasis of social theory firmly on human experience. What such theoretical standpoints also shared was that they took issue with the excessively rationalistic views of society and history espoused by functionalism as proposed by Parsons which conceptualised society as governed by impersonal social forces which he saw to be the bedrock of scientific thought. Indeed, for Parsons the discrete 'motivations, actions and accounts of mere mortals are epiphenomenal to the social system, as well as being largely opaque to the participants themselves... Parsons argues that social institutions function independently of individuals, while human experience is assumed to be "confused and unorganised" (Boden 1994:43). In contrast to Parsons, the social constructivists, phenomenologists and ethnomethodologists called for a far more agent-centred and process-oriented sociology. In stressing the 'analytical primacy of the actor's point of view and the social construction of reality' (Heritage 1984:2), such theoretical approaches were more in tune with the significant social movement and political reform experienced in the 1960s throughout the Western world. However, ethnomethodology also differs from phenomenology and social constructivism at a fundamental level. Indeed, Garfinkel adamantly asserted that ethnomethodology should not be treated as an adjunct to either phenomenology or social constructivism (Garfinkel and Wieder 1992:175). The main arguments for its 'incommensurability' focused on the way in which the phenomenologists and social interactionists gave pride of place in their analysis to subjective experience, and mental processes such as reasoning and interpreting. In contrast, ethnomethodology, akin to Wittgenstein's theorising, emphasises that 'understanding' is related to the concept of a capability or a capacity. Thus, methods such as interviews and focus groups that phenomenology or social constructivism proposes which encourage research 'subjects' to talk of their experiences, world view and so on, were considered to be limited by ethnomethodologists because they do not tell us how people understand but rather what they say they understand.

In spite of its essentialism - the assumption that there is 'cultural and social stability: things are as they are' (Czarniawska-Joerges 1996a:309) - Sacks's work is of interest to discussions of how agency was being advanced by ethnomethodology because it provides us with a way of making the concern of agency methodologically available. Importantly, Sacks recognises that given that there are clearly multiple ways of understanding people, a key theoretical and methodological concern is how the members constituting a specific situation singled out for analysis select and define particular characteristics or events as relevant, appropriate, fitting and true to

conceptions of their membership. Equally, of concern is how other characteristics and events are rejected or simply do not come into consideration.

With his notions of Category-Bound Activities (CBA) and a Membership Categorisation Device, the Membership Inference-rich Representative (MIR), Sacks shows how people rely on commonsense knowledge of how particular groups, or categories of people are tied to certain presumed identities, and practices. Sacks sees membership categorisation as 'basic and extremely generic social control devices' by which 'members of the society are constantly engaged in monitoring events; on the one hand by reference to whether something that has happened is something that they are accountable for, and on the other hand, to find out what is getting done by members of any of the other categories' (Sacks 1992:42).

The strength of Sacks's work lies in the use of seemingly trivial everyday examples of statements such as 'the baby cried, the mommy picked it up', 'criminals often confess', 'Catholics confess', 'boys will be boys' etc., to draw our attention to how categorisation works in the everyday. He problematises our everyday understanding by putting it that in such examples 'we can see ways in which, while just by reference to the components one would figure them to be quite ambiguous, they turn out not to be heard as ambiguous at all.' (Sacks 1992:585). He explains that such statements make sense because each category operates as a set of characteristics, which are already known by the members themselves. Second, these sets of characteristics are 'inference rich' (Sacks 1992:40). By that he means that 'a great deal of knowledge that members of a society have about the society is stored in terms of these categories ... when you get some category as an answer ... you can feel that you know a great deal about the person, and can readily formulate topics of conversation based on the knowledge stored in terms of that category' (Sacks 1992:40-41). By capturing such everyday examples of the members' own sensemaking of categories that describe themselves and others, we gain understandings of what they consider to be 'normal' and hence how they see and represent themselves and others in their everyday world.

Furthermore, Sacks proposes that the researcher can also gain insight into how members select and define categories by looking for instances where the name of a particular person (e.g. John) is replaced by a membership category (student, academic). The activity in which John is engaged (teaching, researching, smoking dope etc.) is considered not as something exclusive to him, but rather is seen in terms of the

membership category. A further example is when members make clear to other members in some way, either verbally or through other actions, 'remember you are a so-and-so'. Or alternatively, it may occur when someone has a particular negative encounter with a member. Other members feel personal pain and take on responsibility and shame. Furthermore, particular members may be aware of the inferences which can be drawn from particular categories of information and may provide qualifications or justifications in cases where it is feared that the category may be interpreted negatively by other members or non-members. Finally, there is the concept of 'boundary testing' (Sacks 1992:589), a strategy by which he puts categories together which, although factually correct, may fall outside understandings considered to be 'common sense' or 'normal' by its members. He explains the strategy as follows:

One may like to play with picking categories other than the category-bound activity category, for an announced activity that is category-bound to some category – where that alternative category you pick is also possibly correct e.g. if the baby crying is also a Catholic and you announce "the Catholic cried" You'll find that you get a lot more queries which you wouldn't otherwise get. What's involved then is a whole range of ways that identification categories are selectable, and are indeed selected.

Boden's work (1994) provides an illustration of such theoretical and methodological concerns within the field of organisational studies. Drawing on the works of Garfinkel and Sacks, Boden examines 'the business that gets done through talk, as well as the interactional business from which talk is the primary medium.' (Boden 1994:8). In her study, Boden is concerned with analysing the 'talk' that takes place in a range of different meetings and in different contexts. In her analysis of meetings Boden examines many of the theoretical and methodological issues raised in the works of both Garfinkel and Sacks. For example, she undertakes a fine-grained examination of how turn taking works in both formal and informal business meetings by drawing on conversational analysis techniques. What is important about this work is that Boden stresses that the everyday conversations that appear so fragmented actually make up that what we know to be organisational life.

But while ethnomethodology does provide the researcher with some useful methodological tools by which to move beyond focusing on talk created in contrived

arenas such as interviews, in that it concentrates instead on data gained from what people do and say in everyday authentic contexts, the ethnomethodologists are not interested in exploring questions such as why or how people come to say and do the things that they do. It is as though the ethnomethodologists are more concerned with proving a methodological point rather than examining issues of why membership categories are conceived in the way in which they are or how such understandings are shaped within historical or cultural contexts.

The work of Foucault is central in helping us to reposition agents as struggling to position themselves, to make choices, to find the best ways of going on within a given context. For Foucault agents are strategists, hence not reducible to a self-defining agent (symbolic interactionists) or a rule-governed agent (ethnomethodology). Rather agents work within a given historical context; thus, not all options will be available to agents at any one time. The aim then of Foucault's work is:

not to find the material causes but to show all the factors that interacted and the reactions of people. I believe in the freedom of the people.... To the same situations people act or react in very different ways... The way people act or react is linked to a way of thinking, and of course thinking is related to tradition. (1988b:14)

It is by way of examining the idea of a choosing, active agent embedded within an historical context: an agent that both is a product of and produces the historical and social context in which s(he) operates that I have identified four key thinking tools by which to convey agency; identity, capital, practices and power. Indeed, in defining agency in this way one comes to see that the examination of identity(ies) involves coming to terms with representations of both who we are and who we are not, institutionally and individually. Conceptions of capital are brought to light through attention to questions of 'what is and is not at stake', 'valued', 'of interest' or 'counts' for us in a particular arena. Furthermore, the examination of practice(s) is concerned with perspectives of both what we do and do not do. Finally, by using Foucault's language of the fusion of such conceptions within 'capillaries of power/knowledge', power comes to be seen as something, which is fluid and connected. It operates as a 'network of relations' between people, objects, and forces rather than something, which is directly attributable to a person, who has power over others. Hence, my concern for power is less with 'taking sides, identifying who has more or less of it, as

seeking to describe its strategic role – how it is used to translate people into characters who articulate an organisational morality play’ (Hardy and Clegg 1996:378). In Foucault’s own words we should do this by asking new types of questions about power (Foucault 1980d:97):

Rather than ask ourselves how the sovereign appears to us in his lofty isolation, we should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, material, desires, thoughts etc.

Importantly, in using such an approach, the researcher does not define ways of seeing conceptions of identity, capital, practice and power in her own terms but rather seeks to examine those that subjects and organisations themselves both construct and enact in the ‘everyday’.

Callon (1986) adds a further dimension to the analysis of agency in that he talks of the agency of the human, non-human and even the non-living. In his seminal paper, ‘Some elements of a sociology of translation: domestication of the scallops and the fisherman of St Brieuc Bay’ Callon tells the story of how a group of three researchers work in St Brieuc, a small fishing community near Brest in France, to repopulate the dwindling resources of scallops. The paper identifies three key agents of concern in determining the success or failure of the study. First are the researchers themselves, and then the fishermen but also the scallops. Callon’s work is interesting because he describes a practical example of how scientists use their abstracted, specialist knowledge to reach generalisable facts which commit ‘uncountable populations of silent actors’:

The result which is obtained is striking. A handful of researchers discuss a few diagrams and a few tables with numbers in a closed room. But these discussions commit uncountable populations of silent actors: scallops, fishermen, and specialists who are all represented at Brest by a few spokesmen. These diverse populations have been mobilised. That is, they have been displaced from their homes to a conference room. They participate, through interposed representatives, in the

negotiations over the anchorage of *Pecten maximus* over the interests of the fisherman (Callon 1986:218).

Using their abstracted knowledge, the scientists are concerned with demonstrating how the scallops will attach. The fishermen hardly appear as interested parties in the paper. Their lay knowledge is ignored. Indeed, after patiently waiting seven years for the outcomes of the project to no avail, their actions of harvesting the scallops are significantly described as a 'betrayal' of the regeneration project even though for them access to their fishing grounds was the whole point of their initial agreement to the project. Ironically, at the end of the paper the scallops do not attach and therefore it is the scallops that expose the scientists' project as a failure. Drawing on the works of Latour and Callon, Law explains the complex inter-relationship between the subject and the object, the non-living and the living (Law 1996:300):

Subjects endlessly turn themselves into objects - objects of rules and procedures which, for instance, take the form of the standing orders or conventions which are performed in meetings. While, at the same time, objects are similarly constantly turning themselves back into subjects so that they may judge whether or not the rules have been properly followed. This, then is a syntax or mode of accounting that is told and performed in documents such as agendas and minutes. And it is something which demands the performance of a constant weaving to and fro between subjectivity and objectivity. The former is not distant, strategic, and occasional. Rather, together with its interventions, it is continuous, reflexive, iterative, unfolding and tactical, distributed across time in ways that cannot be predicted or told in any detail at a single time or place.

Seen this way, the 'thinking tools' for agency need to enable analysis of non-living as well as living agents.

Figure 2 below is a diagrammatic representation of the four contingencies which make up agency; identity, capital, practices and power.

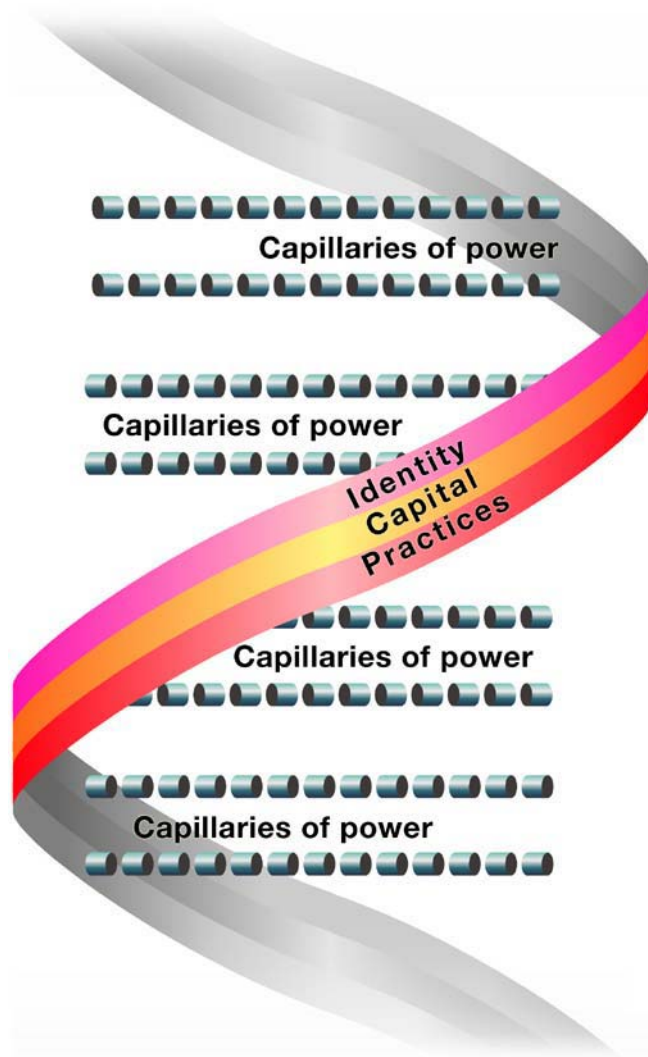


Figure 2: Map two - agency

Having broadly discussed key research which has challenged the silencing of agency, I will now examine the nature of each of the contingencies which make up agency and their truth effects in turn.

## TRUTH IS MANAGED THROUGH IDENTITY

In a conference paper which Foucault gave in 1978 at the Symposium on Law and Psychiatry at the University of York, Toronto, he began his address by relating a brief exchange which he observed whilst visiting the criminal courts in Paris, between the judge and the accused, who was being tried for five rapes and six attempts of rape:

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- "Have you tried to reflect upon your case?"
- Silence.
- "Why, at twenty-two years of age, do such violent urges overtake you? You must make an effort to analyse yourself. You are the one who has the keys to your own actions. Explain yourself."
- Silence.
- "Why would you do it again?"
- Silence.

Then a juror took over and cried out, "For heaven's sake, defend yourself!"

(Foucault 1988b:125-126)

The extract reminds us of the central position which the question 'Who are you' plays in the management of truth in contemporary organisations and organising.

Frequently framed as studies of identity, the question of 'who are you?' has more recently focused on the consideration of 'becoming' as well as 'being' (Ashforth 1998). Chia (1995:582) elaborates on the differentiation between these two concepts by equating 'being' with modernist concerns and 'becoming' with postmodernism. He puts it that 'the postmodern emphasises the myriad of heterogeneous yet interlocking organising micro-practices which collectively generate effects such as the individuals, organisations and society'. Furthermore, he stresses that:

the tendency to think of ... (such..) categories as already completed and self-contained social units is a consequence of what Whitehead (1929) has called the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness. Whitehead used this phrase to describe the tendency to see physical objects and things as the natural unit of analysis rather than, more properly, the *relationships* between them.

The heterogeneity of identity as becoming rather than more static representations of being suggests that identity needs to be explored at multiple levels within the organisation studies literature and contemporary life: at the organisational, the

professional, the individual and the social level. Furthermore, such literature stresses that in understanding identity, the relationship between such levels of organisation should be sought rather than conceptualising them separately. Scrutinised in this way, organisations are not seen to be 'boxes leading their own lives' (Hernes 2004:18), but rather 'the dynamics consist of continually emerging processes rooted in existing organisational arrangements' (Hernes 2004:21), or as Chia (1995:601) describes them, 'implicit assemblages of organisational actions and interactions.' Equally, at an individual level an employee's engagement in, and commitment to organisational priorities and outcomes, is not unitary but rather seen in the light of her being a member 'of a number of groups: ..... the organisation itself, divisions, departments, or work teams as well as management teams, project teams, professional groups, or other informal groups' (Paulsen and Hernes 2004: 14). Significantly, each membership group is a potential source of identification, as well as a means by which an employee's assessment of 'what is, and is not at stake' as well as 'what counts as acceptable organisational practices, and what does not' is informed. Furthermore, Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) talk of 'other, more personal sources of identity work than organisational discourses, ideologies, social identities and roles'. In understanding identity they also focus on the importance of 'anti-identity' whereby organisations or individuals seek to distance themselves from certain characteristics and in this way define themselves by making it clear that which they are not (Kunda 1992; Duckerich, Kramer and Parks 1998). Sveningsson and Alvesson exemplify such characteristics of identity work by tracing the career of a female managing director in a high-tech industry in Sweden which had recently merged with an American partner organisation. The study shows how the so-called Heroine of their story struggles with the move from a middle-level manager to a senior operations manager in relation to the way that she makes sense of herself and her own life story. She does not see herself as a 'traditional' operations manager. Far more interested in the 'design aspects' of her position the Heroine resists the so-called 'janitorial' work of her position with its focus on administration. Furthermore, in promoting cultural understandings within the organisation she finds it important to show staff a private representation of herself - a photo of herself in simple working clothes, on her farm with tools in hand. By drawing the personal into the professional arena she not only tells something of her own self - a simple farmer - but also links with a locally grounded identity and culture. Such a self-representation was organisationally not well received because it conflicted profoundly with the espoused global identities in the organisation. In this way, Sveningsson and Alvesson stress that managerial identity can entail a struggle

between the 'narrated self-identity' (McAdams 1993) and other organisational discourses and roles (Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003:14).

Even though identity is manifold, many researchers have warned against understanding the self as fragmented. Indeed, both individuals and organisations often seek to convey the image both internally and externally that they have a single and unified identity. For example, Mead talking of identity formation at an individual level describes 'a parliament of selves' (cited in Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003:2); similarly, Turner refers to a 'basket of selves' (cited in Gorashi 2003:27) whereby the individual strives to create the 'myth' of cohesiveness. Hernes takes this point further in his examination of identity formation in an organisational context. He puts it that (2004:13)

Proper name organisations have boundaries around them that make them distinct in relation to other organisations. The distinction refers principally to the image they have in society, and what this distinction entails. For example, getting recruited by Shell means crossing the boundaries into the world of Shell with all the connotations that this entails, such as petroleum industry, large company, international, career prospects etc. The boundaries are primarily boundaries of identity ... The organisation is increasingly conflated with the brand it represents and when we speak of the organisation we in fact speak of the brand.

Seen in this way, the identity of organisations and key players that work in them is a fabrication, in that sensemaking is shaped contextually. As Giddens (1990:38) puts it 'social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about these very practices, thus constitutively altering their character'. However, fabrication can also present a paradox in organisations. The responses to the game is the 'look' (as in 'appearance') and it may be possible for the appearance of compliance to satisfy the condition of surveillance whilst subverting and paradoxically controlling it by providing false information' (Linstead 1993:64). Similarly, Ball (2000:10) puts it:

Technologies and calculations which appear to make [...actors and) organisations more transparent may actually result in making them more opaque, as representational artefacts are increasingly

constructed with great deliberation and sophistication [...] the discipline of the market is transformed into the discipline of the image, the sign.

Following Foucault, rather than conceptions of identity being 'unproblematic', and 'essentialist', framed as 'fixed', 'core', 'stable' and 'true', as modernist theorists of self would have it, I seek to undermine conceptions of identity as 'rational', 'non-contradictory', and 'unitary'. I stress instead that the 'subjects'' actions produce selfhood or identities within a given historical framework of power/knowledge and that such conceptions of self are multiple. Such a view is not deterministic, rather as Wenger (1998:146) puts it, 'talking about identity in social terms is not denying individuality but viewing the very definition of individuality as something that is part of the practices of specific communities. It is, therefore, a mistaken dichotomy to wonder whether the unit of analysis of identity should be the community or the person. The focus must be on their mutual constitution'. According to this view of identity, there is no 'true' identity. Rather, the individual's concept of identity goes beyond their own sense of themselves to take into consideration the perceptions of others with whom they interact within their social milieu. Seen in this light, identity is a matter of performance - 'a continuous process of narration where both the narrator and audience formulate, edit, applaud and refuse various elements of the constantly produced narrative' (Czarniawska-Joerges 1996b:160).

To show how identity is both a product of and produces the power relationships that operate at a given historical time Foucault introduces his idea of technologies of the self. For Foucault, the body 'is the site at which the self is constituted by the operation of power/knowledge schema that are historically specific and culturally mediated. The discipline and subjugation of the body mediates the subjugation of the conscious and unconscious spheres of the self. The technologies of the self (Foucault 1988d) bring into effect 'the process of cultural domination' (Casey 1995:72). Rose (1989:11) defines technologies of the self as 'the ways in which we are enabled, by means of the language, criteria, and techniques offered to us, to act on our bodies, souls, thoughts, and conduct in order to achieve happiness, wisdom, health and fulfilment.' The term 'Technologies of the self' is used by Foucault to convey the idea that our sense of subjective experience is produced and reinforced through complex and heterogeneous assemblages of technologies which render us accountable. People literally regulate their own conduct and ways of being in relation to their acceptance of specific institutional or societal expectations. For example, in his historical work on sexuality,

Foucault (1984) focused on a particularly important technology of the self – the ‘confession’ - a practice which involves self-inspection, self-problematisation and self-monitoring. Foucault explains:

The agency of domination does not reside in the one who speaks (for it is he who is constrained), but in the one who listens and who says nothing; not in the one who knows the answers, but in the one who questions and is not supposed to know. And this discourse of truth finally takes effect, not in the one who receives it, but in the one from whom it is wrested (Foucault 1984a:62)

The panopticon is another example of technologies of the self. Based on an architectural design proposed by Jeremy Bentham for a new type of prison in the nineteenth century, Foucault puts it that the design exercised effects of power on the subjectivity of the inmates in that given that the inmates could not see the overseers they were never certain when they might be under surveillance, the result being that they began to discipline themselves. In the literature, the panopticon has been equated with a number of current management practices in the workplace which have the effect of workers disciplining themselves and in this way producing ‘docile bodies’. Such practices include performance agreements, total quality management (TQM) processes and procedures, team building and learning and development programs emphasising worker/learner empowerment (Townley 1993).

## TRUTH IS MANAGED THROUGH CAPITAL

Capital allows the consideration of that which ‘counts’, is ‘at stake’, ‘of interest’, or ‘valued’ in a particular field. Bourdieu (1992:111) argues that:

A capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field. It confers power over the field, over the materialised or embodied instruments of production or reproduction whose distribution constitutes the very structure of the field, and over the regularities and the rules which define the ordinary functioning of the field.

He goes on to explain that the relationship between capital and field can be compared to the trump card in a game. In Bourdieu's words (1992:98)

Just as the relative value of cards changes with each game, the hierarchy of the different (types) of capital ... varies across the various fields... There are cards that are valid, efficacious in all fields – these are the fundamental (types) of capital – but their relative value as trump cards is determined by each field and even by the successive states of the same field.

He sees fields as a 'network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions' (Bourdieu 1992:97) which calls into question notions of space being defined exclusively by institutional boundaries or organisational charts. Bourdieu stresses that a particular institution or individual may be predisposed to focus on one or more forms of such capital in a field. The different forms of capital have different degrees of liquidity - that is the degree to which they may be transformed into other forms of capital; differing rates by which they can be exchanged for other forms of capital, and differing susceptibility to attrition – through loss, flight or inflation.

For Bourdieu, in order to identify a field one must clarify the specific forms of capital, which it values and clarify what specific capital is needed to interrogate its tacit rules and regularities specific to the 'logic of the field' (Bourdieu 1992:99). He maintains that capital should not be considered as something tangibly possessed, or exclusively defined as a financial resource. Bourdieu is also interested in examining the interconnection of concepts of capital with power. He puts it that:

The field as a field of struggles aims at preserving or transforming the configuration of these forces. Furthermore, the field as a structure of objective relations between positions of forces undergirds and guides the strategies whereby the occupants of these positions seek, individually or collectively to safeguard or improve their position and to impose the principle of hierarchisation most favourable to their own products. The strategies of agents depend on their position in the field, that is, in the distribution of the specific capital, and on the perception that they have of the field depending on the point of view they

take on the field as a view taken from a point in the field  
Bourdieu 1992:101).

He talks of various types of capital including 'social', 'intellectual', 'cultural', and 'symbolic' capital. However, Bourdieu stresses that such types are examples only and to ascertain what form of capital is valued at either an individual or organisational level one needs to engage in empirical work rather than deciding that which it constitutes *a priori*.

Such ways of theorising capital have been taken up in a number of arenas including theoretical work, policy frameworks and, to a lesser extent, directly by management practice. However, interestingly the various forms of capital are often discussed as separate entities and thus determined *a priori* rather than seen as possible lenses through which choices are made as to what is valued in a particular field. Thus, in such research, types of capital are not determined in relation to the field under investigation as Bourdieu had intended they should. So in the literature one reads of proponents of 'social capital' (Baron, Fields and Schuller 2000; Putnam 2002; François 2002; Grootaert and Van Bastelaer 2002; Onyx and Leonard 2001) or 'intellectual capital' (Edvinsson and Malone 1997; Stewart 1997) or 'human capital' (Hachlup 1984; Thurow 1970; Schultz 1971), rather than theorists who seeks to find the interconnection between each form of capital as well as the implications that the favouring of one form of capital within decision making processes has for other forms of capital.

In using the concept of capital as one of the 'thinking tools' in my theorising of how agency comes into play within a field, I un-surface what is 'at stake' or valued in a field empirically and thus I return to Bourdieu's original project of capital as a loose term which needs to be determined in relation to the fields of interest to the investigation.

## TRUTH IS MANAGED THROUGH PRACTICES

Practices allow consideration of that which is 'done' or 'acted upon'. Ethnomethodology is central to our understanding of practice in that it focuses on how members demonstrate understanding or capacity to go on in everyday activities rather than what they may say about practice. Boden's (1994) examination of meetings, for example, shows us that far from being peripheral to the organisation it is talk which constitutes that which is organising and organisational life. Boden (1994:79) stresses

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that 'direct observation of organisational behaviour and work practices in situ provides quite distinctive insights into such issues as rationality, effective management, decision making and the like,'

Similar to Boden's analysis of practice, with its focus on data collected from the observation of everyday activities and the recording of talk in the workplace rather than the collection of data from less authentic sources such as interviews or focus groups, is the situated learning (Brown and Duguid 1991) and communities of practice literatures (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). Brown and Duguid's (1991) classic study conducted at Xerox Park shows us how photocopy service technicians go about their practice of repairing photocopy machines. The study demonstrates powerfully that practice entails far more than the following of rules. A key finding of the research was that the knowledge that service technicians used to accomplish the repair of a photocopy machine went far beyond their technical manuals: the espoused rule governed modes of practice. The service technicians had informal knowledge, circulated mainly by word of mouth, of their own instances of problem solving strategies based on their experience. The technicians also engaged in professional dialogue with technical specialists. Their knowledge, which led to their capability to repair the machines was collective, convergent, and coherent. Seen in this way, practice is the 'acquiring, sustaining and changing through collective actions, of the meaning embedded in the organisation's cultural artifacts' (Cook and Yanow 1993:384), thus, pointing to the inadequacies of conceptualising practice as exclusively rule-based and rational. Equally, in the communities of practice literature Wenger (1998), focusing on the work of claims processors in an insurance firm, points to the disparity between the 'individual, asocial, linear view' (Wenger 1998:46) that senior managers held of the job and the actual reality of doing claim processing work. Wenger puts it that seeing practice in terms of a 'community of practice' shifts understanding of practice from a utilitarian, linear and rational approach to an understanding of practice which acknowledges:

Both the explicit and tacit. It includes what is said and what is left unsaid; what is represented and what is assumed. It includes the language, tools documents, images, symbols, well-defined roles, specific criteria, codified procedures, regulations and contracts that various practices make explicit for a variety of purposes. But it also includes all the implicit relations, tacit conventions, subtle cues,



untold rules of thumb, recognisable intuitions, specific perceptions, well-tuned sensitivities, embodied understandings, underlying assumptions, and shared world views. Most of these may never be articulated, yet they are unmistakable signs of membership in communities of practice (Wenger 1998:47).

Flyvbjerg (2001:24) makes a similar point about the problematic nature of rational, rule-based modes of thinking in relation to practice when he says:

the rule-based, rational mode of thinking generally constitutes an obstacle to good results, not because rules and rationality are problematic in themselves, but because their rational perspective has been elevated from being necessary to being sufficient and even exclusive. This has caused people and entire scholarly disciplines to become blind to the context, experience, and intuition even though these phenomena and ways of being are at least as important and necessary for good results as are analysis, rationality, and rules.

To demonstrate this point, Flyvbjerg (2001:10) draws on a compelling research study, conducted in the United States, whereby a number of respondents, including students with limited experience of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), instructors as well as expert paramedics, were asked to watch a video of six people administering CPR to victims of acute heart failure. Respondents were asked to identify the person that they would prefer to be resuscitated by, if they were the victim of acute heart failure. Five of the people in the video were students and only one was an expert paramedic. The results of the study showed that ninety percent of the expert paramedics were able to identify the one expert paramedic in the video, however counter-intuitively, only thirty percent of the instructors, compared to fifty percent of the students, were successful in the task. As an explanation of the poor performance of the instructors in this study, Flyvbjerg proposes that it relates to the way in which the instructors construct and enact their own professional knowledge and practices in contrast to expert practitioners. In viewing the videos, the instructors were more likely to favour those individuals who exemplified the 'rule-governed behaviour' which made up their approaches to teaching CPR. Given that the students on the videos were in the process of learning CPR from such teaching techniques, they were more likely to exemplify

such rule-based behaviour. In contrast, experts often adopt approaches to practice which go beyond following the rules. They 'just do what works' (Flyvbjerg 2001:17). The significance of drawing on such research in the context of his argument is that it shows that (Flyvbjerg 2001:22):

the rational mode of thinking is inadequate for comprehending the total spectrum of human activity, both in relation to human everyday activities and to (expert) performances. Instead, the rationalist perspective focuses on those properties of human activity by which humans most resemble machines of Weberian bureaucrats: rule-based deliberation based on formal logic.

Such thinking about reality and its 'rules' whereby humans 'most resemble machines' is imbued in the context-independence of 'normal science' where environments are carefully controlled and contrived so that all features of the context other than those sought experientially, are screened out for the purpose of discovering the generalisable rules that govern a particular phenomenon. Rather than acknowledging and engaging with the complexity of organisational life, proponents of the normal sciences' screen out the voices of agents in the field, and thus 'prevent managerial discretion from contaminating the results'.

Foucault adds a further dimension to the debate on practice in that he not only talks of why it is important to think of practice in context but also because he shows powerfully how conceptions of practice change over time. His work focuses on critiquing science as the only true form of practice. He does this by juxtaposing current practices with practices from ancient times. Other researchers, too, have explored examples of how the various rationalities that exist in a society determine that which is seen to be normal practice and that which is seen as abnormal. For example, Clegg (1990) discusses an everyday experience of working in Hong Kong whereby checking that an office complies with the principles of feng shui before one moves in is not seen to be an extra-ordinary practice but rather counts as 'normal'. Thus, practices are to be analysed in the light of their relevance to a particular place, particular discourses, and a specific time.

## TRUTH IS MANAGED THROUGH CAPILLARIES OF POWER

Foucault enables us to see that constituting key categories of practice and identity of actors as well as establishing 'what is at stake' in institutional fields is always an exercise of power. Rather than 'possessed', power is not the 'privileged', 'acquired' or 'preserved' artefact of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its 'strategic positioning'. Thus, for Foucault, power has no essence, power is not situated in any 'particular place; power is not reducible to institutions' (Foucault 1980b:92). Nor is it to be seen as a dominating force from outside. By making such assertions, Foucault was not denying the social importance of the repressive power of the state or ruling elite. But rather, he saw power to be exercised through a disciplinary-based production of social order - 'the continuous action of techniques which are built into the very capillaries of social life, and which have the effect of normalising modern life' (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999:90). As Clegg (2001) puts it:

Power was not so much something that was done to people so much as the relations that organisational members together by virtue of their being members, in which some members will have more resources, more opportunities, more techniques etc. at their disposal (see Deetz 1992a; 1992b).

In this way, with his concept of power/knowledge Foucault repositioned the debate of power in the literature. His work contrasts with the so-called conflictual models of power which dominated the power literature until the 1970s. The conflictual model of power is represented eloquently and succinctly in Lukes's model of three dimensional power. In conflictual models of power, power is denial. It is power that says no. Lukes called his model three-dimensional power because he staged his model in three dimensions. He saw his own elaboration of the power literature to be represented in the 'third dimension of power', in his model whereas the works of two other influential power theorists represented the other dimensions; Dahl represented the first dimension of power and Bacharach and Baratz's work constituted the second dimension of power.

Dahl, an American power theorist, is widely regarded as the first contemporary power theorist to examine power systematically. Dahl's thesis was based on debates that

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were raging in the United States in the 1950s about whether the US was democratic. Sociologists such as C. Wright Mills (1956) put it that the US might appear to be institutionally democratic but this did not translate to practice given that he estimated that a small elite group of approximately four hundred had the real power in decision making processes at a local and national level. Dahl set out to test this assumption empirically. He chose as the site of his study the city of New Haven. Dahl formulated a definition of power that 'If A has power over B this means that A has an observable effect on B.' This definition of power influenced his methodological approach to the study of power in that he took as an indication of power the observable effects of both who initiated and those who vetoed decisions in three arenas: party nominations because of their political significance; urban renewal because it represented a significant project in New Haven at the time and finally the education portfolio because it represented the biggest area of budget expenditure in the state. Dahl found that no single elite exercised power in all three areas of decision making and from this he concluded that the US is indeed a pluralistic democracy.

Bacharach and Baratz critiqued Dahl's methodology and findings in that although they agreed with Dahl that power concerns specific events where actors prevail over each other in conflict, they suggest that this event may not necessarily be observable inside the decision making process. Their concern was that power not only is a matter of who initiates and who vetoes decision making but rather may include strategies such as 'the meeting before the meeting' whereby decisions are made prior to the official decision making arena. Another area of interest in their research was the concept of 'non-decision making' in agenda setting whereby items of little interest to powerful players may not appear on the agenda or discussions of such items may be postponed, sometimes indefinitely, so that decision making in official arenas remained focused on so-called organisationally 'safe issues'. Bacharach and Baratz's critique of Dahl's methodology represents a second dimension of power in Lukes's model because it holds that power may be manifested in both non-observable as well as observable social effects.

In the third dimension of his model, Lukes built on Dahl's original definition of power by introducing the concept of 'interests'. Thus, he explains that, 'A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests.' Lukes's introduction of the concept of interest is problematic in that it suggests that there are concrete interests

that impact each actor's life. However, actors may be rendered powerless to recognise what their 'true' interests are.

Foucault significantly extended the power debate as conceived by conflictual models of power by raising the issue that:

If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really think that one could be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things; it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourses. It needs to be considered to be a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repressive (Foucault 1980c:119).

For Foucault, as part of their everyday lives in organisations, subjects constantly make assessments which provide the grounds on which decisions about appropriate actions to be taken are weighed up and adopted 'in situ' whereby the range of possibilities is shaped by a conception of power which is a force not only oriented towards control which dominates and says no but also to those characteristics of power which Foucault defines as 'positive'. By such a term Foucault is not making a value statement about the social effects of power by dividing it into categories of 'positive' and 'negative' nor is he denying the existence of power as a dominating and controlling force.

With his concept of 'positive power' Foucault talks of how power circulates throughout the entire social body from institutional policies and strategies down to the smallest and apparently most trivial and insignificant extremities – in the bodies, desires, habits and gestures of individual social subjects. Power produces our subjectivity or identity, our conceptions of practices and ideas of what is at stake for us in a field because it is that which relates to our categorisation and classification of what makes up what counts as 'worthy' and 'unworthy'. Foucault challenges the idea that an individual can stand outside the boundaries of the social effects of power. The individual is not an autonomous subject who can use power in such a way that its outcomes are predictable and measurable. The outcomes of their actions will always create power effects but not always in those ways that are intended. In saying this Foucault does not

believe that social life is chaotic, but by the same token he wants us to understand that we are not progressing towards a 'truth' that will at some future point be brought to light. For knowledge too, can never escape the effects of power, thus constituting the ultimate 'truth' can not be possible. Rather, he puts it that what we take to be true are the mechanisms which 'enable one to distinguish true and false statements .. the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth (and) the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true' (Foucault 1980c:131). Thus, in our everyday lives there is an interplay of social relations – power is connecting what happens here to what happens there.

For Foucault, power 'passes not so much through forms as through particular points which on each occasion part the application of a force' (Deleuze 1988:73). Latour's concept of 'obligatory passage points' and the four stages of translation from problematisation, interestment, enrolment and mobilisation progresses the idea of power passing through points rather than being a force.

Although concerned with macro shifts in power/knowledge relations, Foucault advocates that one conduct an ascending analysis of power 'starting, that is from its infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics and then see how these mechanisms of power have been – and continue to be – invested, colonised, utilised, involuted, transformed, extended etc. by ever more general mechanisms...' (Foucault 1980d:99). Thus, Foucault's work examines the effects of such macro shifts from within localised manifestations of such 'truth' in what he calls 'micro techniques of power' which act as 'local conflict where truths vie for dominance. These local victories allow the rules, which characterise peace to be interpreted or created, so as to represent victory for particular strategists (Haugaard 1998:69).

The problematic with which I began the chapter was that 'normal science' approaches to the study of organisations have not attended significantly to agency. I addressed the problematic by tracing the study of agency from early seminal studies developed by Garfinkel (1967) and Sacks (1972) to more wide-ranging theoretical works such as those of Foucault (1970) who helps us to combine detailed examinations of everyday life with examinations of how such activity can be positioned within a historical context. Also interesting to the study of agency is what Callon (1986) proposes: agents can be living and non-living. This chapter introduced the second map of 'thinking tools' which

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make up my theoretical model. First, I looked at identity, second, capital and third, practices, which I argued are three concepts which help us to 'bring agency' back from its marginalised position within the organisation studies literature. Included in the discussion is also a fourth vital concept – that of capillaries of power, which as we will see in the next chapter, acts as a 'bridge' which binds the two maps of contextualism and agency to each other. In the next chapter I will use the metaphor of DNA to bring the two maps of contextualism and agency together.

## CHAPTER 6: BRINGING CONTEXT AND AGENCY TOGETHER

We are fortunate, now, to be working in a postmodern climate, ... a time when a multitude of approaches to knowing and telling exist side by side.

Richardson (2000)

*In this final chapter of part one of the thesis, I discuss how the two maps of thinking tools: contextualism and agency are brought together. In this chapter I explore how we come to see that what is considered 'normal' and 'true' is made up of a multiplicity of everyday events in which agents operate within a certain range of possibilities determined by their context. Similarly, contexts are shaped by agents and the choices that they make about 'how to go on' in situ. It is an approach which demands careful scrutiny of the minutiae of organisational life as well as reflexive sensemaking of the social effects of events which are played out in the everyday life. The theoretical model which I propose points to the significance of 'the historical conditioning and continuing institutional knowing that stems from (agents) living in their own bodies in specific places and under specific conditions in the world' (Campbell and Gregor 2002:23). Furthermore, it also requires an acknowledgement that the relationship between context and agency is contingent rather than causal.*

In postmodern theorising various metaphors have been used to represent the complexity of social life. Deleuze talks of rhizomes, and Foucault of heterotopia, others such as Richardson (2000:935) propose a 'crystallisation' which 'combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multi-dimensionality and angles of approach'. Central to each of these images is the idea that social life cannot be plotted on a linear trajectory but is multiple, complex and yet also patterned.

The metaphor that I have chosen as a reference point for my own theorising of organisational life is Watson and Crick's (1953) model of the structure of DNA with its 'two ribbons of phosphate-sugar chains which form the shape of a double helix and the horizontal rods of base holding the chains together' (Watson and Crick 1953).

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Similarly, in my theoretical model I have two chains forming the shape of a double helix. However, rather than phosphate-sugar chains I have one chain representing map one of my theoretical model, contextualism: made up of the three contingencies – discourses, time and space. The second chain represents map two of my theoretical model: agency made up of identity, capital and practices. The chains are fused by horizontal rods which represent capillaries of power.

A holistic visual representation of the thinking tools which make up my approach to examining organisational truths and how they are managed is depicted in figure 3 below.

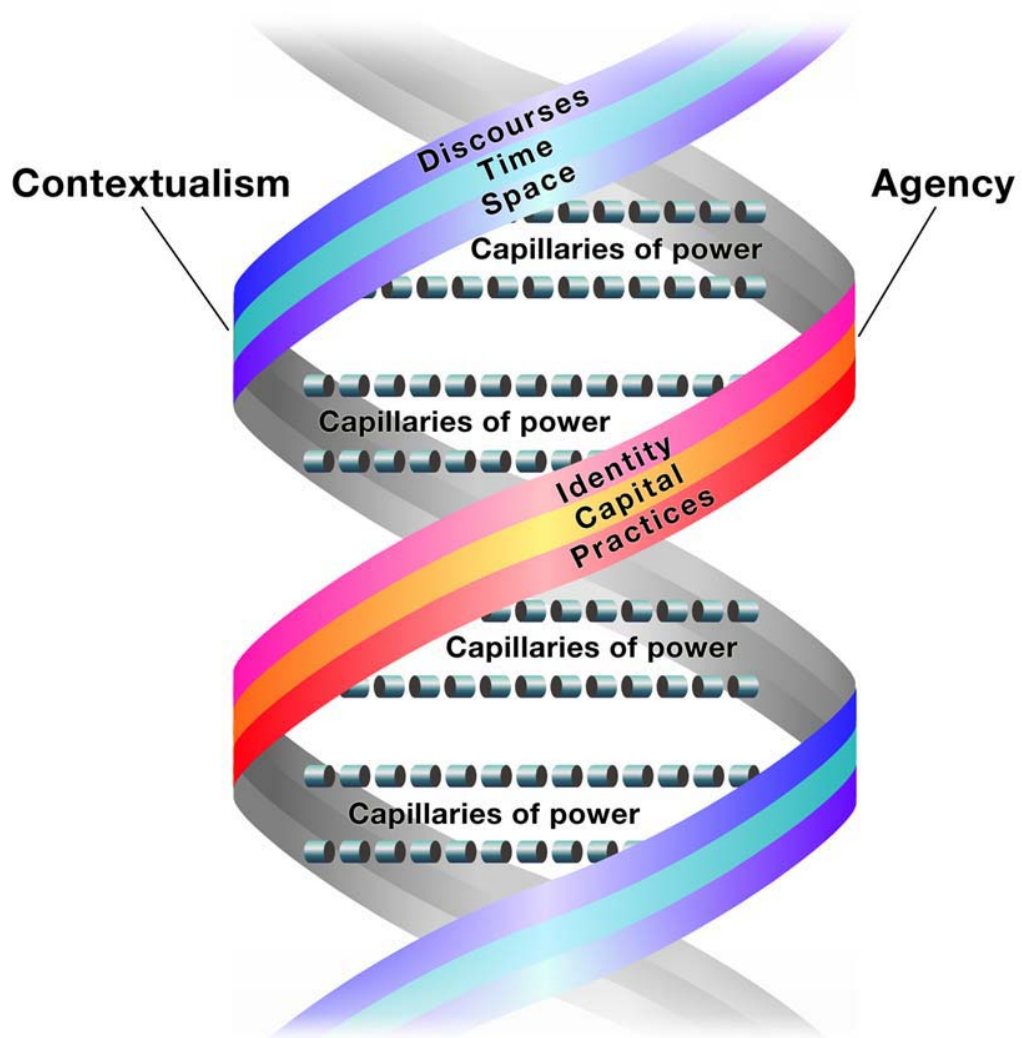


Figure 3: Bringing context and agency together

The beauty of the double helix as a representation of the sensemaking that I wish to convey in my theorising of organisations and organising is not only that it conveys the idea of life itself but also the shape of the double helix is both regular and open and thus simultaneously suggests the concepts of patterning and contingency. Thus, on applying the metaphor to my own theorising it conveys the idea that the two chains of agency and contextualism intertwine in both patterned and contingent ways, suggesting that their social effects both shape and are shaped by each other. Furthermore, the relationship between each individual contingency and chain is contingent rather than causal.

The construction of the two maps of thinking tools is not an attempt to establish a totalising theory of truth and its management in organisations in that the thinking tools are not based on a 'single or fixed number of determinant forces' (Haugaard 1998:3) nor do they 'posit a hidden force which lies behind reality' (Haugaard 1998:3) which determines that which constitutes truth a priori. Rather, the thinking tools are seen to be one way in which to 'delve into how things are socially organised, or put together, so that they happen as they do' (Campbell and Gregor 2002:29). Thus, central to my theorising and its representation is the idea that the way in which I have conceived and represented contextualism and agency is not the only way in which such concepts could be either conceived or depicted. Furthermore, such theorising also suggests that to ascertain the detail of how the social effects of contextualism and agency are 'played out' in practice one needs to examine particular cases of everyday life in situ. Such theorising is central to postmodern sensemaking, as Richardson explains:

The core of postmodernism is the *doubt* that any theory or method, discourse or genre tradition or novelty, has a universal and general claim as the "right" or the privileged form of authoritative knowledge. Postmodernism *suspects* all truth claims of masking and serving particular interests in local, cultural and political conventional methods of knowing and telling as false or archaic. Rather, it opens those standard methods to inquiry and introduces new methods, which are also, then subject to critique (Richardson 2000:928).

Thus, by making allusions to 'normal science' but reinterpreting it in new ways I seek to open up rather than close down discussions of ways of seeing the construction of

truth in organisations. Furthermore, I am not suggesting that the model I am presenting is *the truth*; rather it presents certain lenses which throw up alternative questions and ways of seeing organisations and organising.

My theorising of truth and how it is managed in organisations suggests that for any phenomenon, at any time, to be pronounced 'true' or 'false', it must 'fulfil complex and serious demands'; it must, in Canguilhem's terms, be 'within the true' (Foucault 1970:35-6), by which he means, 'our own reflexive gaze takes over the disciplining role as we take on the accounts and vocabularies of meaning and motive which are available to us, while certain other forms of account are marginalised or simply eased out of currency' (Clegg 1989:156). It follows that given its complexity and multiplicity '(t)he organisation cannot convert entirely its culture of working, .... Because there will always be an overall trade-off between change and stability' (Hernes 2004:21). Similarly, at an individual level, agents are not cultural dopes in their given context but rather they make choices in action as they make sense of how to go on in their everyday lives. Furthermore, the relationship between context and agents is not linear or causal for in Bourdieu's terms a number of games may be operating at the one time.

Having discussed how the two maps of contextualism and agency have been conceptualised as well as demonstrating how such theoretical ideas are useful 'thinking tools' by which to examine how truth is managed in organisations, I use each of the seven contingencies – discourses, time, and space as well as identity, capital, practices and power - to structure the lenses through which I examine my empirical work in part two of the thesis: 'Managing truth theoretically'. Thus, the story of the Work-Based Learning (WBL) program – a partnership program between the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) and a large Australian corporate organisation, AMP, is told by focusing on each of the seven contingencies in turn – truth is managed through ... discourses, time, space, identity, capital, practices and power.

In telling the story of WBL I consciously adopt a different authorial voice to that which I have used thus far in that my assemblage of multiple stories of the truths of WBL and the theoretical and methodological discussion which foregrounds them positions me as a clearly visible and 'embodied' writer rather than an absent or distant voice as the writing and reading of conventional academic texts would have us believe.

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WORKING THE KNOWLEDGE GAME?

THE POWER OF THE EVERYDAY IN MANAGING TRUTH IN ORGANISATIONS

PART 2: MANAGING TRUTH THEORETICALLY

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## INTRODUCTION

One never commences; one never has a tabular rasa; one slips in, enters in the middle; one takes up or lays down rhythms.

Deleuze (1992)

I am starting the writing of this story on a particular day. It is 1 September 2003. In the story of WBL it marks both the end and a new transition. I am the only employee remaining from our team of four managing the Work-Based Learning (WBL) program, a partnership program between the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) and a number of corporate organisations.

Today, I have been appointed to the academic position of Lecturer, Work-Based Learning (WBL) programs. I have been asked to resign from my previous position, or as Manager, Learning Development. The transition involves giving up my permanent position with Insearch, a commercial enterprise of the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), to take up an appointment on a two-and-a-half-year contract position with the Faculty of Business, UTS. The official line adopted by both Human Resource officers and Senior Management at UTS and Insearch is that I am 'not to lose out in any way'. I have been awarded a small pay rise and a lump sum payout which is referred to as 'ex gratis'. I confide to a friend:

JG     Isn't it interesting that things that we do not want to explicitly explain are often given foreign names?

F     'hush money' you mean?

JG     *(I look confused and hesitate before asking.)* Do you think that is what it is?

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F      *(She retracts her statement.)* No, no. That's in the award structure. They have to give you that money. It's all part of the process.

On paper, the two positions are essentially identical. However, a key difference between the two positions is that in my new position I am responsible for the 'maintenance' of learning support for the eighty-seven (87) students remaining in the WBL program. I no longer have the role of inducting new students into the program because there will be no more intakes of students. The WBL program which I have been working on for the last three-and-a-half years has in effect closed down. Hence, to supplement my workload in this 'new' role, one of my new duties is to gather stories of lessons learnt from the experience of conducting the WBL program. The ideas behind engaging in such activity are various.

- Why is it important to gather lessons learnt from WBL?
- What lessons have you learnt from WBL?
- How should lessons learnt be documented or presented?
- Who will do the learning from these lessons?

Collecting lessons learnt sounds neat. I reflect on how I should do it. A first option could be to do it in an abstract and highly codified way; to talk of design phases, development, implementation and evaluation. However, such a rational approach is not that which I experienced in the three and a half years I have worked in this institution nor is it what I learnt. It may be what is required of the work task, but what I learnt and expect what others may have learnt from their involvement and non-involvement in WBL is far more nuanced. It is this more nuanced learning that I want to recount here in all its complexity: as a story of people, and organisations. It aims to tell of the way in which they positioned themselves in their everyday work to show themselves in a particular light - their alliances, struggles of and for different truths, power and knowledge, and the tensions as well as the synergies produced by alternative ways of thinking about and doing things.

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A few days later I am at a conference and during the break I have a conversation with a fellow conference attendee. We exchange details about our work. I tell her briefly about my research and its focus on 'lessons learnt'. Our conversation provides me with a new angle on the issues I am grappling with:

FCA: That sounds great. You mean it's like talking about the 'organisational trip wire'.

JG: 'Organisation trip wire' - I can imagine what it means but I have never heard the term before.

FCA: You know. It's that invisible thread to the newcomer that all the others can see. The stuff you have to trip over to become a member.

JG: Yes, I guess you could see my research that way. I am sure they can see me falling over it continuously. But they are not alone. I see them tripping over the wire too when dealing with corporates .... Really, in the case of the latter, it's the stuff that is being missed if we want a different future.  
(Pause)

JG: I find it confidence-inspiring that you think that you have to trip over it to become a member – but I'm not completely convinced. I guess it depends on what you are seen to do after they know that you've seen it. How quick you are on the uptake of negotiating the appropriate tactics – jump over, cut, crawl under etc. .... 'organisational trip wire' - do you mind if I quote you on that?

In *Writing the Social* Dorothy Smith (1999) helps me to see in theoretical terms what I am attempting to achieve in practice in 'writing lessons learnt from WBL'. She defines inquiry as (Smith 1999:8):

In and of the same world as people live in. Hence this sociology is self consciously attentive to the social relational dimensions of its own practice, a critical attention that is, of course, never perfected. It is always also about ourselves as inquirers, not just our personal selves, but ourselves as participants in the social relations we explore. In discovering the actualities of people's lives and experience we discover the lineaments of social relations in which our own lives are embedded. For this sociology, there is no outside, no Archimedean point from which a positionless account can be written. Writing the social is always from where people are. Discovery is of the relations that generate multiple sites of diverging and divergent sites that their dimensions, organisation, and organising powers can be brought into view.

In this way, she emphasises that it is not possible for researchers to stand apart from the truth of the phenomenon which they study, as normal science would have it. Rather, she helps us to see that the written texts which form the basis of the fruits of the researchers' labour are representations rather than truth or reality in their own right. Clegg and Hardy (1996:422) argue this point eloquently in the conclusion to their *Handbook of Organization Studies* by taking us both outside the discipline of organisation studies as well as outside the practice of research. Clegg and Hardy talk of the artist who 'maps' onto a canvas, but who is unable to render anything but a representation of the world as he sees it rather than the world as it actually is. Equally, they illustrate their point with the example of a map of a city by which the cartographer creates not the city itself but yet another form of representation. By drawing parallels between actors in various contexts grappling to show truth or reality as it really is through the use of a range of different media, but never attaining such a goal beyond creating a representation of truth, Clegg and Hardy challenge organisation researchers to interrogate their own understandings and sensemakings of their practices as researchers and indeed the

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discipline of research. In this way, the researcher comes to be seen as a researcher/author rather than an objective and removed commentator on reality and truth. Equally, research comes to be seen as yet another form of representation of reality or truth to which the researcher is inextricably linked rather than 'The Truth'.

Representations involve a form of translation. To elaborate on the concept of translation, Clegg and Hardy portray the meeting between speakers of French and English holding a conversation by translating their meaning into English and French and indeed creating their own version of a combination of the two - Franglais. The purpose of the scenario is to debunk the commonsense idea of a translation occurring non-problematically whereby one word in a particular language is displaced by an identical word in the other without interpretation or need for change. They maintain that a translation, between speakers of the same or different languages, requires a translation of meaning which occurs at a far deeper level than the non-problematic substitution of one word for another. Translation involves the social co-creation of meaning in context. Furthermore, it is a product of, and produces the agents engaged in the translation - their pasts, presents and futures as well as meanings past, present and future imbued in the language itself, creating both what is said and not said. Talking of change di Lampedusa (1960:40) puts it another way: 'If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change'.

That translations are problematic but also vital if learning is to occur is a standpoint which many learners of a foreign language, myself included, can appreciate. Indeed, at times on being tripped up by my 'faux amis' I have learnt lessons through bitter experience. At best, I have learnt such lessons by being the brunt of a good-humoured joke which nevertheless pointed out that, given the clumsiness of my translation attempts, I had not yet grasped the necessary rituals and rules of practice which would have afforded me the status of a legitimate rather than a peripheral member (Lave and Wenger 1991). But on persevering with my translation attempts, I have also experienced the exhilaration of beginning to see language construction and meaning making in the broader sense of learning a new 'language game' (Wittgenstein 1965); a game which allows my utterances to be accepted in ways which count as truth in contexts which I had previously not known.

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But as Clegg and Hardy remind us there are always 'gaps' in our 'maps' and by implication we can never reach a point where as individuals, groups, or indeed as organisations, we can say 'We have attained The Truth. We now have it in our grasp. We have arrived.' For truth making, its management as well as its representation is dynamic and contingent. Hence, for a translation of meaning to count as truth within, and also between particular communities, they suggest that it needs to be a representation which allows for ongoing conversations: conversations which open up debate rather than seal them off. Conversations which allow space for ambiguities rather than anchor words in certainties or so called banal 'truisms' with no space for alternative ways of thinking, talking and being. In his distinction between the modernist 'legislator' and postmodern 'interpreter' Bauman makes a similar point (Bauman 1987). For Bauman, the interpreter is concerned with 'translating statements, made within one communally based tradition, so that they can be understood within the system of knowledge based on another tradition'. He maintains that for this to work, there needs to be a 'deep engagement' with the 'alien system of knowledge from which the translation is to be made.' Attention is also given to the maintenance of a 'careful balance between the two conversing traditions' to ensure that the intended 'meaning' remains 'undistorted' and is 'understood' (Bauman 1987:5). Legislators, by contrast make (Bauman 1987:4-5):

authoritative statements which arbitrate in controversies of opinions and which select those opinions which, having been selected, become correct and binding. The authority to arbitrate is in this case legitimised by superior (objective) knowledge to which intellectuals have better access than the non-intellectual part of society. Access to such knowledge is better thanks to procedural rules which assure the attainment of truth, the arrival at valid moral judgment, and the selection of proper artistic taste. Such procedural rules have a universal validity, as do the products of their application. The employment of such procedural rules makes the intellectual professions (scientists, moral philosophers, aesthetes) collective owners of knowledge of direct and crucial relevance to the maintenance and perfection of the social world.... Like the knowledge that they produce, intellectuals are not bound by localised, communal traditions.

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They are, together with their knowledge extra-territorial. This gives them the right and the duty to validate (or invalidate) beliefs which may be held by various sections of the society.

It is in the spirit of 'opening up', rather than 'closing down' conversations about learning and work in and between universities and corporate organisations, by 'interpreting' rather than 'legislating' what counts as truth, in a 'postmodernist' rather than 'modernist' frame that I have chosen my own work on the WBL program; a postgraduate partnership program between the UTS and Australian Mutual Prudential (AMP), a large Australian corporate financial institution, as the site to examine a local story of truth management in situ in this research.

Writing the story of lessons learnt from one's own workplace is not new. I spend the weekend reading Machiavelli's attempt, which he drafted in July 1513. The text appears as a magnificent how-to-do-it book written on the topic of obtaining and maintaining power set in the Florentine court. Machiavelli's tale stands up against the passage of time. It does so because he is able to tell his tale through a mixture of gossip, 'objective' advice gained from experience and a wealth of examples drawn from antiquity as well as others from so-called 'modern times'.

He talks of the difficulties of being an innovator in an institutional context:

It should be borne in mind that there is nothing more difficult to handle, more doubtful of success, and more dangerous to carry through than initiating changes in a state's constitution. The innovator makes enemies of all those who prospered under the old order, and only lukewarm support forthcoming from those who would prosper under the new. Their support is lukewarm partly from fear of their adversaries, who have the existing laws on their side, and partly because men are generally incredulous, never really trusting new things unless they have tested them by experience. In consequence, whenever those who oppose the changes can do so, they attack

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vigorously, and the defense made by others is only lukewarm. So the innovator and his friends come to grief. (Machiavelli 2003:21)

On the perceived threats posed by working with people when one is perceived as not being part of the organisation's 'own forces' he writes:

Wise princes ... have always shunned auxiliaries and made use of their own forces. They have preferred to lose battles with their own forces than win them with others, in the belief that no true victory is possible with alien arms (Machiavelli 2003: 45).

And on the contextual knowledge a leader should commit to in order to ensure their survival:

.. he must never let his mind stray from military exercises, which he must pursue more vigorously in peace than in war. These exercises can be both physical and mental. As for the first, besides keeping his men well organised and trained, he must always be out hunting, so accustoming his body to the hardships and also learning some practical geography: how the mountains slope, how the valleys open, how the plains spread out. He must study rivers and marshes; and in all this he should take great pains. Such knowledge is useful in two ways; first, if he obtains a clear understanding of local geography he will have a better understanding of how to organise his defence; and in addition his knowledge of and acquaintance with local conditions will make it easy for him to grasp the features of any new locality with which he may need to familiarise himself (Machiavelli 2003:48).

His thoughts resonate with both the content and focus of my study.

I scan his biography. I marvel at his resilience when I learn the details of his life. He was ousted from office in the Florentine court in November 1512, tried for treason, tortured and incarcerated in February 1513, and after his release and retirement to his country house is able to set to work drafting *Il Principe* (The Prince) five months later.

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Insights into his frame of mind at the time of writing *Il Principe* are conveyed in the letters that he wrote to his friend and confidante, Vettori between 1513-1515. In one particularly famous letter he describes in detail the mundaneness of everyday village life. He tells of the petty gossip and disputes between neighbours for which his skills in diplomacy are now poorly deployed. He also outlines the idle pleasures which village life comprises, from which he distances himself but which nevertheless have become his lot: fishing, gambling as well as the reading of popular literature of the day. By contrast, his nights are dedicated to the higher purpose of writing lessons learnt from his workplace; a pursuit which he imbues with ritualistic and symbolic significance and in this way he clearly severs his nights from his day life as he bodily and mentally transports himself back to a different time and place where he is amongst his peers at court in current times as well as from antiquity (Bondanella and Musa 1979:69):

When evening comes, I return to my home, and I go into my study; and on the threshold, I take off my everyday clothes, which are covered with mud and mire, and I put on regal and curial robes; and dressed in a more appropriate manner I enter into the ancient courts of ancient men and am welcomed by them kindly, and there I taste the food that alone is mine, and for which I was born; and there I am not ashamed to speak to them, to ask them the reasons for their actions; and they, in their humanity, answer me; and for four hours I feel no boredom, I dismiss every affliction, I no longer fear poverty nor do I tremble at the thought of death: I become completely part of them. And as Dante says that knowledge does not exist without the retention of it by memory, I have noted down what I have learned from their conversation, and I composed a little book, *De principatibus*, where I delve as deeply as I can into thoughts on this subject, discussing what a principality is, what kinds there are, how they are acquired, how they are maintained, why they are lost.

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The writing of lessons learnt is clearly a way of making sense of his exclusion from the world of politics; a world which he yearns to re-enter. His 'little book' is a space in which he can retreat to reflect on the past as well as to forge a path for the future by demonstrating his superior analytical skills. A letter which he sent to the Magnificent Lorenzo dé Medici, to whom the book is dedicated, provides further evidence of his motivations for writing the text:

Men who are anxious to win the favour of a Prince nearly always follow the custom of presenting themselves to him with the possessions they value most, or with things they know especially please him; so we often see princes given horses, weapons, cloth of gold, precious stones, and similar ornaments worthy of their high position. Now I am anxious to offer myself to Your Magnificence with some token of my devotion to you, and I have not found among my belongings anything so dear to me or that I value as much as my understanding of the deeds of great men, won by me from a long acquaintance with contemporary affairs and a continuous study of the ancient world; these matter I have very diligently analysed and pondered for a long time, and now, having summarised them in a little book I am sending them to Your Magnificence.

It is in this letter of dedication that I feel even more profoundly the inextricable blend of ambition, humility, hope, failure, love, pride and anger born from failure and success that has driven Machiavelli on to write his beautiful little book. I feel the need to find out details of how the text was received by Magnificent Lorenzo dé Medici.

I am saddened to learn that Machiavelli's little book, so perfectly crafted, did not achieve the personal ends he desired. Machiavelli was not invited to return to public office until many years later, two years prior to his death in 1527. Is this a historical warning? A case story from antiquity which suggests that, as a career strategy, writing lessons learnt from one's workplace are better left unsaid?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It was only later, after I had written a significant portion of my own tale of lessons learnt from the workplace that I was also heartened by the realisation that had Machiavelli's career plan worked as he had hoped then he may not have extended himself beyond being an accomplished but forgotten bureaucrat, this realisation, therefore, clearly pointing to the tensions between the causality and contingency of life and its social effects.

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I meet a researcher who has done similar research work to that which I intend to write up. A key difference is that he writes about learning projects in other workplaces not his own. We talk over coffee. I fess up about why I want to do research on my own workplace and my fears in doing so:

JG Don't you think that it is a little problematic that as researchers we are prepared to go into other peoples' workplaces, critique them and their practices when we fear the consequences of doing the same in our own? Don't you think that we could take reflexivity further than we do by incorporating it into the way we conduct our own lives rather than just talk about it theoretically by applying it to make sense of the lives of others?

R I know what you mean. In the research centre in which I work it is really chaotic. Such rich data to draw on for a great Foucauldian study. I would like to do it.... But, it's career suicide. You can't go there. I think Bourdieu did such a study. But that was when he was already the head of a department. You can only do such a thing when you are at the top. I have to reapply for my academic position in a few months. I can't put people in my university off side.

The story of WBL that I tell is a personal tale; one which attempts to reconcile the lessons that I learnt from the workplace with those that I learnt from others. It will engage in exploring official and unofficial stories of what counts as truth. In adopting a personal approach to the story telling I interrogate the tensions that the role of a researcher entails through the practice of 'epistemic reflexivity' (Bourdieu 1992); a position that acknowledges that the researcher plays an active role in constructing how truth comes to be seen. Such a practice involves the researcher analysing her own intellectual and value position within the research field. Equally, the reflexive approach to the role of researcher in the field is congruent with

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one of the major tenets of this research, namely that 'no knowledge is neutral' (Jermier 1998:238). As Game (1991:8) puts it in her analysis of Australia's Bondi Beach as a 'social text', I 'make no claim to being the best or correct reading; on the contrary, one of the capital concerns here is to develop a form of analysis that invites further rewritings'. Similarly, Calas and Smirchich (1999) in their discussion of the role of researcher as author comment that:

The author is understood as embedded in a social context and in relation to others. He or she is an "author function" (Foucault, 1977), whose name merely operates to authorise another version of the tradition within the community.... The document is meaningful only because it can be read by others, and once this happens, the author becomes just one interpreter among other readers.

I do not present myself as a disinterested actor in this space. There is no pretence of conducting 'objective' research, of writing from nowhere, as no one.

I have hesitated about writing this piece for many months. The hesitation was frustrating as well as useful. First, I needed some distance from the events that I have experienced in the WBL program drawing to a close. Distance means the passing of time, to develop the ability to analyse and reflect as though one is above a phenomenon not swimming in its midst. It may also mean to walk away and to forget. But simultaneously because the phenomenon from which I want to distance myself is also the focus of my research, paradoxically, I need to get closer to it. I am required to sharpen my gaze upon it. My hesitation is confounded by the fact that when I started my research about WBL it was going to be about how 'truth is talked into being': a position which was perhaps more personally, professionally and also institutionally acceptable and comfortable. However, now nearly three years later, given the turn in events, with the closing of WBL I need to rewrite what I had written to make sense of the more compelling question of how truth is both 'talked out of' as well as 'into being'. Furthermore, the hesitation also allows me the time to weigh up the risks of choosing to tell such a story. I acknowledge that I am not embarking on the process innocently, but rather knowingly, as an active constructor of truth.

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The methodological journey that has taken me to this point, where I have chosen to tell the story of lessons learnt from the workplace in this way, with its focus on the everyday, has been long. Its destination is far from where I had started out. At the start I was convinced that the well-worn path that other qualitative researchers had travelled was also my path. Asking people interview questions based on a structured common interview schedule for each of the identified stakeholders with an emphasis on gaining qualitative data from open-ended questions rather than closed quantitative ones was the extent of my methodological problematisation. But in practice, although well crafted and perhaps exactly because they were well crafted, the outcomes of the pilot interviews were disappointing.

The outcomes were disappointing because they did not produce the same rich results that I have lived, experienced and known as a gut-feeling day after day, for the past three and a half years as I have gone about my everyday practice interacting with others, university players as well as corporate partners, having 'normal' and 'strange' (Weick 1979:200) conversations. Such conversations have produced laughter, anger, silent moments, fear, confusion and clarity, questions as well as answers. Nor did the data produced from my interviews convey the understandings which I gained from observing the actions of players in the everyday milieu, from which I, as well as others, created multiple meanings with or without words as we made choices which allowed us to go on. Such choices were based both on what we saw to be at stake and not at stake for us in our field. They were representations of who we are, and are not, as well as, who we are seen to be. Each choice was shaped by, and shaped, decisions made about what we do and do not do.

Linked to my theorising of why the interviewees did not provide insights into what is going on in the same way as the micro stories I have observed in the everyday is my reflection on the significance of the fact that many of the interviewees concluded their interviews – once my digital recorder was switched off – with the words 'I hope I have given you what you wanted' or 'I hope my comments will be useful for your research'. Although such words can be excused as pleasantries, they are imbued with a consciousness of the interviewees' ways of seeing themselves and me in the interview as role players engaged in an all too familiar game where what is at stake for me as well as for them, is the accomplishing of the interview as a social phenomenon. Moreover, the interview activity they engaged in was further removed from that

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which is at stake for them in their day-to-day life than it was for me as the researcher and thus seemed to have the effect that they 'packaged information' in a certain way, one which they thought would best serve my needs, rather than their own ends.

Additionally, there was the abstract nature of the questions which explored contextual elements of space, time, and discourses as well as attempting to examine agency within the field with its elements of identity, practices, capital and power. Although expressed in everyday language, the questions were framed generically, drawn from a common interview schedule that I intended to use with all interviewees. The questions were at times met with responses such as 'I do not really think about that', 'There are no problems with that here' or equally seemed to devolve into listings of abstract traits even when I asked for specific examples. There was no telling whether the interviewee really had not thought about it, or deemed that answering the questions in such a non-committal way was more personally, socially and institutionally acceptable. Interestingly, Lee and Williams (1999:11) define stories which are characterised by the respondents giving 'brief, unconflicted, and unproblematic accounts' in response to the researchers' inquiry as 'thin stories'. They go on to argue that such accounts are not to be attributed so much to the interviewee not having thought about the phenomenon but rather that 'stability, seamlessness and coherence of identity is achieved through the psychodynamic processes of disavowal and forgetting of contradictions or tensions with the self.'

The dissatisfaction with the data drawn from my pilot interview study and the methodological implications which I chose to draw from them appear to be similar to those which Moerman (1974) encountered in his seminal study of the Lue tribe in Thailand. Silverman (2001:10) documents the methodological implications of the study by commenting that Moerman's attempts to 'locate a people in a classificatory scheme .... (with) questions like "How do you recognise a member of your tribe?"' which resulted in respondents 'providing a whole list of traits that constituted their tribe and distinguished them from their neighbours. At the same time, Moerman realised that such a list was, in purely logical terms endless.'

Similarly, Clegg (1975:83-84) in his study of *Power, Rule and Domination*, with its empirical data drawn from the study of a construction site in Northern England, reflects on the

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complexities of gaining data on a phenomenon such as power through direct questioning. In his own words he explains the dilemma:

Few people on site seemed to question this state of affairs.....'Didn't I belong to a pyramid as well?' I was asked. Well yes I did...Nobody could offer any reasons why organisations should be like that. We just knew they were, and that to question this was to invite suspicion of one's intentions. Still, I persisted in sampling opinions about the structure of the organisation only to be told more or less the same thing each time. The organisation was a pyramid. The project manager controlled it. He in turn was managed from the Company Offices.

To persist in asking questions with such obvious answers is to risk censure of oneself – oneself as a sociologist. A self indistinguishable from that of the fool – one who labours the obvious.... And so I ceased to question of members what members never question of themselves. Except that I was later to do this – but not directly.

Paradoxically, the interview extract could also in itself be seen to be a manifestation of power in that in this account we can see that the interviewees had turned the question about power onto the researcher himself and thus had asked him to challenge the use of power not in their own work space of the construction site but rather in the researcher's own world – that of the university. It is an everyday attempt to reposition as well as to normalise. For the interviewees, it is, arguably, also another example of 'telling a thin story' (Lee and Williams 1999:11).

Reflection on such seminal studies helped me to frame what I was experiencing as a 'methodological dilemma' which required a deep rethinking of my approach rather than a 'technical error' which could be addressed by further refinement of my interview schedule. As these researchers had found before me, a possible way out of such a dilemma is to engage in an inquiry into the everyday. Approaching the phenomenon in this way required framing the

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phenomenon which forms the focus of the inquiry within broad questions such as 'Who are the people and what are they doing?' as well as 'What is going on here?' However, rather than posing such questions in abstracted, direct and de-contextualised ways the approach involved seeking the answers to these questions through the examination of the mundane 'micro stories of the everyday'. By shifting my research in this way, I was drawing on the wisdom of as well as seeking membership in a new tribe of researchers who named themselves in various ways. Some see themselves as ethnographers (Van Maanen 1988; Denzin 1997), others as ethnomethodologists (Garfinkel 1964; Sacks 1974), some as institutional ethnographers (Smith 1999; Campbell and Gregor 2002), but also autoethnologists (Hayano 1979; Ellis and Bochner 1996), and organisational storytellers (Boje 1995; Czarniawska 1994).

The key tenets of such research are inscribed in the etymology of the derivatives of the term *ethnography*; *ethno*, meaning 'culture' and *graph* meaning 'writing'. Ethnographies are based on observational work with strong links to anthropology; a field of study which involves immersion in the ways of a particular people for an extended period of time. de Laine (2000:17) explains this as a research approach whereby the researcher 'wants to be *with*, rather than *look at* the other.' Hence, ethnography is a practice which involves the 'writing up of what and how the people are doing what they are doing'.

The ethnographers are committed to looking at the small things in life. They do not seek to create data as a separate event but rather draw it out from 'naturally occurring' everyday activities. As Garfinkel (1967:iv) puts it:

Any setting organises its activities to make its properties as an organised environment of practical activities detectable, countable, recordable, reportable, tell-a-story-aboutable, analysable - in short *accountable*.

In his seminal text on ethnomethodology, Garfinkel shows us the methods that members of the same grouping have by which they sanction the other members' conduct. For the ethnomethodologists the crucial question is not how people respond to the social order and its normative constraints but rather how that order is brought about in a specific situation,

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through activities located in a specific time and place. Hence, to understand the orderliness of social life one does not need abstraction and aggregation, but instead one must turn to the fine-grained details of moment-to-moment existence and their organisation.

Ethnomethodology is oriented towards examining the role of talk and text in the daily accomplishment of actions. The ethnographers treat conversations in any given setting as 'media for accounts' (Munro and Mouritsen 1996:2). They challenge the view that everyday conversations are merely mundane - devoid of meaning. Rather, they suggest a closer scrutiny of everyday conversations with an emphasis on how texts render members' actions accountable. As Munro and Mouritsen (1996:2) go on to explain:

Accountability is never just a question of its participants moving each other about in face-to-face confrontations. Inanimate scraps of paper or silent computer print-outs, albeit implicitly, seem to elicit accounts from people as they go about their work.

As researchers, we are interested in how these materials and devices enter into accountability relationships. And as intermediaries, we want to include them as part of our understanding of accountability.....

Sacks's published lecture series (1992) provide insight into the diversity of everyday sites in which, in painstaking detail, he examined everyday dialogue. Sacks generally used transcripts of recorded data because it allowed him to transcribe every word, hesitation and breath - considering both what was and was not said and indeed - how it was said.

The significance of such studies is that they provided methodological insights into how everyday talk can be analysed; however ethnomethodological research practices have also been the subject of critique. Czarniawska, (1996), citing Latour (1997), argues that the limitations of the ethnomethodologists' work is that they were able to explain 'sociality' but not 'society'. Similarly, Wetherall (1998:408) in critiquing conversation analysis and poststructuralism comments:

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If the problem with post-structuralist analysis is that they rarely focus on actual interaction, then the problem with conversation analysis is that they rarely raise their eyes from the next turn in the conversation, and further, this is not an entire conversation or sizeable slice of social life but usually a tiny fragment.

Such criticisms point to the so-called 'so what factor' in that ethnomethodology focuses on the detail of organisational life without looking to the broader societal context in which such detail is embedded. The criticism suggests that it is useful to combine the textual and conversational analysis proposed by the ethnomethodologists with the work of sociologists such as Smith as well as the methods of archeology and genealogy proposed by Foucault. In this way, as researchers we are better able to engage in a 'theoretical sampling' of critical everyday conversations and other incidents which illustrate more powerfully the social dimensions of the phenomenon which is the focus of our study. As Campbell and Gregor (2002) comment, although it is vital in ethnography that one describes what people are doing, one needs to move beyond the level of description to locate such events in relation to how they are socially organised. In defining social organisation they draw on the works of the feminist sociologist Dorothy Smith who puts it that:

The social arises in people's activities and through the ongoing and purposeful concerting and coordinating of those activities. Social life is not chaotic but is instead organised to happen as it does. What Smith calls the social relations of everyday life actually organise what goes on. People's own decisions and actions and how they are coordinated with outside events are part of social relations. It is the interplay of social relations, of people's ordinary activities being concerted and coordinated purposefully, that constitutes "social organisation" (Campbell and Gregor 2003:27).

A part of this analysis of how things are socially organised is attention to the feelings and thoughts of people as they are doing what they are doing. In this respect feminist methodologies challenge conventional research notions that 'subjective and emotional

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responses are irrelevant or disruptive of epistemology, academic analysis, interpretation and theorising.’ (de Laine 2000:151). Indeed, as I embarked on the process of writing organisational stories of lessons learnt from my own workplace, which includes gossip, speculations and intrigue and their analysis, as well as an examination of how they are socially organised, I also explored my own feelings about my role as a researcher and questioned the nature of the knowledge that I am authorised to construct. The reflections became part of the ‘story behind the story’ of WBL. In this way, my thinking about why and how I am using various theoretical and methodological approaches becomes clearer in that I am combining the ‘small stories’ of the everyday by drawing on the methods of the ethnographers with the social concerns of postmodernists such as Foucault and Latour, as well as highlighting research as ‘emotional work’ which feminist sociologists such as Smith have helped me to understand.

Akin to various postmodern ethnographers (Clifford 1983; Crapanzo 1980; Tedlock 1983), I attempt to evoke potent fragments of text which aim to rupture as well as represent commonsense understandings of reality: so-called ‘partial truths’. Clifford (1983:6) even goes so far as to talk of ethnographies as fictions:

To call ethnographies fictions may raise empiricist hackles. But the word as commonly used in recent textual theory has lost its connotation of falsehood, of something merely opposed to truth. It suggests the partiality of cultural and historical truths, the ways they are systematic and exclusive. Ethnographic writings can properly be called fictions in the sense of “something made or fashioned”.

Although now satisfied that I have found ‘the right niche’ to locate theoretically and methodologically the work that I am doing, increasingly I feel renewed unease in telling my story in this way. For although the analysis of everyday encounters appears to produce a rich account of the phenomenon by seeming to show things more authentically than through more contrived data collection techniques, such as interviews, questionnaires or surveys, such research is also possibly more apt to produce ethical dilemmas. Whether the researcher has the authority to consider such accounts as data which are within the boundaries of that which can be retold becomes problematic. For selecting data from observation of ‘what happens as

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part of the everyday' is clearly very broad and therefore, by its very nature, not as bounded as conventional data collection techniques whereby the researcher and respondent are both conscious of the purpose for which such activity is being used and as such will construct both what they are prepared to say and not say in such fora. Indeed, my choice of data drawn from the everyday seems, on reflection, to be designed to piece in retrospect the ceremonial façade that other research protocols tactfully maintain. Increasingly, I found myself drawn to the ellipses, slippages, stage frights and insecurities - the breaches – of everyday normalcy.

Being an 'insider' also presents ethical dilemmas in that one has access to information and indeed knows things of relevance to one's research because of membership groups and identities gained through other aspects of ones being than being a researcher. As de Laine (2000:17) suggests, ethics in research extends well beyond adherence to ethical guidelines in that 'ethical codes and guidelines are by necessity generalisations and therefore lack the complexities and specificity of any given ethical or moral dilemma'. Thus, she sees ethics in research emerging far more from the complexities of 'overlapping roles, relationships and the interests, expectations, allegiances and loyalties of parties concerned'. In a similar vein, she argues that 'in the immediacy of personal involvement in a particular ethical dilemma, situational or contextual, personal elements come into play (value, ideals, moral professional and personal standards, intuition and feelings) ' (2000:17). For in writing up accounts of one's everyday experiences, in addition to being a researcher one is simultaneously also a worker, learner, friend, confidante etc.

Moreover, my unease is confounded by the fact that, as a researcher at the beginning of the twenty-first century as opposed to one in the 1960s or 1970s, when many seminal ethnographic studies were conducted, ethics requirements have changed the possibilities of what are to count as appropriate and inappropriate ways of gaining knowledge. Indeed, as de Laine (2000:16) argues changing norms and practices in regard to ethics in research are in themselves socially organised such that they can be seen to be attributed to social phenomena such as:

The rise of feminism and feminist scholarship, consciousness with the rights of the individual; the emergence of critical and participatory

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approaches in social science research; and the establishment of ethics committees within various disciplines, university departments and research institutions.

My ethical dilemma is akin to that which Schwandt (1995:19) describes when talking of the 'moral passage' with reference to Goffman's concept of the 'moral career'; 'the regular series of changes ... in the person's self and his framework of imagery for judging himself and others' (Goffman 1961). Schwandt (1995) puts it that the interpretivist inquirer generally adopts one of two paths in their moral career. A first option may be to adopt a universalistic, and impersonal ethical model. A second, which seems to describe the 'moral career' which I am grappling with, is where 'problems are not conceptualised as having solutions so much as being lived; they draw on the intellectual faculties and the passions. The mind, emotions and feelings come together in the thinking person when organising connections between self and other and the world when reflecting on what it is 'right' to do and 'good' to be as a social inquirer.

A further dilemma in telling those parts of the story – the gossip, the speculations, the intrigue - that are generally left out of a published written research account, is that it may seduce the reader into seeing the account to be more 'truthful' than that achieved through the use of more conventional forms of 'objective' academic writing. Equally, the risk is that what is presented by the writer and understood by the reader will be seen as the 'complete story'. However as Foucault reminds us confession is (1981:60):

So deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us; on the contrary, it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, 'demands' only to surface; that if it fails to do so, this is because a constraint holds it in place, the violence of a power weighs it down....

In this light, 'truth telling' can also be seen as another textual technique, as a highly crafted form of 'spin' which through confession has the effect of powerfully constructing the writer and the context she depicts, as well, drawing the reader in by requiring complicity through the

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act of writing, reading and keeping 'secrets'. Furthermore, it is also commonplace for confessional accounts to be criticised for self-indulgence and self-absorption (Fabian 1991; Okely 1992). However, other mainstream ethnographic sociologists, notably De Certeau (1984), Denzin (1997) and Van Maanen (1995), comment on the contribution of confessional studies in that they highlight the everyday struggles encountered in the field as the researcher goes about her craft.

To assist me with the task of making authorship transparent and engaging in the 'truths' as produced by myself and others in my community I draw on various data from the everyday. Data include everyday conversations, observations, official documents, emails, books, notes, and visual material as well as thoughts recorded in a learning journal which I have maintained for the purpose of documenting my reflections on my work and research. It is all data which is part of the everyday, things I find and connect with – at times by serendipity and at others through explicit searching and probing. Equally, the 'truths' of lessons learnt from WBL emerge from the writing process as Lyotard (as quoted in Bennington 1988:103-104) says:

One writes before knowing what there is to say and how to say it, to find out if possible... Obviously the only interesting thing for the philosopher to think what he can manage to think: without that ... I wonder what the hell he'd be doing.

Richardson (2000:923-924) explores this idea further in her article 'Writing: a Method of inquiry' whereby she argues that:

I consider writing as a method of inquiry, a way of finding out about yourself and your topic. Although we usually think about writing as a mode of "telling" about the social world, writing is not just a mopping-up activity at the end of a research project. Writing is also a way of "knowing" – a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable...When we view writing as a method ... we experience "language-in-use," how we

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“word the world” into existence (Rose, 1992). And then we “reword” the world, erase the computer screen, check the thesaurus, move a paragraph, again and again. This “worded world” never accurately, precisely completely captures the studied world, yet we persist in trying. Writing as a method of inquiry honors and encourages the trying, reorganising it as embryonic to the full-fledged attention to the significance of language.

Writing as a method of inquiry, then, provides a research practice through which we can investigate how we construct the world, ourselves, and others, and how standard objectifying practices of social science unnecessarily limit us and social science. Writing as method does not take writing for granted, but offers multiple ways to learn to do it and to nurture the writer.

As I write and reflect I am prompted to ask additional contextually specific questions of various players to further develop the storylines. In this way, I construct multiple storylines – juxtaposing authentic documents with my own stories as well as those from others. To write my own stories I use a technique which Ellis and Bochner (2000:752) refer to as ‘emotional recall’. The practice involves the researcher revisiting the scene emotionally and attempting to move both in and out of the experience to analyse the personal details of the scene as well as the cultural or social implications. In addition one explores how it may appear to others. In this way, a web of intricate ambiguities and various ‘truths’ shape my representation of the story of WBL.

Writing a story which includes the gossip, speculation and the intrigue is seductive for the writer because it allows the representation of truth as a contested terrain. It also allows the telling of some truths, which are marginalised and as such are not generally told (Richardson 1990:25). Furthermore, it allows reflection on and sensemaking of one’s own experience. Finally, there is the buzz of writing a text, that works on the boundaries and as such has elements of the freedom gained from the disruption of a reality previously having been seen to be an established and ‘taken-for-granted’ truth. It aims to write of the events and different

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interpretations at times when thought is open and therefore not yet closed down and settled. From this is gained knowledge from experience: an exhilaration of pushing thought and ideas to places where one (and perhaps others) had not been before. Coupled with this is also the strong emotion gained from pushing oneself into situations of discomfort as well as personal danger: the point being that when one takes the leap from one's comfort zone and is free falling one does not know at what level or at what place one will end up.

In my case, the risks are that I am on contract. It is a vulnerable position. I fear that the story I tell may not please all readers. Even in using particular protocols to shroud certain details, such as not mentioning names, particular places, or events, there is still the risk that people think they recognise themselves in the storyline and see the story I write as far too radical a departure from the 'official story' of WBL. It also seems to be particularly dangerous to choose to critique the very institution in which I am seeking membership given the nature of the text that I am writing, a PhD, which is in itself an 'important element of the rite of passage into the tribe' and into 'academic life' (Baxter and Fox 2002:5-6). Bailey (1977 quoted in Becher 1989) provides insight into the significance of describing the academy as 'tribal' by putting it that:

Each tribe has a name and a territory, settles its own affairs, goes to war with the others, has a distinct language or at least a distinct dialectic and a variety of ways of demonstrating its apartness from others.

Furthermore, using what is seen to be the 'rite of passage' into the academy to write such a text is all the more confronting given my growing familiarity with the works of authors such as Sacks who have helped me to theorise how membership is both gained and denied.

A second case story from antiquity unfolds before my eyes, which tells of deeds in ancient Greece with outcomes even more dramatic than those which ensnared Machiavelli in the Florentine court of 1513. Socrates fell out of favour with his contemporaries in 399 BC for doing nothing other than asking about the obvious. He was tried by a jury of five hundred men, found guilty and put to death for crimes of abomination: of being a heretic, inciting the young,

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instigating the downfall of Athens by way of the ruinous Peloponnesian War, beleaguering the city with hurricanes and plague and so on. Is it plausible that such ferocious wrath was unleashed for the sole purpose of stemming an inquiring mind?

The significance of my musings about this shadowy figure from the past is that I draw a further alarming parallel between the image of Socrates wandering in the marketplaces of Ancient Greece asking difficult and unpopular questions designed to challenge the everyday sensemaking of all whom he met in his relentless pursuit of 'truth' with a further image from a more recent time and place; the ethnographers Garfinkel and Sacks, whose thinking and methods have informed my own research approach and who worked tirelessly on a similar life project in California during the heady days of the late 1960s to early 1970s. Similarities between Socrates' work and that of Garfinkel and Sacks were manifest not so much in the details of their methods or the content of their inquiries but rather primarily in their intent to disrupt the sense of what is normal and taken for granted. For Socrates as well as for Garfinkel and Sacks their 'breach activities' were aimed directly at drawing each of their subjects into their inquiry with the purpose of altering the way they thought and lived and in this way to awaken their subjects from their sleepy repose as they went about their everyday lives with neither thought nor questions about the smaller details by which they were constituted nor for the connection between such details and larger social issues. Additionally, for Socrates, as with the ethnographers and ethnomethodologists such thinking was a way of life, a method to be lived by and through rather than a methodology which did not extend beyond the pages of a polished research text. Furthermore, a worrying similarity between the works of Socrates, Garfinkel and Sacks is the social effect they produced in that they were dismissed by many in both ancient and more recent times as the troublesome and nonsensical antics of provocateurs.

The issue then in writing and living my own version of such a text is to craft it in such a way that it operates at multiple levels so as to rouse my own thoughts and actions from their sleepy repose, as well as those of the folk that I encounter in the field as we go about this inquiry as 'research in action'. Furthermore, given that the text is written as a doctoral thesis it also represents my attempt to balance the sensemaking of my everyday world of work and life with my appreciation of what constitutes 'stretching the boundaries' rather than violating

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the rules of that which counts as an academic piece of work. As Brew (1998:38) puts it in discussing the writing of doctoral work:

If someone breaks the rules it generally occurs within a wider framework of rules, one rule being that it is okay to break the rules as long as you can justify it; in other words as long as you adhere to other rules. What is not acceptable is to break all the rules or to break certain identifiable key ones. To do so is to risk non-acceptance.

Latour (1987a:1) provides a model for writing research which 'stretches the boundaries' of what counts as research without violating its rules. In his method we see traces of Foucault's genealogies in that both researchers are interested in going back to the past with the purpose of disrupting the idea that that which we now consider an established truth was always seen as such. Latour refers to his research method as 'opening Pandora's black box'. By entitling his research approach in this way, he makes reference to the ancient Greek myth whereby Mercury leaves a beautiful box with Pandora and her husband for safekeeping. Pandora, consumed with curiosity about what the box contains, opens it, and in so doing, unwittingly unleashes the 'evils' of the world. Confused by the misery it causes, Epithemeus her husband opens the box a second time. His actions release 'hope'. Thus, suggesting that both 'evil' and 'hope' exist alongside each other in humanity. Latour, does not make explicit reference to the myth in his research beyond using it as the title for the introduction to his book *Science in Action* (1987a). Instead within the text of the introduction he draws on the more contemporary usage of the term 'black boxing' used by cyberneticians who 'draw a little box around that which they need to know nothing but its input and output' (1987a:1) 'whenever a piece of machinery or a set of commands is too complex' (Latour 1987a:1). Latour further examines the consequences of opening a black box in that (1987a:4):

Uncertainty, people at work, decisions, competition, controversies are what one gets when making a flashback from certain, cold, unproblematic black boxes to their recent past. If you take two pictures, one of the black box and one of the open controversies, they are utterly different. They are as different as the two sides, one lively,

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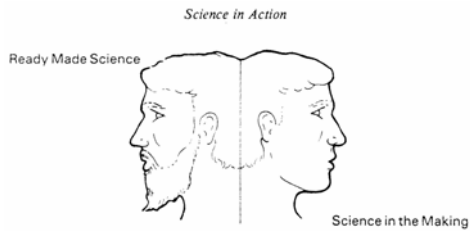


the other severe, of a two-faced Janus. 'Science in the making' on the right side; 'all made science' or 'ready made science' on the other.

It is an approach which requires attention to the minor details, the analysis of things that may have at one point been forgotten or remained unearthed which, as Bergson (1950: 173) puts it, requires the researcher to adopt a certain stance with respect to the past and the present:

The truth is that we shall never reach the past unless we frankly place ourselves within it. Essentially virtual, it can not be known as something past unless we follow and adopt the movement by which it expands into a present image, thus emerging from obscurity into the light of the day.

Latour illustrates his method of expanding the past into the present by way of the two heads of Janus which punctuates the introduction to his text *Science in Action* (1987a:4-12):



Janus' first dictum:



Janus' second dictum:



Janus' third dictum:



Janus' fourth dictum:



### Latour - Science in Action (1987a:4-12)

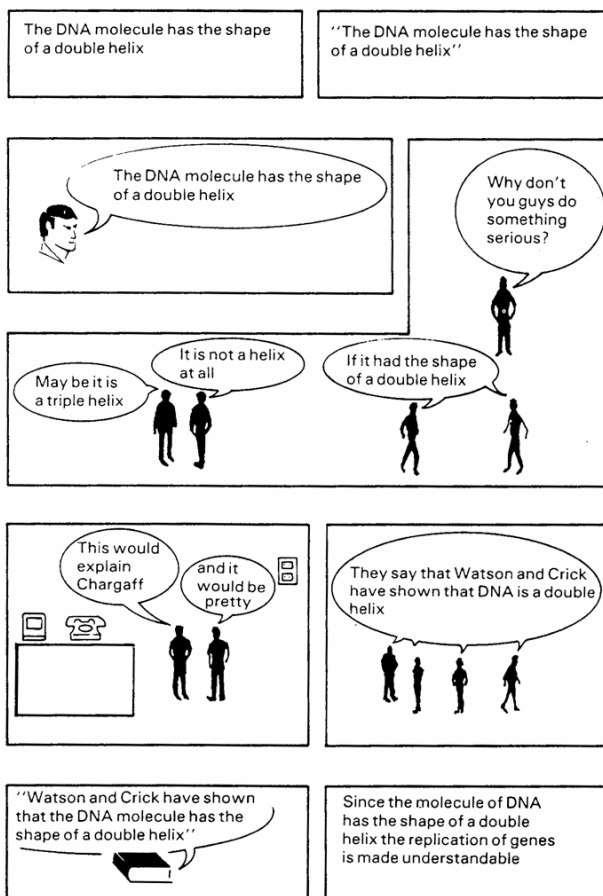
Using the example of Watson and Crick's landmark paper on the model of DNA in 1953, in the form of a comic strip, Latour chooses to use the right hand of the storyline to trace the movement of past conceptions of 'science in the making' and its relationship to the present construction and representation of 'ready-made science' in the left hand of the storyline (1987a:14):

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**Comic strip (Latour 1987a:14) Science in the Making**

I am intrigued by my reading of Latour. I like the way that he storyboards various versions of the story of DNA in a series of cartoons and text and weaves the stories into a theoretical discussion about how truth construction works. He describes the thinking behind the comic strip as follows (Latour 1987a:15):

We start with a text book sentence which is devoid of any traces of fabrication, construction or ownership; we then put it in quotation marks, surround it with a bubble, place it in the mouth of someone who speaks; then we add to this speaking character another character to whom it is speaking. Then we place all of them in a

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specific situation, somewhere in time and space, surrounded by equipment, machines and colleagues; then when the controversy heats up a bit we look at where the disputing people go and what sort of new elements they fetch, recruit or seduce in order to convince their colleagues; then we see how the people being convinced stop discussing with one another; situations, localisations, then people start being slowly erased; on the last picture we see a new sentence without any quotation marks, written in a text book similar to the one we started with in the first picture.

In this way, Latour writes an account of how Watson and Crick's version of truth became seen as such through engagement in various language games - the controversies and contestations which precede the acceptance and legitimisation of truth. His account includes moments when multiple voices are 'allowed to speak from their own realities' (Smith 1999:153). Such voices have 'their own authority, others might not agree or believe, but had to attend to what was said and take it seriously' (Smith 1999:153).

However, in the account we see evidence too of what Latour, the author, chooses to write in and what to leave out of such a representation of the local stories and contestations that surround the story of DNA. For example, Rosalind Franklin features not as the character I had become familiar with from various feminists' 'local stories' dedicated to the aim of 'writing in' the important role played by women of science whom they argue had been 'written out' of more established accounts (Maddox 2002). From Latour's account, we do not learn of Franklin's contribution to science as the only crystallographer at the time capable of creating a photographic image of DNA, nor of the significance of the image to the formulation of Watson and Cricks' own model, nor that the image was taken from her laboratory and given to Watson and Cricks without her knowledge. The only reference to Franklin in Latour's account describes her as 'stubbornly convinced earlier that it was a three-strand helix' (Latour 1987a:13). Thus, in Latour's account we come to see Franklin as a protagonist who made a technical error and by implication as one who had stood in the way of the progress of science. Through this example, which compares feminist and non-feminist perspectives of the story,

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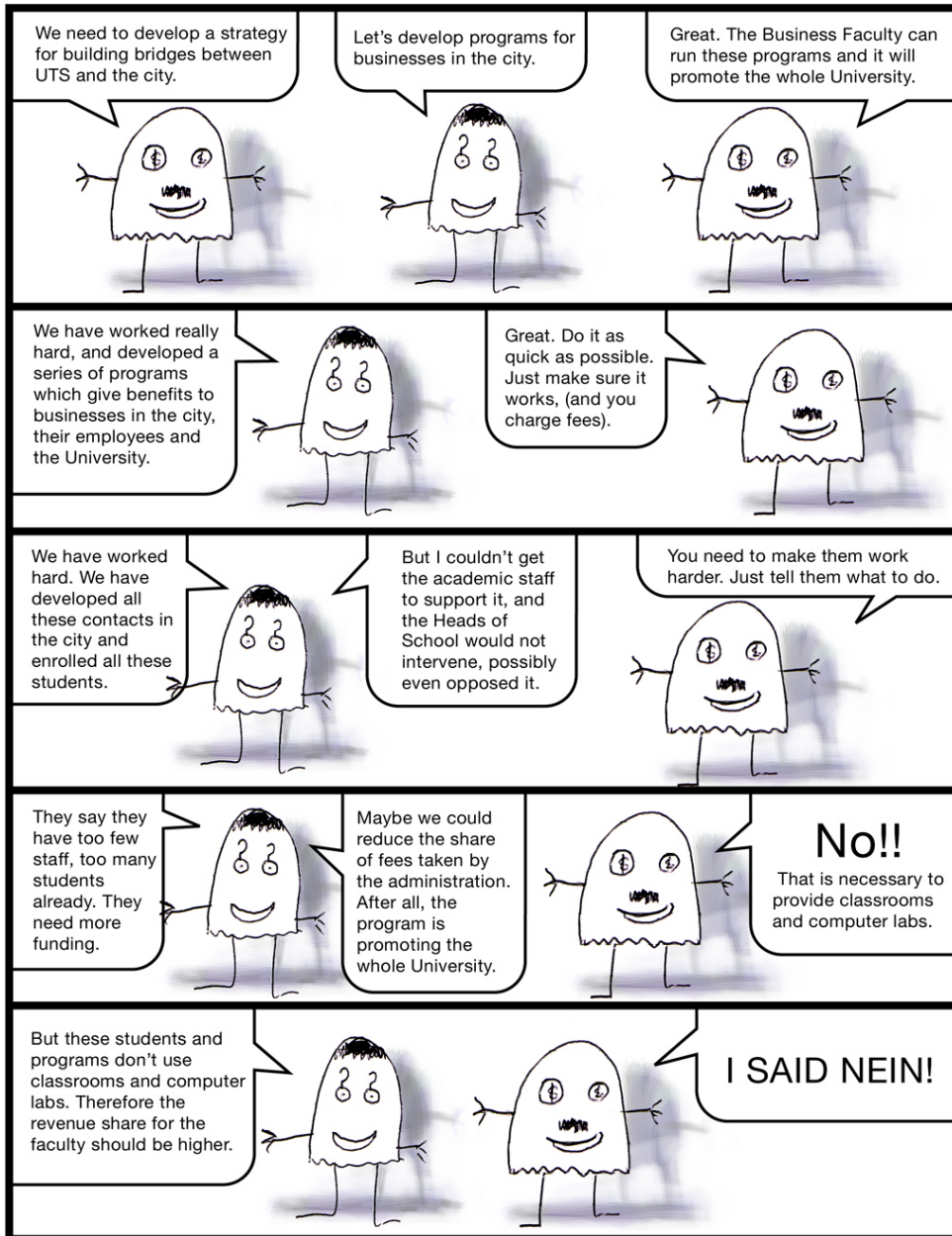
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we see that different 'facts' of the story are drawn on or left out. It reminds us that (Flax 1992:452):

Truth claims are in principle undecidable outside or between discourses. This does not mean that there is no truth but rather that truth is discourse dependent. Truth claims can be made by those who accept the rules of a discourse or who are willing to bridge across several. However, there is no trump available which we can rely on to solve all disputes. Prior agreement on rules, not the compelling power of objective truth, makes conflict resolution possible.

I shared the article with some key players within both the university and the corporate organisation, AMP. I asked various of these players to draw a comic strip of WBL as Latour did for the story of DNA and in this way to surface some of the contention in different truths. Some of the comic strip artists have been directly involved in WBL; others have watched the game being played out at the sidelines. All their stories make up the story of WBL.

Exhibit A

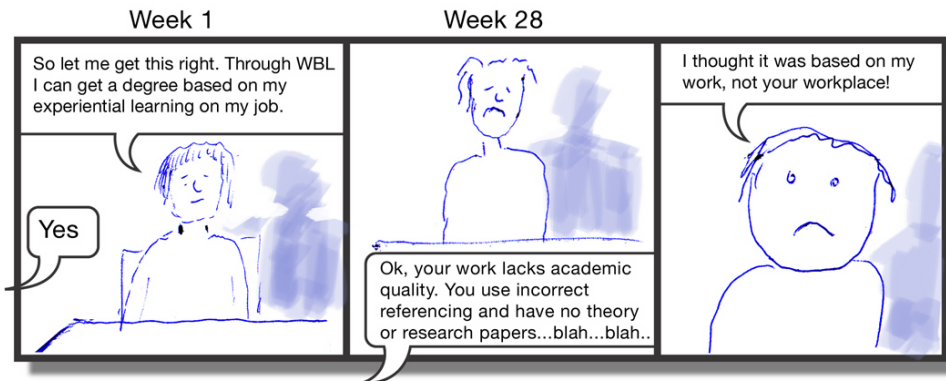


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## Exhibit B



## Exhibit C

### WBL is DEAD



I compare the comic strips that various people have drawn about the contestations surrounding WBL. I speculate as to why people have represented their ideas about WBL in the way that they have chosen to. As with my analysis of Latour's account of the contestations surrounding the construction of the 'truth of DNA', in constructing the 'truths' of WBL it is as important to think of what various people have left out and why as it is to seek explanations of what they have represented in their drawings. Equally, I begin to speculate why WBL did not achieve the state of 'rest' in life which it appears to have achieved in death whereby truth is

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able to 'hold'. Some stories, such as that which Exhibit A represents, focus on the failure of WBL to achieve the financial return it was designed to gain for the university. Other stories, alluded to in Exhibit B, highlight the different expectations that various stakeholders held and in particular the tensions that a translation of different knowledges produces within the academy and the workplace. Yet other stories are integrally linked with the membership groups that WBL involves and the blame that may be attributed to various parties. I develop some probing questions based on the analysis of each person's comic strip. The data which I collect becomes part of the story I tell of WBL.

From last year's reading, fragments of another of Latour's tales, *Aramis: Or the Love of Technology* (1996), resurface and enter my everyday thoughts. The story of the French automated train system fraught by the complexities of innovation takes on renewed relevancy. Given my changed work-life circumstances, I felt the need to read it again. I read it on the bus on the way to work and find that its storyline slips effortlessly into conversations that I have with various people throughout the day. It appears that everyone has their own Aramis tale to tell:



### **Aramis tale one: The Engineer's spin**

I am sitting in a campus café. I meet an engineer. He is fascinated by the design of pumps. He talks of creating a pump which is appropriate for our fragile environment. He is grappling with issues of salinity that plague our territory. From listening to him I begin to see the world in a new light. I learn that trees are like pumps. I listen to his metaphors and then slip my own story of Aramis – my current fascination - into his tale. I think that Latour's story may resonate with him. I am interested to see what spin he will put on it and the connections with his own knowledge and experience that he will make. He nods and then begins with a new tale, that of Thomas Midgley.

It appears that Thomas Midgley was an inventor beyond his own time – he created ethyl gasoline (leaded petrol) which achieved the ends he desired – of creating a more efficient fuel to drive the wheels of industry – but nevertheless at a later time in history leaded petrol was of course called an abomination for the risk to health and environment. Once a success, later a failure against other criteria.

Midgley was also responsible for creating dichlorofluoromethanes (Freons) used in refrigeration units which aren't toxic at all. So they served us long and well. However, later, long after his own death, we found that they were eating up our protective ozone layer! There is also the joke that he is one inventor who actually made his mark on the universe!

His death completes the farce that was his life. Highly symbolically he died of lead poisoning (an illness in life which he attempted to keep a secret to protect the beauty of his first major invention) and he was even entangled and strangled in a contraption which was of his own making - a harness to help him get out of bed!

### **Aramis tale two: An Aramis tale from the art world**

A second Aramis tale comes to me by way of a chance meeting. I am shown a reproduction of a painting of Judith from the Bible severing the head of Holofernes, a painting borrowed from the Uffizi, Florence and part of the recent Caravaggio exhibition at the New South Wales Art Gallery.

Artemesia Gentileschi (1593-1651/52) was born of the well known Roman artist, Orazio Gentileschi (1563-1639). The power of Artemesia's work is attributed to the trauma of her alleged rape in 1612 – the violence of her paintings seen as a kind of therapeutic revenge substitute?

A detective story. That seems to be the genre I need. When I first read of *Aramis*, of course WBL still had a future. It was a fraught future, however; for what project is the future not fraught? Now that WBL has been seen to fail, the story seems even more apt. A detective story of 'who killed WBL?' The thought smoulders inside my head.

Various researchers have sought to highlight the similarities between doing research and detective work (Balnaves and Caputi 2001). Furthermore, in their *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Denzin and Lincoln (2000:4) allude to various other images which define the identity of the researcher. They talk of the 'bricoleur': a French term which means 'a Jack of all trades' who 'produces a bricolage – that is, a pieced together set of representation that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation'.

So similar to a detective and 'bricoleur' I generate multiple texts about my inquiry from my own experience. As I do so I also generate questions for which I feel compelled to seek answers. Respondents for the questions will be sought based on my own knowledge of various actors in the field. However, I will also use a snowball sampling technique whereby I will ask respondents in the field to identify others who they sense may support their story or

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provide alternative angles for me to pursue. The rationale for using the snowball sampling technique is based on the understanding that people and their sensemaking connect in various contingent ways unknown to the researcher.

In writing up the story of WBL, I am seeking what I come to think of as 'naked truth'. To my surprise Fleming and Spicer (2002:72) convincingly couple this common sense term that I am using to frame my thinking about what and how my tale will be written with a definition of cynicism and as a strategy of worker resistance:

A .... way that employees may respond to attempts to colonise their subjectivity via corporate culture management is cynicism. It has become somewhat commonplace to identify the widespread nature of cynicism in contemporary society (Lasch 1978, Sloterdijk 1988; Žižek 1989) and the workplace (Kanter and Mirvis 1989). We understand cynicism to be situations where people look for the "naked truth" behind the official "party line" so that blatant contradictions are laid bare:

Cynical thinking can only arise when two views of things have become possible, an official and an unofficial view, a veiled view and a naked view, one from the viewpoint of heroes and one from the viewpoint of valets. In a culture in which one is regularly told lies, one wants to know not merely the truth but the naked truth. Where that cannot be, that is not allowed to be, one has to draw out what the "naked" facts look like, no matter what morality has to say about it. In a certain way "ruling" and "lying" are synonymous. The truth of the rulers and truth of the servants are different (Sloterdijk 1984:218).

Although I agree with the usefulness of examining so-called 'official stories' and juxtaposing them with 'unofficial accounts', I am disturbed by the dualism which flows throughout the authors' analysis in that it sets up 'two views' of 'truth': '*an* official version' and '*an* unofficial version'<sup>2</sup> and in this way suggests that there exist singular, rather than multiple versions of

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<sup>2</sup>. My emphasis.

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each such category of truth. Equally problematic is the statement by which the authors talk of truth as 'one from the viewpoint of heroes' and subsequently 'one from the viewpoint of valets'. In setting up a binary category of membership groupings; 'heroes' and 'valets', they reinforce the dualism of their argument. Furthermore, their argument suggests not only that each membership grouping is a proponent of a single shared truth but also that the membership groupings of 'a valet' and 'a hero' are mutually exclusive. Moreover, by equating heroes with the telling of 'veiled truth' and 'valets' with the telling of 'naked truth' they attribute specific 'truth-telling behaviours' to each membership grouping. We get the sense too that the authors are using the word 'heroes' with a degree of cynicism. The 'heroes' are those officially deemed as such rather than those which the authors hold to be 'heroes'. Finally, the authors go on to present one final dualism of 'rulers' and 'servants' and maintain once again that the truth of each membership group is 'different'. By keeping their arguments of 'truth', 'cynicism' and 'resistance' within the boundaries of a binary divide their argument smacks of truth as 'power over' which is made sense of exclusively as a relationship between those with and those without authority in the sovereign state whereby truth is defined as 'good' or 'evil' rather than an understanding of truth that Nietzsche compels us to see; whereby truth comes to be known as 'beyond good and evil' (Nietzsche 1973). In this way, we come to see that truth is fused in capillaries of power and manifest in multiple, contested stories. No agent is the unambiguous embodiment of power. Rather, each agent is seen to be both servant and ruler.

Thus, in telling the story of WBL, I do not want to divide the truths that at first made it possible and those that seven years later rendered it impossible into the simplistic binary membership categories of 'rulers' and 'servants' nor that of 'heroes' and 'villains' and by implication 'those with' and 'those without' power; the 'good' or the 'evil'. Rather, I need to weave a far more complex tale by bringing multiple stories out into the open for analysis in order to make sense of the story of WBL. Equally strong is my compulsion to open up debate around truth and its management within the academy as well as in corporate organisations; in large part we avoid talking of failure in organisations. However, unofficially many projects are seen to fail (Flyvbjerg, Brazelius and Rothengatter 2003). It is in part because of this official silence on the issue of failure within organisations that I have chosen to stay with WBL in my personal and professional life, and indeed, get closer to it, rather than forget it, and move on. In telling the

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story of WBL, I will attempt to give way to versions of 'truth' that may not suit my sensemaking of events. However, I want to come clean from the start of this tale that I am always the storyteller; thus, in the process of telling I am always weighing up what to say and not to say. As Foucault (1979:75) puts it in an interview with Lucette Finas:

I am fully aware that I have never written anything other than fictions. For all that, I would not want to say that they were outside truth. It seems plausible to me to make fictions work within truth, to introduce truth-effects within a fictional discourse, and in some way to make discourse arouse, "fabricate," something which does not yet exist, thus to fiction something. One "fictions" history starting from a political reality that renders it true, one "fictions a politics that does not yet exist starting from a historical truth.

In making sense of the story of WBL, I frame my account by drawing on the two 'maps' which constitute the thinking tools of my theoretical approach to truth management. Each of the thinking tools operates as a lense through which I examine a particular dimension of truth management. In this way, I discuss how 'truth' is both shaped by and shapes the contextualism of discourses, time and space as well as agency made up of identity, capital, practices and power.

Furthermore, for each thinking tool used to structure my narrative, I weave three threads into the story of lessons learnt from the workplace. First, is my story, now as a lecturer on contract at UTS, previously as a permanent employee and Manager at Insearch, the Commercial arm of UTS, in which I give an account of how I grappled to engage in commercial activity to 'open up' rather than to 'close down' space between actors in my own institution and corporate organisations with the aim of engaging in alternative ways for both universities and corporate organisations to 'work the knowledge game'. Second, is the significance of lessons learnt from the 'conversations' at an inter-organisational and individual level surrounding the WBL program. In my analysis, I track numerous seemingly banal, everyday conversations from 1997-2003, as well as related decisions and their consequences made in and between both the university and the corporate organisation by which actors in both fields first engaged

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in the talking into, and seven years later, the talking out of being of their inter-organisational partnership. Third, is the story of the lessons learnt from the WBL program as a 'learning innovation', which I represent by drawing on the perspective of the student/worker/learners, their managers and UTS advisers. Indeed, following Callon (1986) with his work on an approach which is sometimes called a 'sociology of translation' and at other times 'a sociology of enrolment' I abandon all a priori distinctions between the natural and social by suggesting that inanimate objects can have agency. The approach frames the third thread of the story, where the WBL 'learning innovation' speaks as a living being with its own 'voice' as it attempts to translate, into academic as well as corporately acceptable terms, the knowledge and experience of corporate employees, and in this way aims to validate such knowledge and experience within a negotiated postgraduate degree framework. Thus, 'instead of a homogeneous narrative, each text is theorised as a network of fragments that refers to still other narrative texts' (Boje 2001:74). Furthermore, the text is not only written, it may also be spoken or represented in a particular artifact for example a building or an image. In this way, my analysis is in line with what Boje refers to as intertextuality:

A web of complex inter-relationships ensnaring each story's historicity and situational context between other stories. Essentially every story is informed by other stories that the writer and reader have heard or read, and their respective cultural contexts...

Quoting Kristeva, Boje puts it that in intertextual analysis the author is '(author + spectator) and very much a part of the carnival scene, part of acts of production, distribution and consumption' (Boje 2001:76). Intertextuality provides a postmodern frame for the analysis and representation of WBL in which:

The postmodern condition of fragmentation and simulation makes coherence problematic. There is no whole story to tell, only fragments, which even with retrospective sensemaking cannot find a plot that will make the fragments cohere. Instead a wandering audience chases storylines on multiple and simultaneous stages. In such a Tamara of collective sensemaking people are only tracing story fragments,

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inventing bits and pieces to glue it all together, but never able to visit all the stages and see the whole (Boje 2001:5).

In this way, I aim to depict how individual players and organisations, as well as seemingly 'animated-inanimate' objects such as WBL managed truth not so much as a rational process but rather in action in such a way that allowed them to 'go on'. As Arne (1990:13) explains:

The idea of reflexive monitoring of actions is connected with the importance of unintended consequences. Even if individuals can control their bodies and movements when acting, they can seldom control the effects of these actions to any extent. Things happen that were not intended and sometimes intentions are realised but not by the expected means. The unintended consequences are regularly distributed as a by-product of regularised behaviour reflexively sustained as such by its participants.

In this chapter I have sought to un-surface some of the methodological, theoretical and ethical issues that research after the 'postmodern turn' suggests. In the following chapters I return to each of the contingencies which form the two maps of 'thinking tools' of my theoretical model to tell the story of WBL. In telling the story of WBL I aim to show that although narratives have been rhetorically marginalised as 'exploratory', narratives are a very rich way of 'knowing' in that they help us to see the complexity and subtle interconnections between levels of analysis and phenomenon that more traditional genres of academic research screen out.

## CHAPTER 7: TRUTH IS MANAGED THROUGH DISCOURSES

The official story of why WBL ended was sent on 2 July 2003 by Faculty email broadcast signed off by the Dean to Faculty staff, students, and corporate partners.

Dear Colleagues

Work-based learning is one way that the University and Faculty of Business have been pursuing the strategic objective of leadership in Practice-oriented education and collaborative research.

In recent times, the Faculty of Business has undertaken a review of WBL programs to assess their sustainability in the current context. I regret to inform you that, on advice from various bodies within the Faculty, I have decided to suspend further student intakes into WBL programs. Given the unique benefits that the WBL programs offer to students and organisations, and my appreciation of the educational quality of the program, this was a difficult decision to make. This decision is also being communicated to all WBL students, staff engaged in WBL programs and relevant external stakeholders.

Arrangements with students currently enrolled will be honoured. Any queries from current students will be directed to Julie Gustavs who will continue with her role in work-based learning. The Work-Based Learning Programs Committee in the Faculty of Business will also continue its activities in relation to WBL programs.

The Faculty of Business will maintain its commitment to build on our accomplishments in practice-oriented education and collaborative research. To this end, the Faculty of Business will be establishing a Cross-Faculty WBL Working Party. A key role of the working party is to establish ways in which the WBL program can be used to inform future innovations in work-relevant coursework and research programs. In this way, we will ensure both financial sustainability as well as quality educational outcomes in future UTS initiatives.

I would like to thank you for your support of WBL programs.

Yours sincerely

It is a version of the truth, even one that I enjoyed helping to construct. It has the hallmarks of an official response in that it provides a paragraph of context, followed by the success of the program, it makes scant reference to the reasons which would explain why the program has folded. Finally, one is left with the sense that the decision may not be an end but a new beginning. In helping to construct this truth, I guess I did what others do when they write the official version. I set myself apart from it. Before it is sent, I read and re-read it from a range of different perspectives to assess what other readers would see in it.

A time of silence precedes the official version of truth being told. It is not explicitly enforced but comes to be known that it is important that everyone hears of the truth in the 'right order'. The official version of what constitutes the 'right order' is that it involves the members of the

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WBL team hearing first. Each member of staff is also given the opportunity for further private meetings with the Dean to give their particular version of how events should proceed. There is a genuine sense of an 'open door policy'. However, it is also clear from the outset that the parameters in which such actors will be able to change or even massage the course of what counts as truth are already set. They have been set out in the eight-page document, three thousand three hundred and ninety-nine (3, 399) words of explanation entitled *Reasons for not applying for Director Position of WBLU* (2003), in the place of the usual email or brief letter to decline an offer of employment. Rather, this document resembles a detailed evaluative report structured within the discrete headings of; financial viability, systems compatibility, organisational compatibility, value proposition to customers, and evidence from the WBL literature which the acting manager of the unit writes to the Dean to explain why he will not apply for the position of Director of the WBL unit. The document wraps up its arguments with a shift from the 'facts' to a personal and alarmist statement, which speaks directly and persuasively to his reader:

In summary based on my improved understanding of the business, I believe that the task is simply too big for me. In fact, I have strong doubts that self-sustainability is achievable without the fundamental changes beginning with organisational strategic positioning and capability development. I believe that the latter is beyond my control of Director and to a large extent beyond you as Dean. Please let me know if you want any of my observations further clarified.

In the document, of course, there is no discussion of the author's hands that had peeled from day one of being offered the appointment. Of his regular tearful pleas to the three members of staff that he is 'overwhelmed' because he is an 'academic' and not a 'manager of people' nor one trained or comfortable with 'doing a deal'. Furthermore, that 'he knows nothing of WBL' and we his team of three are the 'Experts'. However, what I see is that on the day after the letter is sent he takes off his corporate grey suit and dons his tweed jacket, which he acknowledges on the day after the death day of WBL as signifying that he has made his decision: he has come home. I am calm. I know it is over.

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Although his words still have eight weeks to weave their way through the various committees before they are officially sanctioned, I know that his words in the document already count as the official truth and hence it is important for me to also acknowledge them as such. As part of my strategy to achieve WBL's repositioning in my head, I try to remove myself from hearing more of his words in practice in the everyday. In practice he speaks of how he 'had not given a single thought to what he will now do because his first concern is to get us, the 'Ladies' settled in secure jobs'. There is talk too of the 'brilliance of the program', of 'how much he had loved working with us', the importance of 'lessons learnt' and 'how much he would still like to be a part of the future directions of WBL'. Furthermore, he talks of his sincere hope that WBL would 'rise like Phoenix from the ashes'.

This last image conjures D. H. Lawrence's poem (1993:728) *The Phoenix*<sup>3</sup>:

Are you willing to be sponged out.  
erased, cancelled,  
made nothing?  
Are you willing to be made nothing?  
Dipped into oblivion?

If not, you will never really change.

The phoenix renews her youth  
only when she is burnt,  
burnt alive, burnt down  
to hot and flocculent ash.  
Then the small stirring of a new small bub in the nest  
with strands of down like floating ash  
shows that she is renewing her youth like the eagle,  
immortal bird.

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<sup>3</sup> Phoe-nix\ 1: a legendary bird represented by the ancient Egyptians as living five or six centuries in the Arabian desert, being consumed in fire by its own act, and rising in youthful freshness from its own ashes and often regarded as an emblem of immortality or the resurrection.

2: a person or thing likened to the phoenix as a: a paragon of excellence or beauty b: one that experiences a restoration, renewal, or seeming rebirth after ruin or destruction... (Webster's *Third International Dictionary*)

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WBL as Phoenix? I speculate as to whether there are not less radical ways for an organisation to learn. For when one 'sponges out' and 'erases' isn't it more likely that organisational amnesia rather than learning is the outcome? WBL is dead and his words are of no comfort.

Within a few days the grey suit is redonned. His step quickens. He is a father of four 'beautiful children' with a 'beautiful wife'. He is the sole 'breadwinner' of the household. I am not surprised by my observation of his actions, nor uncomfortable with the thought that he has to reposition himself – personally and professionally. He is often out of the office. His mantra of open communication, of 'keeping the team in the loop' appears to have been abandoned. Questions of where he is going are met with the rushed apology:

'No time to talk, soooooorry. Have to rush. Got a meeting in the Tower'.<sup>4</sup>

Another difference that I observe is that there is no mention of team meetings nor the weekly two-hour 'one-on-ones' in which he inscribed in pencil in a ring-bound copybook the copious notes written in his small and even handwriting, the answers to the questions he felt the need to ask to help him to 'get his head around what we each do, how and why'.

The document outlining his reasons for not accepting the Director's position is tabled as evidence at the Deans Advisory Committee (DAC) with its representation from each of the Heads of Schools. Furthermore, each of the members of the WBL Programs Committee which oversees quality issues in the WBL program in the Faculty of Business and other stakeholders of WBL in participating Faculties as well as in the centralised administration of UTS, is phoned individually by the Dean to inform them of the status of WBL. They are each sworn to secrecy, for the matter remains confidential.

A number of critical incidents occur in this time which makes a mockery of the 'silence' and also of the possibility of communicating such a truth in the 'right order'.

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<sup>4</sup> Tower: the colloquial name used by members at UTS to signify the twenty-seven storey building which is the 'head office of UTS'. (It includes dedicated space for the Vice Chancellor and the other senior executive.)

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- I. Computer audit: Two computer technicians from the Faculty of Business Information Technology Support (ITS) enter the WBL office. They have come to remove the Business Development Manager's computer. It is to be returned to the supplier even though she is required to make the daily two-hour journey from home to work for the next six weeks and the official Faculty broadcast informing staff of the closing of the WBL unit has not yet been sent. These actions produce spoken and unspoken questions and answers in the minds of organisational actors. They brutally confirm who is being made redundant and who is not. In this instant I am not calm. Rather, I am incensed. We have been required to develop evasive and non-committal ways of answering peoples' queries of 'what is happening with WBL?' We have been muted by the shrouding of 'truth' in secrecy and confidentiality so that it can be told 'in the right order'. And here we are in practice confronted by actions that speak with or without words.

The rationale for the decision is an economic one. The cancelling of the lease for the computer will save money. I remain unconvinced. I see so much financial waste. So many ways to save and make money around me. Indeed, so little interest in commercialism. No, the only way I can see this is that it is not humane. I decide to intervene with an apology:

Sorry, that you have come in vain. Clearly a mistake has been made. We will get back to you and sort it out later.

Neither of the technicians looks at me. Their eyes drop instead to the document which one of them holds in his hand. The one who holds the document adds:

Look, it says here we have to pick it up and send it back. Read it yourself. That's what it says on the form. We are sorry about this. We don't make the decisions. We are just following orders.

As a child who had grown up as the daughter of a postwar German migrant, and was schooled in Australia, an education system and curriculum shaped by the lessons

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learnt from the justice of the 'allies' and the 'wrong-doing' of those they had vanquished, those words 'We are just following orders', as no others, have been inscribed in my mind as ones that one needs to be wary of so that one would never do evil as one's forefathers had done. For I had learnt from such lessons that seemingly unconnected and insignificant actions which make up the everyday (both actions taken and not taken) can lead to unprecedented inhumanity. The rationality on which my actions can be explained remain unspoken. They are part of the 'irrationality' of the everyday. However, it is through this irrationality that the fate of the computer is now sealed. For in my mind it is no longer a matter of a computer which needs to be returned to a supplier but it is now imbued with other possible meanings: a choice between 'humanity' and 'inhumanity'. Thus, framed in this way it becomes vital that it remains firmly in its place.

II. Email: Support staff feedback on recent DAC meetings on 13 June 2003.

<p>2. EDU Change Management Process ----- This process has now been finalised and vacant positions are currently being filled.</p> <p>4. Work Based Learning (WBL) Change Management ----- This was a "confidential" item discussed at the last DAC and the Dean will communicate this matter directly with relevant staff in due course.</p> <p>If anyone wants any issues discussed in relation to support staff, please feel free to email them to me.</p>
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In the Faculty of Business there are two units which have been set up to engage in commercial activities with corporate organisations. One is the Executive Development Unit (EDU), another is the Work-Based Learning (WBL) unit. In the Faculty of Business it is common knowledge that EDU had been engaged in a protracted review process which resulted in the entire staff of eight employees either voluntarily leaving their positions or being made redundant. The email above makes note of the outcome in item 2 under the heading – EDU Change Management Process, 'vacant positions are currently being filled.'

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Although the official Faculty broadcast informing staff of the closing of the WBL unit has not yet been sent, item 4 of this same document heightens speculation about the fate of WBL and its staff. The document does so, not so much by what it says, but more by what it does not. It is crafted in such a way so as not to violate the politically correct choice of 'truth telling in the right order' rather it reinforces it with the nomination of the item as 'confidential'. However, the similarity of the heading with that of EDU coupled with the common knowledge of what 'change management process' meant in the EDU context clarifies in the minds of many institutional players the fate of WBL and its staff. WBL staff experience a renewed spate of concerned and probing inquiries.

- III. Accountancy staff, builders and architect: I hear a conversation between the various accountancy staff, architects, and builders who have come to the WBL unit unannounced. They are standing in the open plan section of our space. I am in my office. They are discussing the plans they have for how they will modify the office space, which we will shortly be moving out of, for their own needs. They discuss in detail the walls and new offices that will need to be built, the furniture that can be discarded and what will stay. I hear someone ask:

What will happen to the people who are here at the moment?

A voice responds in hushed tones, for she is now in secret-telling mode:

They have all been made redundant except for the associate professor. He will be returning to his school.

Their truth remains uncorrected. I hear feet moving on carpet. The door opens. The door closes. The office returns to stillness.

The day of official truth telling comes to break the silence. The official email is sent to internal and then external stakeholders. It is not the only official organisational response to the closing of WBL in the Faculty of Business. We also have two official farewells. WBL is not allowed to die quietly. We have one farewell for the unit as a whole where speeches are given

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and another with the WBL courses committee; a cross-Faculty group which oversees the quality of the WBL program.

I see myself back at the office. I am working with my colleagues. We are culling documents from the filing cabinets, bookshelves and large compactus in our office in preparation for the closing of our unit. On one of the shelves, I find a 'treasure trove' of documents which none of us has seen before. They date from a time before our time, to the beginning of WBL. I manage to salvage some of the documents and later begin to piece together the story that they tell. There are both official and unofficial stories of WBL. I am seeking the juxtapositions and points of contention which they throw up. First I divide the documents into two neat piles: official and unofficial stories. Official stories are mainly conveyed in policy documents – there are some emails.

To understand the official story of how WBL was talked into being at UTS is to examine it against the backdrop of government policy – the drive for partnerships with industry which has pervaded both the public and private sector since the late 1980s.

Dawkins, J. S. (1988) *Higher Education: a policy statement*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

West, R. (1998) *Learning for Life*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Services.

Cunningham, S. et al. (2000) *The Business of Borderless Education*. Canberra: Evaluations and Investigations Programme, Higher Education Division. Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

Gallagher, M. (2000) *The Emergence of Entrepreneurial Public Universities in Australia*. Canberra: Higher Education Division, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

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Although hotly debated and criticised by staff and students at the time of its release as a white paper in 1988, the *Higher education: A policy statement*, more commonly referred to as the *Dawkins report* nevertheless framed the significant agenda of reform and change that higher education institutions have been forced to engage with in the last decade. The report called for a number of significant structural changes to the tertiary sector which were implemented shortly after the release of the document. The main thrust of such change was that there were to be fewer tertiary institutions. The recommendations culminated in the abolition of the two-tier education system, of which UTS had previously been a second level institution - an Advanced Education College, in favour of a so-called 'unified' and 'more cost-effective' university system. Marginson and Considine (2000:188-206), commenting on the current structural arrangements of the Australian tertiary education sector, use five different labels by which to define the landscape of universities in Australia since the implementation of recommendations from the *Dawkin's report*. First, they use 'sandstones' to describe the six oldest universities. Second, 'redbricks' describe three universities that, similar to the 'sandstones' have the highest status of universities in Australia but are different to 'sandstones' in that they are newer, having been founded post-Second World War, and are 'less traditionally academic, and more openly corporate, modernist and pliable.' Third, are the ten gum trees, which were founded later in the post-war period. Their label underscores their bush setting as opposed to the colonial garden settings of the more established universities. They also differ in that they were considered 'educationally radical', and particularly 'nationalistic'. Fourth, are the five 'unitechs', to which UTS, the institution for which I work, belongs. The five 'unitechs' were largely formed as a result of Dawkin's recommendations. Finally, Marginson and Constidine describe the 'new universities': a 'heterogeneous sub-sector' of thirteen rural and regional metropolitan institutions which were also formed out of the Dawkin's report.

Whilst the *Dawkin's report* focused on structural changes that marked the shaping of the current tertiary education sector in Australia, it was West's report, released in 1998 that formed the official blueprint for the future of higher education in Australia. Similar to the *National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (Dearing Report)* that had been released in Britain about changes in the British tertiary sector in the previous year, the West Report spelt out the tensions that lay in store for universities of the future: larger classes, and an

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increasingly diverse student population in line with market-force imperatives. The *West report* had as its key terms of reference three key responsibilities. First, to undertake a 'broad ranging review of the state of Australia's higher education sector' in terms of how it would meet 'Australia's social, economic, scientific and cultural needs'. Second, it was expected to develop a framework which would allow the tertiary sector to meet better the changes that it would face in the following two decades. Furthermore, financial options were also to be identified for the future funding of the Australian tertiary sector. The main thrust of the report was that it sought to introduce greater competition between the providers with the view to increasing choice for students. It also explored the impact of computer-based technologies in the provision of higher education as well as the associated opportunities for international markets. Such market driven foci were juxtaposed with concern that such changes suggested for the tradition role of universities in fostering 'the public good.'

*The Business of Borderless Education* (Cunningham et al. 2000) is also significant within the context of WBL because it examined the role that various 'new' providers, including the corporate university, the for-profit university, and the virtual university, were having on the Australian tertiary education sector at the turn of the twenty-first century. The report examined a number of pathways that universities were expected to adopt to gain further revenue in the face of declining government funding, rising student numbers and the commercialisation of education. The document was written in the spirit of 'market research' in that it outlined some of the anticipated competition that universities faced in pursuing various commercial ventures. It examined the Australian tertiary context as well as the US education market. Key findings of the report were that:

(the) factors driving the growth of the alternative education markets in the US, and which are likely to be relevant to Australia, are as follows:

- the globalised economy, with a growing demand for standardised products, services and technical infrastructure, and sophisticated communication systems;
- the emergence of a post-industrial information age and the explosive growth and distributed nature of new knowledge;

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- demand for greater access to tertiary education fuelled by rapid changes in the economy, the need to maintain and upgrade skills for employment, and industry's need for 'work-ready' graduates;
- growing reluctance on the part of governments to fund increasing demand for higher education;
- the increasing costs of higher education and the growing importance of the 'earner-learner' market;
- the potential for communication and information technologies to reduce the fixed costs of education
- the rapid growth of technology-based distance education in a market traditionally strongly dominated by campus-based education; and
- dissatisfaction by industry with the responsiveness of traditional providers. (Cunningham et al. 2000:vii-viii).

In that same year a further document, *The Emergence of Entrepreneurial Public Universities in Australia* (Gallagher 2000) provided yet more evidence of the main thrust of the government's political agenda at the dawning of the new millennium. Commercialism, entrepreneurialism, work relevance, practice-based knowledge, working knowledge, a new curriculum for the 'real world': these are all discourses which the government talks of within the policy context of universities of the twenty-first century. It is these same discourses that are integrally linked to the story of WBL: a story which provided the context in which WBL first took root at UTS.

In the compactus, I also find documents which relate to how UTS has interpreted government-wide priorities specifically within its own strategic context. I search for further documents on the UTS website as well as in the archives of the Planning and Review Unit, which maintains policy documents at UTS. The key insights into discourses, that I develop from an examination of these strategic documents allows the identification of two main strategic documents at UTS and two related research projects - one conducted externally the other internally - which are relevant to WBL's positioning from 1997-2003:

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UTS strategic policies 1997-2003, Planning and Review Unit:

*Working for our future* (1998 -2000) (Nov 1997) University of Technology, Sydney

*Dangar Report - visual image research of UTS* (1999) Sydney: Dangar Research.

*Setting the pace: Strategic Directions for the next decade.* (Jan 2001) University of Technology, Sydney.

*Working for our Future*, (1998-2000) frames the strategic directions of UTS with 'six mutually reinforcing critical themes':

1. New sources of income
2. Research
3. Flexible Learning
4. Work-Based Learning
5. Internationalisation
6. Organisational Development

Looking at the document again now, in hindsight, at the close of 2003, I remember that the document had surprised me for a number of reasons. First, was the blatant initial goal of '1. New sources of income' which seemed to be an ill-fit in a strategic document, which generally frames the goal of financial capital more subtly. In respect to goal 1 the report stated:

UTS faces a challenging period. Increased competition together with changes to Government funding arrangements means that the University will need to explore new ways of generating income. It will be vital for the University to become more entrepreneurial in outlook,

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safeguard against financial risk, upgrade its business planning processes and skills and carefully assess where resources are best deployed and how further efficiencies can be achieved.

A number of promising academic developments will have the added benefit of contributing to income growth. The critical development themes outlined above have the potential to expand existing avenues for revenue generation and open new ones. In some instances, they will also contribute to efficiency.

#### Key Development Objectives

1. Attract external research funding and support from agencies, industry partners and other institutions both nationally and internationally.
2. Increase income from internationalisation activities.
3. Pursue opportunities to secure income from the key developments of flexible learning and work-based learning.
4. Continue to implement the UTS fundraising strategy.

The second surprise at the time, was that Work-Based Learning - our small initiative - was one of its key themes.

UTS has a national and international reputation for its approach to cooperative education and is the largest provider of cooperative education in Australia. The University has identified employers' demand for, and the opportunity to develop, innovative forms of education for professional practice which involve new learning contracts between the University and industry and which enhance professional formation.

Work-based learning describes a range of educational practices whereby students learn in authentic work settings. The curriculum is

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influenced significantly by issues and challenges which emerge from the contingencies of work rather than predetermined academic content-driven requirements. Work-based learning normally involves a three-way partnership between the University, the employer and the student, with each party having a distinctive influence on the particular program which is pursued.

#### Key Development Objectives

1. Introduce work-based learning models of education which enhance the reputation of UTS for professional formation.
2. Establish UTS as the national leader of Work-Based Learning Partnerships (WBLP) in Australia.
3. Develop and implement systems, procedures and practices which enable an institutional development of WBLP at UTS.

The entry for Work-Based Learning sees it as linked to co-operative learning – a model of learning typically for undergraduates with limited work-experience. However, the WBL program implemented in each of the three participating faculties is for postgraduate students – and the teaching and learning model was based on a target group with work experience, given that a major feature of WBL programs involved managers claiming credit for learning experiences that they had gained in their workplace. Up to two-thirds of the credit points in a Master's degree could be claimed through the portfolio process. Already a disjuncture can be seen between rhetoric and implementation.

*Working for our future* (1998-2000) was always seen as a precursor to a large strategic plan. In preparation for the ambitious new strategic framework for the first decade of the 21 century UTS commissions a visual audit which becomes known as the *Dangar report*.

The *Dangar report* (1999) was in essence a high level competitive analysis which described UTS's key competitors in visual and imaging terms describing each institution, their key strengths and points of differentiation within the field. It is within this document that it is

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formally recognised by UTS that its main strength is its practice-based and work-relevant curriculum. The report had a wide influence on staff and policy directions at UTS. In 2004 its messages still have currency.

*Setting the Pace: Strategic Directions for the next Decade* (2001) takes a different tack from the policy directions of 1998-2000. Work-Based Learning is no longer explicitly named in the report – however, nor is financial gain. The document has taken on a far more corporate look and feel and its strategic focus, picking up on the findings of the *Dangar report*, is on UTS as a practice-based university. The practice-based focus has as its major objectives:

- Strengthening innovative approaches to the design and delivery of practice-based education
- Strengthening core components of the university's educational philosophy: sustainability, internationalisation and ethical and social responsibility
- Apply knowledge of best practice in teaching and learning to enhance the consistency and quality of teaching and learning
- Continue to support e-learning developments. (2001:6).

I seek out various players at UTS who have been instrumental in shaping the strategic focus of UTS and ask them various questions which position WBL within a discursive and strategic context:

1. In *Working For Our Future* WBL is explicitly named as one of the six themes along with:

New sources of income  
Research  
Flexible Learning  
Internationalisation  
Organisational Development

What did WBL mean within the context of *Working for our Future*? Why was it seen as a priority?

2. In what ways did *Setting the Pace* differ from *Working for Our Future* as a strategic plan for UTS?
3. Did the *Dangar report* inform the framing of *Setting the Pace*? If so in what ways?
4. In what ways was practice-based education seen as different to the policy direction of work-based learning as articulated in *Working for our future*?
  - a. To what extent has the priority of practice-based education (PBE) been realised?
  - b. Why do you think that it is a challenge to achieve the priority of PBE at UTS?
  - c. Tell me about the working party that was established for PBE. What did it achieve? How did it achieve this? What are the future directions for PBE at UTS?

What becomes obvious from these conversations is that although there is a strategic framing at UTS from 1998 onwards and it is heralded as a rational planning process one, can see key champions behind the process. The champions for WBL step out of the frame and the language in the policy documents shifts with them. The phrase 'work based learning' (in lower case rather than in capitals as a proper noun indicating the Work-Based Learning

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program) appears only once within *Setting the Pace* within the framing of University Enterprises. Work-Based Learning is assumed to now be incorporated as one educational option within the broader framing of 'practice-based education'. However, this broader framing of practice-based education has its own challenges. In talking of the way in which practice-based education has unfolded at UTS, a senior manager notes:

A lot of the Deans would say they are already doing it.... I think there is a sense in which a number of senior people at UTS think that there is already a common understanding of what is meant by practice-based education and they think that they are already doing it and that there is plenty of evidence to support that but when you actually try to get the evidence aligned with some of the strategies in the *Setting the Pace* ... it is actually very hard to see what UTS is doing that is distinctive....so from the point of view of the working party I think one of the reasons for setting it up was to try to get at this issue ....the report has lots of good recommendations but the money has not been forthcoming so it has not been implemented or acted upon at this stage. I think there were some very real and very understandable tensions about what it might mean. The political climate changed during in this period particularly in relation to what is a university and what distinguishes a university from other organisations and the focus on research and research performance. I understand that there were a number of discussions, and I was part of some of them, where people felt that there was a very real tension between arguing that what UTS was aiming to be was a distinguished practice-based university .... (rather) than a high impact, quality research institution. I think that those tensions are still being played out.

I remind myself that it was not only discourses at UTS which made it possible for WBL to be talked into being in 1996 and then later talked out of being in 2003. In fact, as I learn from one senior manager at UTS involved in initial negotiations about WBL with AMP:

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The idea for WBL was not instigated by UTS. It was really a case that at UTS it found receptive ears. AMP senior managers were the ones pushing for it. It was they who came to us with the idea and put up the money for it.

The new information prompts me to turn my attention to AMP. The examination of the official documents had provided insight into the discourses which have operated from 1996 to 2003 at UTS. I realised as I re-examined the files from the dual perspective of finding evidence of discourses of importance at AMP at the time when WBL was first initiated, as well as gaining insights into how discourses changed at AMP, making the program increasingly remote from its strategic purpose, that the files included no discernible references to the strategic imperatives of AMP. The lack of information about strategic imperatives at AMP was relevant data in itself in that it seemed to suggest that 'the main game' as far as actors at UTS were concerned was in locating WBL within our discourses at UTS - not necessarily that of our partners at AMP.

To clarify the discursive background of AMP, the government agenda is also important, but from a different source than that which influences the Higher Education sector.

Karpin, D. 1995, *Enterprising Nation: Renewing Australia's Managers to Meet the Challenges of the Asia-Pacific Century, Report of the Industry Task Force on Leadership and Management Skills*, Commonwealth of Australia, Australian Government Publishing Service.

The release of *Enterprising Nation – Reviewing Australia's managers to meet the Challenges of the Asia Pacific Century Report of the Industry Task Force on Leadership and Management Skills* (the *Karpin report*) by the Federal Government in 1995 placed the spotlight firmly on management development practice in Australia. The *Karpin report* took a visionary look at Australian business. It sat firmly within the Keating Labor Government's agenda of building stronger trade ties with Australia's geographic neighbours in the Asia-Pacific region rather than those which are a legacy denoted by Australia's European roots. The *Karpin report* called

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for 'a new paradigm of management' and the general thrust of the report was that 'good managers are the key to a more competitive economy and higher performing enterprises'. Karpin provided a profile of the Australian manager: typically Anglo-Celtic males working in a turbulent environment with high stress levels, and long working hours. Karpin propounded that the 'leader/enabler' of the future will be different from the 'communicators' and 'autocrats' of the past. The report highlighted the critical importance of education, training and ongoing professional development to ensure managers had the knowledge and skills they needed to perform effectively in the workplace. Emphasis was placed on the important non-technical domains of management: leading and managing people, communicating, negotiating, resolving conflict, adaptability, lifelong learning, quality, fostering creativity and innovation, as well as managing change strategically. The document was keenly picked up by Human Resource professionals who used it to lend weight within their organisations to their training and development agenda. Indeed, a luncheon jointly sponsored by the Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI) and the Australian Institute of Management (AIM) to launch the report was held for a large group of human resources practitioners at the salubrious Regent Hotel, Sydney, in March 1995. The large audience that the launch attracted was testament to the high level of interest that Human Resources professionals took to the new government policy. Presentations were given by Geoff de Lacy and Peter Ivonoff (both taskforce members). They focused on explaining the terms of reference and findings of the report but also on the implications that the report suggested for HR professionals in that there is more emphasis on workplace learning rather than attendance of traditional formal courses. The report gave a legitimate voice to the challenges that HR practitioners faced in further developing management practice in Australian organisations.

Further to my aim of clarifying the discursive background at AMP, I also needed to examine AMP's own archives.

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*Employer of Choice Policy* (1997) Training and Development, AMP.

*The AMP Applied Business Program: Putting Learning to work. Performance management in Action.* (1999) Training and Development, AMP.

*Best Employer to work for: A review of results by the AMP HR community. Insights and Recommendations* (2001) Human Resources, AMP.

The broad policy framing for WBL is within AMP's strategy for *Employer of Choice* (1997). The policy is based on the premises which underpinned the Karpin report that retaining a talented, productive team is one of the key challenges of the contemporary business world. *Employer of Choice* focused on learning and development as one of the key motivational aspects which influence the retention of talented people. Allen, a senior manager at AMP, explains how the policy was experienced in the business:

Essentially *Employer of Choice* was a guiding principle that ran AMP-wide which was really focused on encouraging people to have a lifestyle choice to help them balance work with homelife. It was also to introduce a number of AMP benefits ... short-term incentives and more longer-term incentives all wrapped in together. Short-term investments included bonuses and we got discounts to various organisations, there was a social club in place and then that was tied against long-term incentives which were support for financial support for degrees at a tertiary institution like WBL at UTS, or if you performed well you would get a share allocation so *Employer of Choice* was all that wrapped together but it was a bit of a mantra that people would believe in and work towards. Every six to twelve months we did employee surveys to see how people felt about the organisation and a lot of that was around *Employer of Choice*.

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Given that WBL does not have its first official intake at AMP until 1999, we first catch a glimpse of the marketing for WBL on the final page of the training and development strategy, *The AMP Applied Business Program: Putting Learning to work. Performance management in Action* published in that same year. The glossy brochure for the Applied Business program announces the relevance of learning and development to employees' career progression evocatively:

Now your success is in your hands! The Applied Business Program (ABP) aims to provide you with a wide range of training and development activities that are easy to access, cost effective and tailored to meet your needs.

The ABP is part of AMP's investment in you as *Employer of Choice* and it is up to you to work with your manager to take full advantage of the learning opportunities it offers.

It goes on to argue:

This program provides you with the opportunity to enhance your career and meet the challenges of today's employment market. This requires you to constantly update your knowledge and skills base.

AMP provides you with the opportunity by integrating work and learning through the Applied Business program.

The brochures position the WBL program as being part of its internal short course offering. The stress is on integrating learning and work and customising one's learning to business and professional learning needs as negotiated with one's manager. Although the advertising highlights that 'these are not quick compromised awards, the academic rigor required is on par with traditional awards' its inclusion within the document suggests that it is nevertheless part of a suite of inhouse AMP programs. Furthermore, the brochure raises the expectation that 'awards will include certificate, diploma and master's level qualification.' Thus, the WBL

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is marketed as being a 'fit' for vocational as well as postgraduate levels of qualification, rather, than being exclusively for postgraduate awards, which is its positioning from 2001 onwards.

In 2001 the success of the HR strategy of 'Employer of Choice' is brought into question, not by way of a formal strategic document but rather as a series of workshops and powerpoint presentations, entitled, *Best Employer to work for: A review of results by the AMP HR community. Insights and Recommendations* (2001) conducted by human resource professionals at AMP. The aim of the workshops was to discuss the findings of a research project in which AMP, along with 165 other Australian organisations, took part. The focus of the study was to identify the 'best employer to work for in Australia'. Shock waves rippled through the AMP because although the findings showed that the AMP was in the top ten on people practices it was 'near the bottom on employee engagement'. Considering AMP's espoused focus on Employer of Choice, this was the first tangible and significant evidence that something was amiss within the organisation and needed to be acted upon. The study theorised that organisations needed to focus on four key areas to become 'best employer':

- Strong executive commitment
- Aligned and supportive people practices
- Culture and values
- Highly engaged employees

Engagement was defined as when 'people consistently speak positively about the organisation to co-workers, potential employees and most critically, customers (current and potential)'. Furthermore, engagement is demonstrated through the employees' 'intense desire to remain with the organisation' and 'commitment to exert extra effort and are in engaged in work that contributes to business success'.

As part of the workshop series employees were asked what concerned them most about the findings and they reported the following points:

- No sense of urgency to address extremely low engagement

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- Employer of Choice public image verses reality causing cynicism
- Great disconnect in level of engagement between 'top level' and other parts of the business
- Poor communication between senior management and employees
- We don't appear to be addressing key drivers of engagement for different employee segments
- Recruitment is not aligned to AMP 'values and culture'
- Availability of resources to address lack of development
- Capacity to build engagement in an environment of uncertainty
- Our capacity to partner with the business to deliver line manager driven employee engagement.

The workshop approach to AMP strategy building and evaluation prompts me to think about my experiences of writing strategic documents. Through my reflections on my own practices I come to the conclusion that what is written in strategic documents tells only part of the story. Strategic documents aim to present a particular 'high level' picture, which provides the 'official story'. Surrounding the official version, are numerous unofficial stories, often conveyed by word of mouth as tales 'just between you and me....'. For other, perhaps more astute players, who do not engage in such banter, unofficial stories may never materialise beyond a silent thought, or private diary entries from which assumptions are made and connections are drawn, which remain unspoken but, nevertheless, define the moves they make in 'how to go on'.

I organise to have lunch and coffee with a number of people who knew WBL in its early days at both UTS and AMP. Now that I have more contextual information about the discourses which operated at a strategic level within both organisations from 1996-2003, I am able to ask more specific questions as a means of attempting to unearth multiple unofficial stories. In interrogating the discursive elements of unofficial stories at UTS, I am particularly interested in seeking opinions as to why it now seems so difficult to link agendas between work and learning at the university even though it remains a cornerstone of our strategic agenda whereas seven years ago that was not the case. I focus discussions on talk of:

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- How did WBL fit with the strategic agenda at UTS in 1996?
- What role did you play in the design and implementation of WBL at UTS?
- Some have defined WBL as one of a raft of commercial activities that UTS has engaged in during the mid-1990s. In what ways was it 'commercial activity'? How was it different from other mainstream activities at the time?
- How was such difference received by various stakeholders at UTS?
- What did players at UTS think they were going to get out of WBL in the early days?
- Why was it seen to be a good thing to do?
- Insearch was also a key player in WBL. What did Insearch think they were going to get out of WBL in the early days?
- What were some of the key challenges which were faced by early advocates of WBL? Why do you think that it is so difficult to engage in commercial activity such as WBL at UTS?
- Was there other activity at the time which would be classified as commercial activity along with WBL? What was this activity? How did this activity play out? Can you draw any parallels or differences between the story of these other activities and the way WBL has played out?
- Can you draw any broader implications or themes which would help you to explain why commercial activity plays out in this way at UTS?
- Can you imagine how things could be different?

In seeking answers to the questions, I gather stories from a range of people who were involved in the early days of WBL. Their stories throw up the integral link between language, truth making and power. Analytically, Bachrach and Baratz (1967) are useful in developing my thinking in that their seminal work on power in organisations shifted the sense made of power to include not only the power exercised in the taking of decisions but also the power exercised by confining the scope of decision-making to safer issues. Bachrach and Baratz (1970) frame their findings as an interest in both decision-making and non-decision-making. I frame my own inquiry in such a way that I examine discourses that are part of the organisational fabric as well as those that are not, or as in the case of WBL – discourses which simply slip from view.

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Paul, a senior academic at UTS, who was involved in its start-up tells of the strategic framing of WBL:

WBL became a strategic direction in itself. So, it did not fit directly. It was a force fit. I think there was a feeling that UTS's reputation and commitment to practice-based education - and that is something that we have been involved in for the whole life of the institution and several times have attempted to define with some difficulty because it varies according to discipline - there was some feeling that work-based learning was an extension of practice-based learning into learning in the workplace and that was a natural fit and that was argued at the university to the extent that Work-Based Learning became a significant strategic direction for a while... the then Deans of Business and IT went around the world ... and again this was not at the behest of the central university - researching what would be the best model.

He goes on to explain:

I think you got the usual things about strategic directions... the senior management of the university had taken on Work-Based Learning as a kind of mantra but I don't think that they ever dug under the surface to understand what the details were or even to understand that there were any tensions or that there were any differences of opinion about what it may be. They just saw Work-Based Learning as a strategic direction without much thought about what it was actually like.

His comments show how strategies are not necessarily formed as top down but rather actors at various levels may form coalitions and may be champions for a particular initiative for a certain time. There are also clear disjunctures between strategy and implementation. Paul went on to explain that many people, himself included, who were involved in the design phase

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of WBL were well rewarded in terms of promotions. He stressed that although he was not into strategically managing his career he was not so sure of the motives of some others.

Stories of the heady start-up days of WBL contrast with those I experienced in the later years of WBL as well as now when WBL is officially over. Its continued existence is shrouded by prolonged waiting and the waiting occurs for ill-defined reasons. Responses to texts and proposals regarding WBL are constantly redrafted. Equally important is the examination of discourses within the context of Bacharach and Baratz's concept of mobilising bias which incorporates the idea of:

a set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals and institutional procedures ('rules of the game') that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain persons and groups at the expense of others. Those who benefit are placed in a preferred position to defend and promote their vested interests (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970:43-44).

At UTS there are two distinct policy phases of discourses which relate to how WBL was both talked into and subsequently talked out of being. The two distinct policy phases are mirrored in two different arenas of discussion:

Phase 1: "design" (1996 - 2000). Initial advocates of WBL within the university embedded it, for instance, within their research agendas. They privileged inward organisational discourses rather than outward external organisational discourses. Strategic working parties and committees were established to ensure corporate governance of the WBL program at UTS.

Phase 2: "redesign and implementation - Rollout" (1999 – 2003). A significant shift occurred in that the people who were employed to further develop the WBL program at UTS were "outsiders". They privileged outward- rather than inward-looking discourses. However, the implementers invariably had less power within UTS given that their employment status was not as academics but rather as managers and employees of Insearch, the commercial arm of UTS.

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What becomes clear from the discussions is that commercialism is not supported by the culture at UTS beyond 'lip service'. As one UTS colleague puts it:

What is lacking is a service orientation... When it comes to setting up infrastructure they (the academics) see it as a secondary activity. They will support research and teaching well ahead of commercial activities even if it relates to teaching and research. So the culture does not exist. That makes it very difficult... it is not seen as core business.... It is too difficult for them... I have not come across many selection panels... where promotions are based on commercial activities or community service. So I think we pay lip service to the whole area of community: commercial and non-commercial. Promotions are based on research and teaching only... People read between the lines.

I turn to AMP to see if the 'unofficial story' of how discourses shifted between 1996-2003, and the implications this had for the positioning of WBL within that institution:

- > What were the key messages that AMP was espousing in 1996?
- What was WBL designed to do for AMP?
- How did it fit into the strategic agenda at AMP at the time?
- How was the activity received at AMP?
- What did players at AMP think they were going to get out of WBL in the early days?
- Why was it seen to be a good thing to do?

The discursive track we trace at AMP mirrors that of UTS in the sense that in the initial stages of the establishment of the WBL program we hear and feel the presence of an important membership group in our story: a powerful senior management group. Initially, we see how AMP senior managers attempt to use the WBL program as one of its 'organisational change

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tools' by which to position the organisation and its employees as a major 'Corporate Power'. In the words of Simon, a Senior HR Manager in Shared Services at AMP:

AMP was reinventing itself.... It was viewed as a 'brown cardigan brigade company'. It had been there successfully for ... over a hundred years so it is a long time for any company in Australia to succeed but with that success brought a legacy. So AMP was not reinventing itself to meet the new and emerging needs of the finance sector. So that the finance sector was going through this major shake-up: new products were being offered, the traditional channels by which people accessed financial products were changing so it was now even conceivable that individuals could organise their own financial products - not need a broker or an agent. So it meant that AMP had to reinvent itself and the way that it did its business which also meant that the ways in which people operated together needed to change significantly which also meant that the way in which they were led had to change significantly. Learning was not considered in terms of what results it got but rather in terms of activity. So there was a significant shift in AMP towards being results-oriented and being team or collaborative in the way it was working and client-focused.

From the perspective of the senior management membership group, forging links with a tertiary institution made sense in 1996 at AMP because funds were flush. Equally, there was the acknowledgement by senior managers that the capabilities needed to realise the ambitions of becoming a 'global power' were currently beyond those possessed internally within the organisation. Therefore it made sense to seek an external partner in order to develop further capabilities 'in partnership'. Finally, the establishment of a partnership with a university was regarded as an important means for powerful and successful enterprises to demonstrate their position and standing along with other powerful and successful enterprises such as Motorola, Shell and Woolworths, who all lay claim to having a corporate university. Each of these organisations extolled the benefits of such a move in a range of forums, including professional journals, conferences and so on. WBL provided a case, which allowed AMP professionals to join in with their 'peers' to tell their own stories of success in 'working

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knowledge in partnership'. In this way, they too generated an image, both for themselves as professionals and for their organisation, of having successfully made the transition to instituting financially viable as well as more democratic and people-centred approaches to business; the hallmark of corporate organisations for the twenty-first century.

According to Luhmann (1995) studying transitions is particularly interesting because they allow us to examine both the evolutions that do, as well as those that do not, take place. Fat years had turned to hard times as their share value declined precipitously in the wake of ill-considered and major overseas investments. As we will see, by 2001 senior managers at AMP had largely withdrawn from our story of WBL. As rhetoric in the business shifted from 'Employer of Choice' and the importance of 'knowledge assets' to 'hard times' and the need to 'tighten belts' WBL seems to become an ill-fit. However, such truth is not explicitly stated as such. Indeed, even in 2001, during the reign of the second AMP CEO in the lifetime of WBL, Paul Batchelor, an elaborate re-signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between UTS and AMP took place. The launch coincided with release of the Engagement research - the research project which documented the level of engagement that employees had in their organisation. AMP's performance was poor. The results had sent shockwaves through the senior levels of the organisation. A series of strategic meetings and internal reviews was commissioned. The results were misaligned with AMP's discursive focus of 'Employer of Choice' which aimed to position AMP both internally and externally as a leading organisation which cares for the needs of its employees. Senior managers latched on to tenuous evidence such as the re-signing of the MOU with UTS to demonstrate to its people that AMP was an organisation that provided opportunities for its people. A media release entitled 'AMP recommits to UTS work-based learning' (9 May 2001) reports Paul Batchelor's high praise of the WBL program:

Paul Batchelor said that WBL was probably the most outstanding component of AMP's training programs and "very important" to the company's future.

The truth of WBL's demise emerged implicitly as staff responsible for WBL at AMP were made redundant and each of the replacements was, in turn, given broader responsibilities. There

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were eight new temporary assistants for WBL at AMP in 2001. The evidence did not escape the notice of various internal players. As one WBL participant at AMP put it:

You probably noticed that the number of WBL co-ordinators just changed and changed and changed and changed so I think even in the first year or two it must of changed three or four times and that sort of stuff and my guess, it seemed to me that the duration of the WBL co-ordinator got shorter and shorter each time round reflecting that AMP no longer valued it... you noticed that as well didn't you?... It was very interesting....

Furthermore, meetings were cancelled and dates for the quarterly joint management group between senior managers at both AMP and UTS were let slide in favour of dealing with more urgent business. Issues at stake at AMP included pulling out of overseas ventures, implementing radical cost saving measures involving selling off parts of the business and massive redundancies, as well as calling for the resignation of their CEO in September 2002. The aim was no longer to etch for itself the image of a global power but rather one committed to 'going back to basics, going back to our roots' (March 2003 CEO update to AMP Shareholders and Customers): a bid to salvage its image and standing in order to 'buy back' the trust and confidence of the local customers and shareholders. All efforts seemed to be in vain as shareprices plummeted from an all-time peak when first listed in June 1998 and on the first erratic day of trading the price settled on \$23.50. By October 2003 the shareprice had closed at \$6.53.

In spite of the significant discursive shifts that were occurring at both AMP and UTS at the local level, the WBL program pressed on by working tirelessly to make discursive links between the university and corporate organisations. The website 2002 promoted 'learning', 'empowerment', 'knowledge management', and 'partnerships', as well as, 'capability development' in an attempt to link into many of the current work improvement discourses of the day.

The workshops and learning materials also worked hard to convince players that the design of the negotiated curriculum is a 'win-win-win' for all. Discursively the WBL process challenged

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how to determine what counts as knowledge. For, in WBL, the individual student-worker-learner is required to make explicit to the other parties their reflections on 'what they have learnt and need to learn' and to balance such thoughts with 'what their organisation knows and needs to know'. Indeed, central to the integrity of the partnership is the idea that the university is seen to be only one stakeholder in the relationship. Thus, it should not be the university's place to prescribe the curriculum of the WBL program, nor are formal subjects the mainstay of learning in such awards. Rather, the curriculum and content of the award arises out of a process of negotiation between the individual learner, their workplace manager and an academic adviser. Discourses of both organisations are said to be on an 'even footing' and are 'mutually valued'. In WBL, students and the academics co-create a 'new' joint language. Examples of such 'new' language are that in undertaking a postgraduate award through WBL, students choose their 'target award', 'major focus area' and 'areas of learning'<sup>5</sup>. Equally, it is a process by which labelling what they know and need to know and in naming the major focus of their award they make choices about the language they will use to 'write up' and represent themselves as professionals. Furthermore, they also choose past experiences, to be validated as credit for their degrees from a wide range of experiences that may extend well beyond work. Experiences may include those drawn from educational experiences or even private spheres of their lives - committee membership, family duties, personal networks, and so on. However, as they 'write up' the rationale for such choices, which forms the mainstay of their award, such choice is balanced with their reflections on how the knowledge gained from such experiences aligns with the organisation's priorities and, indeed, their own positioning within their firm. Thus, they come to see and re-label their experiential knowledge as being of relevance to their conceptions of work and of their own identity as workers and selves.

The written text has a central position as the site of the 'translation process' between the academic world of work and that of the student-worker-learners' workplace. Interestingly, many students and academics alike see 'writing up' the curriculum of the degree of a WBL

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<sup>5</sup> 'Target award' - is a postgraduate level of award (graduate certificate, graduate diploma or master's degree in business) 'Major focus area' - the nomenclature - or major. In WBL students develop a title focused on their past work experiences and future career goals. 'Areas of learning' - are negotiated 'subjects' of their award. Some areas of learning will be part of their claim for recognition of current capability (up to two-thirds of the credit points can be claimed through RCC). Other areas of learning will be 'Future learning' ('Future learning areas of learning can be gained from attending formal subjects or doing individual work-based projects).

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program as something that needs to be 'got out of the way' before real learning to address knowledge gaps can begin. However, the negotiation process in designing the degree is central to professional learning in the WBL experience. As Usher, Bryant and Johnston (1997:56-57) put it:

In any professional practice,... the principal business is the articulation of text. Practitioners are defined and governed i.e. normalised through a never-ending process of inscription. We are all party to the reproductions of such technologies in the continual generation and amendment of texts in our daily practice. This is not simply a question of having to deal with paperwork, which is often viewed as an impediment to practice as something that one has to get out of the way before the 'real work' can begin .... This is not the case. Documentation is a metapractice, which records and accounts for our practice.

Thus, it is through the 'textual' practices of 'playing' with decisions about what to include and exclude in their negotiated award, as well as what they should 'label' such knowledge, that the student/worker/learners discover what is appropriate and acceptable to both the world of work and the academy. In developing their customised award the student-worker-learners come to see and feel the fuzziness and arbitrary nature of the boundaries of what counts as knowledge. The questions inevitably become, should they include 'teams' and 'collaboration', 'quality' and so on? These are questions which shape some current work discourses. They involve choices about the language that will be used to 'write up' and represent themselves as professionals. In this way, the WBL program material works hard to encourage its students to take up current organisational and academic discourses to shape both how they see themselves - their past, their present and their future as well as that of their organisation. Moreover, the academy is seen to have an explicit role in this process. I turn to a number of my students' stories to see how they made such connections between discourses of the corporate organisation, the academy and the self:

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- How did you make choices about what to include and not include as 'areas of learning' which made up your target award in your WBL program?
- What did you learn about yourself and your professional field in the process?
- Which organisational discourses did you consider when making these choices?
- What helped you to get a sense of academic discourses?
- What did you see to be the tensions and synergies between the university and organisational discourses?
- How did you reconcile these with how you saw yourself as a professional?

In deciding what students felt they could include as well as what they should not include in their target award, many students were quite instrumental in that they focused on how they could optimise the credit points they could claim in their portfolio to count towards the completion of their postgraduate degree. Claire explains how she approached the task of negotiating the focus of her own WBL postgraduate degree:

I think I started thinking that I really want to get the full points...

But WBL also required them to engage in deep learning about their professional practice for such points to be achieved. For in identifying their areas of learning and major focus areas for their award, WBL presented the challenge of learning how to articulate their professional practice in new ways. As one student who had worked as a professional in her field for over twenty-five years puts it:

I think when I started I did not really think I had a profession. I knew I did things and I knew that they were useful to the business. I did not have a label for a lot of the things that I actually did. Some of the things that I did, I thought were trivial and through this process I realised that they were really important... really worth communicating with others in the business....

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WBL presented opportunities to think beyond the task by examining how one's positioning as a professional related to the broader organisational discourses and wider professional communities. Claire explains:

I learnt that I do have a career in the field ... when you put it together and formalise what you know from experience ... it is very saleable. I think that I had given it a clerical rather than professional status. By doing my research ... even talking to people and reading magazines .... I have gone from thinking I am kind of clerical, to thinking no, I actually have a profession, to thinking that I have a very unique profession in Australia.... So it has really raised my whole self-perception.

However, academic discourses are clearly not highly valued within the organisation. Indeed, academic language can 'scare people' in the business. Claire explains that a project that she was working on was seen to be 'academic' by her colleagues and this is something that she needed to 'negate' because:

Academic is a bad word in my workplace... it is a derogatory comment ...  
Academic means impractical, high faluting.. not useful here.

Similarly, Ellen, another WBL student, who works in the IT area of the business, draws differences between industry and university ways of knowing and operating:

Since I was working in the IT industry, I thought its growth in its ways of knowing had no synergy with university background. Uhm ... I think the IT industry is very organic in its growth. It changes rapidly .... you are not really looking at historical learning patterns; you are looking at what is the latest and newest invention and learning on the spot. As that product or software is being developed you have to learn about it at the time that it is being developed. The university obviously takes a more reflective view on learning: you look at what people have learnt in the past and how to put

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that into a present situation. I think my organisation was more of a 'fly by the pants sort of learning environment'.

Nevertheless both Claire and Ellen recognise ways in which the learning they have engaged in at the university contributes to the workplace:

Research, data gathering, proper analysis, uhm.. perhaps a writing style, not so much a language style, but a writing style of putting things out with a convincing argument. A well formed argument.... In the workplace people tend to jump straight into solution mode without looking at 'what is the problem?'... 'what are we trying to sort out?'... I think that that is very undisciplined in the business world in my experience and academia can provide discipline to the way you go about doing things.

Similarly, Ellen explains:

I really had to search and examine the role I was doing and where it fitted within the organisation and try to look at what the university could contribute to that. In my circumstances I knew I was sitting on the border of a technology background and a business background and I needed to merge the two. I guess the university allowed me to really consolidate what I knew in those two areas and critically look at what was missing in my own professional expertise in that area.

Reflecting back on these conversations, I see myself walking with a folder under my arm. It is close to the time when the WBL unit is officially pronounced dead. The words have not been spoken yet but I can feel the imminent closure throughout my body. My nerves are on edge because I care a lot about what we are doing and I am thinking intensely about how what we are doing can be saved. Our problem begins to be framed in my mind as 'How can one counteract other truths that are circling about, other truths that form a sensemaking different to that which we want to believe in?' Perhaps my sense is that the other truths are seen to be much more important than our own in WBL and that the other truths are closing in on us:

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truths that are stealthfully tracking our every move like a gigantic machine far bigger and more powerful than we are. This sensemaking would explain why I begin to work in an extraordinary way. I know I am working emotionally and not as coolly as one would perhaps expect of a 'true' professional. The folder I am delivering in person (rather than posting by internal mail) contains the work of an excellent student who has just completed the first stage of his master's degree through the WBL program. The student is a senior executive with over twenty-five (25) years experience. He works in a prestigious firm. He has documented his incredible work experience evocatively. I become a bit obsessed with using his work, and others like it, strategically. I want someone who counts at UTS to read it. Not for the assessment to be delegated this time to a part-timer or outsider who has no voice here. I do not want the job to be done silently for the sake of efficiency because that would mean that it would, like many other pieces of work similar to it, not connect with even one actor in this organisation. I can see that this has been our practice, not to make waves, not to be a burden but in so doing our meaning and connection have been lost. I am desperate to use the students' work as an agent - a living being that can speak for itself and for us to counteract the discourses denigrating our way of thinking about what doing tertiary education means; to somehow stem the words of 'failure', 'poor student work', 'too much doing - not intellectually rigorous enough' that swirl endlessly around our unit within the academy.

As I walk I smile as memories of Callon (Callon in Law (ed) 1986:214) come to mind and how lovingly he described the way that the scientists came to see the scallops as living actors. Indeed, for the scientists conducting research on how to replenish the stock of scallops in the small French fishing community of St Brieuc Bay, the scallops were equally important as, if not more so, than the fisherman in determining the success or failure of their experiments.

Does *Pecten maximus* really anchor itself? Yes according to the colleagues, the anchorages which were observed are not accidental. Yet, though everyone believes that they are not accidental they acknowledge that they are limited in number. A few larvae are considered to be the official representatives of an anonymous mass of scallops which silently and elusively lurk on the ocean floor. The three researchers negotiate the interessement of the scallops through a

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handful of larvae which represent all the uncountable others that evade captivity.

The student's work is my scallop - I laugh out loud to myself. I want WBL to connect with those who utter dismissive words about WBL and give them direct evidence to challenge their sensemaking. I have booked a meeting with the WBL coordinator in another faculty. It is the time of our meeting, I say what is on my mind and show him the student's work explaining in more detail than he is used to why this is an exemplar. He looks at me a little surprised that I have shown how much I care and at this moment he really wants to help. However, it is a desire borne from something which one knows is already lost. He begins to draft an email - a circular to all staff to ask for an assessor on Faculty staff for the WBL work. It is a familiar story; everyone is too busy. Everyone is already over-stretched with conflicting priorities: research, grant submissions, teaching, marking, meetings, family commitments and so on. Reading the work of such an experienced practitioner and the lessons that he has learnt from his working life is not seen as a privilege - a most powerful way of learning of 'how things really are in organisations'. Rather it is a burden - yet another task to be added to someone's to-do list. The student's work finds an internal assessor only through a personal favour which is now 'called in'.

WBL's tireless attempts to reposition itself are not matched by the organisational rhetoric. It has already slipped away in the rush for more important priorities. WBL is no longer in sight, nor part of either organisation's vocabulary. WBL is shrouded in silence: part of the walking dead.

## CHAPTER 8: TRUTH IS MANAGED THROUGH TIME

A particularly astute organisational player gives me some advice at farewell number one for WBL:

AOP    Keep your head down and nose clean for at least six months and after that you can engage in some more interesting entrepreneurial activity.

JG     (Nod in agreement)

Timing seems to be important in dealing with truth. Six months is appropriate mourning time? Time enough for trust to re-grow? Time enough for the wounds of failure to mend and for one to reposition oneself from non-legitimate to legitimate actor in the field?

JG     I have a 'Z' stamped firmly on my forehead which all can see.

AOP    (He frowns. He does not understand.)

JG     (I am a little uncomfortable that I have to explain my meaning. The moment has passed. I laugh.) You know, Z – it's the grade we give at UTS when a student fails.

AOP    (Taking me seriously. Frowns again.) You shouldn't think like that. You didn't fail. It was doomed from the start.

I think about timing and the advice that I had been given.

- Can you remember that at the close of WBL you gave me the advice to wait for at least six months before I start further commercial activity? Why did you give me that advice? What was it based on? Does it relate to your own experience in any way?
- You also mentioned that in many senses WBL was doomed from the start. Why do you think this was so? Does your statement that WBL was doomed from the start relate to your own experience in any way? I would be very interested to hear your story about it.
- When do you think the timing will be right for the university to 'seriously' engage in commercial activity?

The advice of six months waiting time related to how AOP anticipated that the closing of WBL would have been perceived within the academy:

The fact that WBL had been closed down, uhm... for a lack of commercial success would have been how it was perceived. And that that initiative had cost the university a significant amount of money would have been how it was seen by the average Joe. And therefore, uhm.. having just cost the university a lot of money uhm.. it would behove to you to wait until that negative image had dissipated before starting another commercial activity which by its definition would be risky and time-consuming.....

You needed to establish yourself in a more traditional research area which would give you a credibility that would be more akin to their mainstream focus at the moment... that would enable you to regroup and move away from that closing down, negative image...

Why I think that? Past management experience really ... Management is something that you learn from the workplace... I guess that is something I picked up: if you have had a bad spot, you keep your head

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down and don't do anything controversial for a while until your brownie points are up again.... Commercial activities... there's no doubt about it, in the current environment, they are a bit murky.

AOP puts it that there are two main reasons why WBL was doomed from the start:

Why? Not because... there isn't a market for it. But again, within the structure and reward system within the university.... You see if you think about it, you were a virtual centre in as much that you were to use the resources of the schools in the faculty to help give the academic credibility to the program but there's no reward system for the academics to be involved and learn something new. In other words, were they going to be made a professor by making it a success? No, and so ... there is no way that until it was made clear by the Dean that if you succeed in this and help then that's going to be counted as part of your 30% surcharge or salary. It's individual KPIs as we would see it in industry. Normally, you get paid a certain percentage based on corporate profit and then you have 4 or 5 Key Performance Indicators that make up your package. Until you encourage people to work outside their square in a teaching environment the lecturers would always be too busy, not turn up, and be unreliable. So that was the first design problem that I saw and I did not see how that would be delivered.

The second problem is that the university has only two faculties (Business being one of them) that make a profit at the moment .... so all the others have to be funded by those two so ... any new program you start something like 50 % of the money you make has to go back to the centre to look after the cripples in effect and the head office overheads, which have also continuously gone up in the last ten years ... So that is a huge impost on new initiatives to lumber them with such overheads. And to try to build a new model is a hell of a heavy weight.

The answer is, uhm.. you look at it this way. There have been no new commercial initiatives that have been successful in the last 5 probably 10 years.... That would tell you how difficult it is to do new things.

Until the university wants to be revolutionary ... I do not see the university at the moment having the will or the capability to be in that space at this time. That's to be a leader and not a follower.

He also stresses that it would 'take a disaster' for universities to engage more fully in commercial activity.

On the eve of WBL closing, I get a call. It is one of the WBL participants. He has already received the email about the closing of WBL. We do not feel the need to discuss it. He is after all in IT and therefore has more Aramis tales of his own to tell than most. He is a people person. He knows me well enough to know what I am going through without asking. He is a technical man; an action man. His motto for life is simple: 'get back on the horse and keep riding'. Therefore, the purpose of his call is to 'talk of an interesting offer'. He is wondering if UTS would be interested in becoming involved in a new initiative in their organisation – the *Action Learning Initiative* – a pilot program run by a consultant in conjunction with a reputable professional consultancy house. The program is designed to support senior managers to think more strategically and rigorously about how and why they choose to adopt particular business solutions for organisational problems or priorities.

Significantly, the WBL participant is a senior executive in a large Australian financial institution. He has a lot of scope in his job and is responsible for at least three hundred staff. He is also a strong advocate of WBL. I have taken time and care in the last eighteen months in helping him to achieve his goal of gaining a postgraduate degree. He made a major claim for recognition of current capability. He gains the maximum points possible for his portfolio claim: forty-eight credit points which constitutes two-thirds of the credit points of a Master's degree in recognition of what he already knows. The achievement was important to him both professionally and personally. Insight into the reasons why this is so could be seen in a

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reflective essay entitled, 'My odyssey into the world of academia' which he wrote at the end of stage one of the WBL process.

*(Pooh) ' I am a bear of very little brain and long words bother me. '*

Whilst I am not a bear, and long words no longer bother me, I did for many years consider my brain in an academic sense to be somewhat smaller or less capable of knowledge absorption than those who spent their late teens or early twenties gaining that all important "piece of paper". This essay is a personal reflection describing the undoing of my self-imposed narrow view of what constitutes learning. It chronicles the slow but undeniable realisation that my career progression was in part due to my ability to learn from experiences and situations that could easily be dismissed as normal or just plain old work.

Through the work based learning (WBL) process I have given myself the luxury of time, time to review past experiences in a new light. In addition to time I had a framework in which to put my experiences and capabilities allowing me to analyse the value not so much of the output, but rather of the learning experience. Through this essay I will take you the reader with me on my roller-coaster odyssey, from the introduction to the concept of recognised current capability (RCC) through the highs of rationale writing, into the depths of despair as I wrangled with those pesky supporting statements. Finally I will take you to the quiet place I found when at last I realised my brain was not as small as I had once imagined and I knew that within me I had the knowledge, capability and desire to fulfill a dream long ago buried in my subconscious to obtain a serious qualification.

And later in a speech he gave as part of a marketing activity earlier in the year when WBL was still working towards creating a future for itself he said:

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Actually, I wanted to gain a Masters. I've got of those few hundred people who work for me, most of them are single and double degree people,... so I actually really need to have something to prove that I know what I am talking about.

Both comments point to the importance of legitimacy and the validation of knowledge gained from experience and furthermore that university education undertaken in such a way that WBL privileges shapes the worker's identity in academically acceptable ways. It also points to the vulnerability of managers - their own self-doubts, and the role that learning can play in washing some of their fear away.

Given the significant scope in his position and longstanding career within his own organisation as a valued and trusted employee, Tom was one of a number of participants who could operate as a 'boundary spanner'<sup>6</sup> (Adams 1976) to help us to make institutional links between his organisation and our own. The timing for his willingness to take on such a role was not by chance. Had WBL still been alive, Tom's call would have been seen to be right on temporal target. The academy had validated his knowledge gained from the workplace in this way and accepted him into the fold of the 'world of academia', which he, and it, had previously positioned him as being outside. Now with his dual identity of successful organisational player as well as successful student he was willing to operate as a conduit to establish a working relationship between his institution and our own. Being a skilled organisational player his first move is a gentle one in that he was not taking too many risks. We would be working not directly and solely with his institution but rather in conjunction with a reputable professional consultancy firm and a trusted consultant who had, I later learnt, at one time been a full-time employee at the financial institution where he was now asked to do consultancy work. Prior to this engagement he had headed up the Executive Development Unit in the Human Resources Department.

However, that WBL was dead meant that institutionally, within my organisation, it was the worst possible time for such an offer to be made. WBL was not yet cold in its grave. The move was too late to save it from death, but also too early for such activity to be seen as a 'rebirth'

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(the appropriate committees and lessons learnt had not yet been established let alone formulated!). Arriving with 'new activity' so early could only be seen as 'non-legitimate' and 'madness'.

I was in search of a respected and powerful institutional player within my organisation. First, I go to a professor with a reputable research centre with whom I had developed a relationship of trust over the last three years and had worked with closely on various other initiatives. The dates, which had already been set by the financial institution, were not possible for him to work with me on this occasion. I was disappointed. I knew it would be harder for me now.

I remember snippets of a conversation - a chance meeting with another professor earlier the previous week. He talked of his new role in establishing commercial activity within the Faculty, and had mentioned that the Dean had suggested that he meet with me. Off then to a meeting with the second professor – a commercial man.

I see myself coming out of the second professor's office. He had listened with interest. Our first meeting had been a success. I laughed at myself as further flashes of the article 'Some Elements of a Sociology of translation: domestication of the scallops and the fisherman of St Brieuc Bay' (1986:203), written by Latour's life long collaborator Callon, now 'attaches' themselves again to my brain:

**1. *The problematisation or how to become indispensable***

Once the researchers returned home, the researchers wrote a series of reports and articles in which they disclosed the impressions of their trip and the future projects they wished to launch. With their own eyes they had seen the larvae anchor themselves to collectors and grow undisturbed while sheltered from predators. Their question is simple: is this experience transposable to France and, more particularly to the Bay of St. Brieuc?

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<sup>6</sup> A person with social capital in a field who can develop external links with others in another field. They are often seen to have a gift for living in several

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Unlike the long lead times required for negotiating a deal for WBL the negotiations moved quickly on the financial institution's part. Long lead times were reported as one of the key points outlined in the eight-page document *Reasons for not applying for Director WBL position* (2003:5) which were used as a critical piece of evidence by the Dean to discontinue the WBL program in the Faculty of Business, UTS:

*Long lead times.* Individuals and organisational partnerships have long lead times because the product is so complex; because HR managers are more sensitive to L & D strategies for senior managers because their time is more valuable; because funding a cohort is more expensive than funding an individual that embarks on a course themselves; because an MOU requires greater organisational buy-in and support than simply hiring a trainer to present an in-house course.

The workshop dates for the *Action Learning Initiative*, which forms the basis of our joint venture, have already been established by the trusted consultant in negotiation with the sponsor of the program, the Executive Director, as well as four of his team of senior executive staff. The start date is three weeks hence. 'Time was at a premium'. The program will run with or without us at UTS.

The sponsor, the Executive Director, has a hankering for legitimacy for his program. Significantly, I later learn that in his previous job he had participated in a similar program himself. It too had been linked to a university. The program had been important to his own professional development. Now one year into working at the financial institution, he is keen to 'make his mark on the organisation'; sponsoring a similar program to that which he had experienced with sixteen of his 'best minds' is one way of doing that. He suggests to his executive team that it would be a good idea to 'get accreditation for the program'. The rush is on to find a university to do the deed. Tom knows people at UTS. He makes the call. It is as easy as that.

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worlds at the one time.

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I had thought clearly about how to approach the question of accreditation prior to the meeting which is set up for me with the trusted consultant. I know that the lead time is short, but I want to hear him out. I ask a series of clear questions – ‘Do you have documentation for the program?’ ‘Where are the learning outcomes, assessment etc?’ I was not surprised that his practices had not been formally documented. I provide contextual background about the complexities of seeking accreditation, the requirement for formal documentation within universities and the time required for such outcomes to be achieved. Next, I respond to a question about ‘our value proposition’ by quickly disaggregating WBL. I reframe WBL in my mind not as a ready-made product but rather as a series of ‘knowledge services or solutions’. The proposal I put forth is designed to provide the academic rigour required to hold the initiative in better stead at UTS so that it can consider its accreditation at the conclusion of the pilot. I take up the language that I hear the consultant use. I present the proposal as comprising ‘bundled services’ which include ‘three lines of activity’<sup>7</sup>. First, access to library resources (to ensure that participants engaged in professional reading – a pre-requisite for any postgraduate study), second academic adviser support for each of the four action learning projects (to ensure academic input into the project, increase their visibility at UTS and institutional buy-in). Finally, the proposal includes advice at the conclusion of the program on accreditation pathways at UTS which may be pursued once outcomes are better understood by both parties. The scope of potential collaboration was ‘soft-set’<sup>8</sup> within the space of two meetings. I was swept away with excitement. The initiative represented a small (hopefully non-threatening) collaborative activity, which I could use to cut some ‘commercial teeth’.

Given the speed with which the negotiations had progressed some internal paperwork and official ‘socialising’<sup>9</sup> of the so-called ‘commercial activity’ needed to be engaged in with other internal stakeholders at UTS. I consult with the professor – the commercial man. We start with a powerful player in the School of Management.

PP: (shocked. looks sideways. Face turns red. ) I don’t understand what they are getting out of this. What are we offering? Where is the paperwork?

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<sup>7</sup> Language gained from the trusted consultant, which I playfully incorporated into my everyday.

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... This reminds me of WBL in the very early days. Corporates wanted things to be done immediately. .... We took two years to get it up and running and by that time they were not interested anymore.

I can see the organisational fear in the eyes of the powerful player. I watch him take his glasses off and clean them. It is day two of my new contract and our first 'official meeting'. The timing is unfortunate.

Our meeting has taken him back in time. In his mind we are back at the beginning of the story of WBL. How interesting. I bring into focus other parts of my positioning in the field. For the moment, I am not the commercial wheeler and dealer. I am the researcher. He is giving me an organisational narrative that I can follow. WBL moved too quickly, but nevertheless too slowly. WBL was a failure. WBL was dirty. This is a problem for him. He does not have time to discuss this.

PP: I do not know what you expect of me. I have given you options. (I think about this – yes, he has given me options – none of which say that I should not pursue such activity. Making links with industry is, after all, one of our stated strategic priorities.)

PP: What has this to do with your job spec? We will have to talk to XX (the Dean). I was not clear that this was part of what you do.

JG: Well it was what we were all doing. It was all of our responsibilities to build client relationships in WBL particularly with people with significant scope in their positions such as Tom. This is a lead that has taken over twelve months to come to fruition. We do not have many

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participants with that much scope who have the pull to get us involved in different knowledge-building roles with their organisations but we do have a few. I anticipate that this sort of offer may be made again. Relationships such as these are like gold in helping us to deliver on the university's strategic priority of building links with industry.

I listen and watch carefully in this meeting. A further extract from Callon's article (1986:207) comes to mind:

Each entity enlisted in the problematisation can submit to being integrated into the initial plan, or inversely, refuse the transaction by defining its identity, its goal, projects, orientations, motivations or interests in another manner. In fact the situation is never so clear cut. As the phase of problematisation has shown, it would be absurd for the observer to describe entities as formulating their identity and goals in a totally different manner. They are formed and are adjusted only during action.

I grapple to pull myself back into line. The need for a good dose of 'impression management' (Goffman 1959) springs to mind with his rules to organise social interaction (who is able to do and say what to whom and in what way).

The focus of dramaturgical discipline is to be found in the management of one's face and voice. Here is the crucial test of one's ability as a performer. Actual affective response must be concealed and an appropriate affective response must be displayed (Goffman 1959 reproduced in Hatch and Schultz (2004:41)).

Too late for that I hear an internal voice say. 'I have said and done too much already'. 'Never too late!' A counteracting voice screams back. I listen to the latter and my thoughts skip to another of Goffman's terms, 'face work', by which he means the smoothing of interaction by

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maintaining ceremonial order. It occurs to me later that, in practice, I had taken the term to its most literal meaning by refocusing on a very small matter at hand. I spend some time concentrating on my lips, willing them into what I hope is an 'appropriate smile'.

I apologise for taking so much of his time. He adds that he has another ten meetings on that day. I feel pangs of guilt and sorrow for I know this is surely true. A theoretical mental audit takes over my everyday thinking. I know that I have done anything but pass Callon's first obligatory passage point as far as he is concerned. 'Problematisation: or how to be indispensable'? No, our encounter has manifested the meaning of its 'faux amis'<sup>10</sup> 'problematisation: simply being a problem'. I also apologise because as I get up to leave I almost take the black jumper that hangs off the back of the chair on which I was sitting. I stop before I do so and laugh at the absurdity of my action because I am wearing an overcoat. I realise that the jumper is not mine but his. I say 'Well, that tops off a great start to our relationship. Now I am going to steal your jumper'. He says nothing. He had grown hot in the meeting and I had grown stone cold. For I see who I am in his eyes. I am not in the School of Management. I am out on a limb. I am on contract and have one of a few options to take. One is a choice to bow to internal politics which amounts to canning the initiative, sitting and supporting the students and finishing my PhD as well as making myself into a useful internal player. Teaching the hoards of undergraduate students springs to mind. The second option is to do each of the above in addition to engaging in the commercial activity that I wish to help the university to achieve. It is not only out of altruism that I wish to do this but also because the offer has made me live again in WBL time – an opportunity to prove myself and its relevance. The offer has transformed into a series of dashes and dots, that cold, hard line that in my mind, I had drawn and visually watched myself step over as I sat in the Dean's office a few weeks earlier and heard his voice say over and over again:

There is no one internally or externally who can take on WBL.

The moment of truth when WBL was first talked out of being – pronounced dead.

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<sup>10</sup> Faux amis – a French term which literally means false friends. The English equivalent is 'false cognates'; words which look like and are pronounced alike in two languages, however, carry different meanings.

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I know that refusing the offer would amount to giving way to organisational fear: a personal risk which I am not prepared to take. I resolve to move forward in time. For I have the freedom as well as the burden of one who is an outsider. Additionally, given my status I am not sure whether I now need to prepare myself for professional work inside or outside the academy. I choose to take action to incorporate the acceptance of the offer into my everyday thinking.

But other things have come out of this meeting. Simultaneously, I have renewed interest in going back in time to test the theory of the powerful player. I am interested in investigating whether there are clear parallels between what I am now attempting to do and previous activity in WBL from 'before my time' in the early days of 1996 as discussions between UTS and AMP first began to take shape. I begin a temporal analysis of lessons learnt by reconstructing a chronology of events which have led to WBL being pronounced dead:

- When was contact first made between UTS and AMP?
- Who was involved in the negotiations from UTS and from AMP?
- What was spoken about – what was the main thrust of what AMP wanted?
- What was their reaction to the plan?
- Do you see a link between the timing of WBL in 1996 and a significant transition that UTS was attempting to undertake at the time?
- What were the internal politics around the setting up of the initiative at the time? At AMP? UTS?
- When did the Middlesex people come out?
- Who invited them, and why?
- What did they advise?
- When did the program actually start its first intake?
- Why did it take 3 years to set up?
- What was done during that time?
- What was AMP's reaction to this time-lag between their initial inquiry and the program finally taking off?
- Who was involved in this set up at UTS/AMP?

The stories of time that emerge from various people who knew WBL from its early days are that negotiations surrounding WBL commenced in 1996 with a Statement of Understanding agreed upon by both AMP and UTS in October of that same year. Negotiations involved senior academics in three faculties at UTS: Business, IT and Education as well as senior managers in the Tower. One senior manager at the faculty level describes some of the various differences of opinion between players within the academy which emerged within the design phase of WBL:

People just make their own interpretations of what it might be and then you end up with these tensions about where it is going. Certainly,

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although Insearch... had perhaps a different view than ... the Faculty of Business, eventually the Insearch team was brought into a unit that was set up in the Faculty of Business but there was also an academic group set up with a Chair and again there were not necessarily disagreements but certainly their views of what Work-Based Learning was were actually quite different: the Insearch team was more profit motivated whereas the Chair had a more academic view ... of what they were trying to achieve.

The first pilot group of participants did not commence the program until the end of 1998. There was a lot of ground work to be engaged in, particularly at UTS to establish WBL, for it was recognised from the outset that these awards were different from traditional UTS programs. In May 1997, Derek Portwood, a key player from the University of Middlesex, UK was invited to UTS. Middlesex University had been instrumental in developing a similar framework of awards for both undergraduate and postgraduate students to the WBL program at UTS. Portwood identified five objectives for UTS and Insearch as part of a series of workshops:

- 1) To establish UTS as the national leader of work-based learning partnerships in Australia
- 2) To develop and implement institutional systems, procedures and practices which enable work-based learning partnership initiatives at UTS
- 3) To initiate and test work based learning partnership developments through a leading agency comprising the faculties of Business and Mathematical and Computing Science in collaboration with Insearch
- 4) To develop and quality test curriculum frameworks, subject modules and learning instruments through pilot developments by the leading agency, especially with AMP
- 5) To engage in appropriate staff development, building teams and individual expertise in work-based learning at UTS

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AMP senior managers were also invited to the workshops and it is after these discussions that they committed to being a major partner. The input of Middlesex University was seen as a vital turning point. As one AMP senior manager who reflects of the early days of the negotiations put it:

The breakthrough for us came when the guy from Middlesex University came out because he was a guy who was able to translate between the two of us. We had actually reached an impasse. From AMP's perspective we were ready to say 'It is all too hard. We won't proceed'. But when the guy from Middlesex came out he had a business hat and a university hat so he was able to communicate with our business colleagues around the university issues and helped us understand. He was also able to explain to the university the business imperative so that was a bit of a breakthrough. For us we saw a shift in UTS thinking and we saw them embrace the Middlesex model more and they started to talk more about the whole idea of packaging what learners were doing rather than course work in another disguise. Once they had made that paradigm shift we then started to get traction. Next complication came with the bureaucracy of the system and this how do you manage ugh ... all the bureaucracies all the paperwork and all the documentation in order that the university could be guaranteed of the quality of the standards of what they were wanting to produce as graduates. The other difficulty was that as we started accessing the personnel of the university they were of the old paradigm. It was very difficult for them to find people who were prepared to work with AMP employees and think of it from the business perspective. They were still back in discipline learning and dispensers of learning. They did lots of telling and were reasonably arrogant. So bureaucracy and the level of arrogance of the supervisors/advisers was another big issue.

Time and the differences between academic and corporate sensemaking of the concept are further points of tension raised in an article that was written as a reflective piece on the early days of the implementation of WBL by Jenny Onyx, the Head of the School of Management at the time of the establishment of the WBL program as well as the Chair of the WBL Programmes Committee, it is noted that:

as early as April 1997, 'response time' was identified as a problem... Those Faculty of Business members of the working group who were negotiating directly with the client experienced considerable pressure from the client for a rapid turnaround. For instance, the client expected a quick approval from UTS for the course accreditation document. It was unsympathetic to the university requirements of an extensive approval process which went from Board of Studies back to the work-based learning programmes, then to Faculty Board, back to the Board of Studies and finally to Academic Board. What should in the client's eyes have taken two or three weeks in fact took two months (and that was fast tracked compared to conventional course approvals). The pressure on the working group created considerable frustration and stress on individual academics, sometimes expressed in strong statements referring to the legal contract and contractual obligations to the client. Such statements, while perhaps understandable within a market discourse, generated anxiety and friction in an academic environment where freedom and autonomy are highly prized. From a university perspective, and given the collegiate process of review, it was essential that approvals be carefully considered and involve the academic community, in part to ensure adequate quality control.(Onyx 2001:133).

An incident interrupts my everyday life within the institution as I write these words and links me again to the story of AMP. I receive an email from a student of mine, a research assistant at AMP. He is doing his last subject in his WBL degree. He is writing to tell me that he has been made redundant and that the organisation's archives are being closed down. It is still

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being kept a secret. This is putting more pressure on him and his team. Their team had twenty-five researchers. Now they are down to three. Soon there will be one. They have been charged with the responsibility of dismantling that which they have built. It is a familiar story. I reply that I am sorry and ask if I can come in for a visit.

It is the day of our agreed meeting. I see myself walking into the AMP head office at Circular Quay. I have not been here for many months. I meet with Rick and his colleagues. We share some stories of organisations and test out some ideas which seek to piece together how UTS and AMP came together to engage in WBL.

My conversation progresses carefully with them until I notice that they understand and encourage what I am doing. I tell them of my project to examine lessons learnt and enrol them as my co-conspirators.

I ask them about the contextual background of AMP in 1996, for what I wish to do is to link the events of WBL to the broader contextual backdrop of the organisation to get a sense of how AMP was tracking when contact with UTS was first made and what could count as some key events at the time of its initiation till now in 2003.

- Do you see a link between the timing of the commencement of WBL in 1996 and a significant transition that AMP was attempting to undertake at the time?
- How was AMP attempting to position or represent itself at that time?
- What of the staff, in what ways was it seen that they would need to think and act differently to take them forward in AMP's new positioning?

Their stories tell of the mammoth changes that AMP was engaging in as part of the process of preparing for its demutualisation in which WBL was clearly identified as one of the change management strategies:

1998 was when AMP demutualised so that was a big turning point in our history.... In 1996 we had George Trumball as CEO and he was very much a man that had a background in HR and had probably more interest in training, and HR and development ... than previous CEOs. AMP traditionally had actuaries as their CEOs and I think the old AMP staff were very important and they took good care of their staff, but probably the CEO knew very little about training and HR and therefore left it to the HR people to do it. In 1996 there was a lot of emphasis on change management because going from a mutual company to a listed company was going to involve very basic changes to the way we worked and there was a lot of effort put into changing the actual way the average employee thought and operated.

My co-conspirators agree to take part in further meetings. They also uncover various organisational documents and newspaper clippings to help me with my detective work. However, they warn that I should not take too long in coming back because they fear that they will be gone by the end of the year.

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As I am leaving my first meeting with the research assistants they give me a copy of *A History of the AMP* written by the controversial Australian historian Geoffrey Blainey (1999). It traces the organisation's history from the day it began in 1849 to the day it was demutualised in 1998. This is significant. The end of his story is the beginning of my story. I stand in the lift. The book is tucked conspicuously under my arm. I focus on my surroundings. I observe the people. The building has a different feel about it. It is somewhat hushed. It is not as frantic. I am not sure whether what I am feeling is borne from the sense that I have of its corporate decline or if it is real that one can now feel its decline seeping from the walls. I get out of the lift and notice that the café – once the heart of the organisation - has been closed down. The opulence of its magnificent view of Sydney Harbour is juxtaposed with the now empty chairs, closed shutters and furniture in disarray. One man sits alone with today's newspaper spread flat in front of him. He holds his bowed head in his hands as he silently studies the career section. Bad move I think: 'Whoever made the decision to close down the café does not know of the power of the everyday in managing truth in organisations'. In down times people need the routinisation of normalcy more than ever. To eat in the canteen, as well as to talk informally with others in a communal space, was an integral part of the organisational life that I had observed and been a part of at AMP. I leave the building and make my way through the city. By contrast, everyone seems to be walking at too frantic a pace. My thoughts return to the research assistants and others I have known and also imagined at AMP and suddenly I am struck by the tragedy of it all. I yearn to tell the story of AMP, WBL, UTS, collapse, 'bad timing' and the will to survive.

From various sources of information, the stories as well as books, websites and newspapers, I develop a mental map of key events and their chronology in the history of the AMP from 1996 - 2003.

Significantly, it is 1996, two years before the AMP's demutualisation and listing on the stock exchange, that the story of WBL begins at both UTS and the AMP. The timing is significant because it marks a transition point in the history of the AMP. It marks the move to officially recognise itself, and to be recognised by others, as a corporate organisation and in so doing to sever its roots with its history as a mutual provident society. However, what we learn from the

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course of events that take hold at the AMP, taking it from financial boom to near corporate collapse by 2003, is that it is perhaps harder to sever roots than first imagined.

Established in 1848 by its founder, the Anglican clergyman, Reverend W. H. Walsh, the AMP's original social agenda was to protect families against poverty. Describing the context in which the AMP was established, Blainey comments (1999:2):

The government offered no sick pay and no child care. There was no money for the unemployed, no invalid pension and no old age pension. Most people in trouble had to fend for themselves.

A common sensemaking of the AMP and its history emerges from various employees stories. The protestant religious values and the mantra of 'a sure friend in troubled times' which underpinned the original social agenda at the AMP, came to be seen to be long 'out of step' with government social policy in Australia in the late twentieth century as well as with contemporary business practices. By the 1990s the AMP board members and many senior executives felt the need to finally distance themselves from such an 'old fashioned' and 'philanthropic' venture grounded in good will and civic and religious sympathies. There was a sense, both internally and externally, that the 1990s heralded 'new challenges' which required a new business model. It was also acknowledged that no insurance company establishing itself afresh would choose a mutual as its business model. The AMP's demutualisation also had the blessing of the federal and state governments. Locked-up value would be liberated in this scenario (Instead, of course, it was wasted, squandered, lost.)

The 'new challenges' facing the organisation were primarily seen in terms of the idea that the AMP had 'outgrown the Australian market' and that to survive in a financial sector which, through deregulation, had become far more competitive; growth needed to be sought by exploiting markets beyond Australia's shores. The 1990s were marked by great optimism with regard to the opportunities that the global economy held for Australian business.

The need for demutualisation was a way of making sense of AMP's past and linking it to a future profitability that its board and executives imagined as a perfect future, one which had

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been developing during the time of Ian Salmon, CEO at AMP from 1991-1994. Significantly, many senior managers reflecting on this time at the AMP comment that Salmon was seen as an 'outsider' in AMP in spite of his twenty-five years of service in the organisation. His 'outsider' status is attributed to a recruitment practice unprecedented until the time of Salmon's appointment whereby the choice of a new CEO was made from the rank of senior managers who 'had given their entire working life to the Society' (Blainey 1999:310). That Salmon, in contrast with previous CEOs, had begun his career with a competitor insurance company, Eagle Star Insurance, was a point of contention for other senior managers. Salmon's appointment reflected a first move on the part of the Chairman of the Board at AMP, Balderstone, to 'do things differently'. The changes instigated can be traced to strategic operational documents 1991 and 1992 conducted by Philip Twynham, and directly supervised by Salmon, which drew heavily on the expertise of McKinsey Consultants who had been instrumental in introducing change initiatives at CSR and BHP. However, the seeds of the complexities of such business ventures were already present in two of AMP's failed attempts to engage in a merger.

In 1994, the traditional leadership pathway to CEO was even more profoundly challenged than with the appointment of Salmon when George Trumball, an American, thus not even a fellow countryman, became CEO of AMP. Trumball was a 'cosmopolitan' not a 'local' to use the terms which framed Gouldner's seminal papers on latent and manifest identities (Gouldner 1958). He was appointed specifically because of his outsider status. The organisational discourse in circulation at the time was that AMP was in desperate need of a 'shake up' and Trumball was identified as the man to do it.

In 1997 Trumball made perhaps the most significant appointment in his career when he hired Paul Batchelor as his new Chief Financial Officer. Batchelor was to challenge Trumball's leadership in 1999.

Although the demutualisation in June 1998 was at first to exceed expectations, in that its share price was initially over 20 dollars, it created new problems for the burgeoning company and CEO in that funds were flush: 7 billion dollars in spending money. GIO was the first significant and disastrous purchase. It violated management rules of thumb in a number of

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ways and came to be widely seen in the business as a 'textbook case in bad timing and bad management'. First, it was a hostile takeover which meant that AMP did not gain access to the true picture of GIO's financials. Second, GIO was involved in the reinsurance business which was high risk. Indeed, in the following year AMP would need to write-off 1.2 billion dollars; a debt that rocked AMP to its very foundations. In 1998, the purchase of Hendersons and Pearl, followed. The purchase of Pearl was the biggest takeover ever experienced in Britain by a company from a foreign country. Soon those business ventures also faltered. At the heart of the problem were capital guaranteed policies sold to millions of British policy holders. Instead of people's investments rising and falling like Australian pensions, insurers had an obligation to pay back capital invested to insurance holders. Some policies also guaranteed bonuses.

Although many in the business maintained that it was on the Chief Financial Officer's advice that AMP engaged in the purchase of the various companies, it was Trumball who took the rap for the failure of the ventures. Trumball resigned in August 1999.

The signing of the MOU for WBL was part of the preparations for the demutualisation. WBL and UTS were swept up in the euphoria of the early success of the demutualisation which significantly fell into later decline as the burgeoning business was soon marred by the significant problems: the failing UK business; the purchase of GIO and subsequent sale to the Queensland-based, Suncorp Metway; various governance and transparency issues such as the National Australia Bank bid, board sackings and resignations, and related leadership crises, as well as decisions to pull out of the India and China bid which resulted in mammoth redundancies. Such was the business that Andrew Mohl (the current CEO at the AMP) inherited on Batchelor's resignation in September 2002.

Thus far, I have told the historical story in broad brushstroke terms but to feel the effects of time we need to take a different tack. For example, the filing cabinet that now stands in the administrator's office in WBL tells a lot about timing as it is experienced. I look through various files and am confronted by the incidents that have marked these people's lives. Most have had at least one, if not several, restructures in the time since their enrollment. Given that participants are also generally mature students, the average age bracket being 35-50,

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there is also a higher proportion of illness than with younger students on standard MBA programs - not only their own illness but also that of partners, children and parents for whom, given their age, they are more often than not the 'responsible adult', which, in many instances, means becoming the 'primary carer'. The interruptions of life and work significantly impact on their study patterns. But paradoxically, there is an expectation by senior managers at AMP and UTS as well as the students that completion rates will be quicker than normal awards but also more flexible so that they can 'fit' around the contingencies of work.

My mind wanders and settles on the WBL program and the assumptions made about time within its parameters. WBL was premised on the assumption that workers design their own curriculum based on their work. The program involved students examining the strategic priorities of their organisation, and seeing ways in which such strategy was reflected in their business units and their own professional development. The idea was that they should focus in particular on the last five years of their work experience to build a portfolio of 'what they know' and to use their performance agreement to identify areas of focus for the formal subjects and work-based projects that they would incorporate into their negotiated degree in order to align with 'what they need to know' by balancing the present with future plans - making projections about where they want to be, strategically, in their career as well as making projections about where their organisation will position itself within the next three years. In this way, it was anticipated that strategic links between work and their own performance could be forged.

WBL parallels what Kane, Abraham and Crawford (1994), in studying management attitudes towards training and staff development (TDS), refer to as human resource planning, in that it is a long-term investment, with a 'focus on creating a tight fit between TDS and targets in the Human Resources Plan (HRP)'. The argument they present is that the world has changed and the nature of learning and knowledge is changing along with it (Drucker 1993; Kennedy 1993; Kotter 1995; Lash and Urry 1994; Reich 1992). Senge (1990:283), a champion of the learning organisation, also talks of the value of reflective learning for the improvement of business performance, suggesting more holistic and learner-centred ways of knowing such that WBL privileged:

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The 'compartmentalisation of knowledge' creates a false sense of confidence. For example, the traditional disciplines that influence management - such disciplines as economics, accounting, marketing, and psychology - divide the world into neat subdivisions within which one can often say, 'this is the problem and here is the solution'. But the boundaries that make the subdivisions are fundamentally arbitrary - as if it is purely 'an economic problem' or 'an accounting problem'. Life comes to us whole. It is only the analytic lens we impose that makes it seem as if problems can be isolated and solved. When we forget that it is 'only a lens', we lose the spirit of openness.

Organisations, Senge argues, with decreasing timeframes are seen to encourage behaviour which is too reactive and focused on solutions rather than encouraging of inquiry and more reflective practices. When viewed in this light a program such as WBL with its focus on reflective practice is understood to teach people how to align their own personal and professional goals with those of their organisation. The focus is on learning-how-to learn for it is knowledge that is now of premium value to the business. However, this presents a significant challenge for worker-learners as they attempt to link to work which is increasingly in turmoil, its focus chaotic, as business units are closed down, teams restructured, or made redundant. How does one keep abreast of such changes and have them reflected in one's learning program?

My mind slips back to my first experience with implementing the WBL program when I first joined the program at the commencement of 2000. I refer to my professional journal to jog my memory.

Not all students turned up. Of those that turned up many are in between jobs and thus do not have formal job specs or performance agreements outlining what their job entails. Lack of understanding of the commitment that enrolment in a postgraduate program involves..... One of the major outcomes of the first workshop is to discuss how we learn from lessons in the past through the practice of reflective

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practice. There is no understanding of reflection and its link with action. Reflection is thought to be akin to navel gazing. A practice that academics are renowned for in their opinion - but not busy professionals in corporate organisations.

Paradoxically, taking a long term view of work was identified as a need in the organisation but the stakeholder was seen within the business to encourage an increasingly short-term view of business. I decide to interview some students in order to surface some of the tensions of timing and the integration of reflective learning at work.

- WBL is about reflective practice. What does this mean to you?
- What was your knowledge of or experience with reflective practice in the workplace prior to commencing WBL?
- How comfortably do the principles of reflective practice sit with the way that you are expected to work in organisations today?
- Why do you think that reflective practice is not more of an explicit part of the way people work in the workplace?
- Please give examples of the tensions and synergies that reflective practices have brought to your work? and indeed to your life in general.
- WBL makes various assumptions about the need to set up study routines so that you can dedicate considerable time to your study. What tensions did this produce for your work and life in general?
- When did you do most of your WBL program work? At home or at work? Why? How is this aligned or misaligned with the rhetoric of WBL or your initial expectations of doing WBL?
- Did this put more pressure on you? Explain.
- You have come to study fairly late in life. What particular issues did the need to study present you with?
- Are there more pressing or efficient ways of doing well in the business than gaining a postgraduate degree?

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In defining reflective practice Claire put it that it involves:

Taking time to learn from what you have just done...Learning from the patterns ... be they successful or unsuccessful and then looking at a way of not making those mistakes again. It is very much in line with a quality management cycle... Reflective practice is about learning from mistakes ... you can make as many mistakes as you like as long as you don't make the same mistake over and over and over again and again. From my business experience there is simply not enough of it ... learning to provide more of a consultancy .. and instead of just taking orders and jumping to, which is how I started out, I must say, uhm, you stop to say now why do you want me to do that, what are we trying to solve and once again get root cause analysis, finding out what is really wrong and what we are trying to solve because so often the people who ask us to do things don't know what they are talking about, they don't know much about process.... It has been beneath them to talk about and do anything about process. It is perceived as something mundane and clerical... we need to say what is the problem rather than act on their solutions...

In spite of her enthusiasm for reflective practice, Claire stresses that it is not seen to be part of the culture, nor is it a term that has currency within the workplace. According to Claire, some people may even 'feel embarrassed about it. Putting their hand up to say that they have a better idea or way of doing something' can be dangerous as it is too confronting for management in the business.

There are clearly tensions around making reflective practice a part of the way people go about their business in corporate contexts. Claire explains:

The focus in the business is on identifying future directions rather than examining the past.

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Similarly Ellen explains that she had 'no real knowledge of reflective practice' and 'no prior to experience of it before commencing WBL'. She goes on to examine the limited way in which reflective practice was used in the business and the tensions of incorporating reflective practices into work processes:

The closest we came to reflective practice was in reviewing small scale projects that had taken place and they were usually based on something going wrong not a review of 'this is how the project went' but usually a review of any critical problems that had come up. They really weren't 'let's not make that same mistake next time'. It was more an appeasement to the customer - a sort of reflective review.

According to Ellen reflective practice is not more of a part of the way business is done because:

The business was just continuously changing. You were too busy looking at how to cope with the changes, what new problems you were facing rather than looking at how you previously coped with the changes.

Similarly, Allen, an IT Manager at AMP, stresses that:

Work practices are more about get the job done, move onto the next job, move onto the next job, move onto the next job and just with... tighter timeframes and less resources to do things. So I find that everyone is just super busy so there is virtually no time for reflection... The other thing .... is ... I don't think that ... management finds it of value. So if they found it valuable then they would instill it as part of the process and things like that. But if they don't find any value add out of it, or how does it improve things? Or how does it improve the share price value? ...How does it improve the bottom line? They won't do it.

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There is also the clear problem that one experiences in working and learning when the business is thrust into a renewed restructure. Work takes precedence, as does survival. Ellen explains what it was like going through the last wave of restructures and the impact it had on her learning:

It meant that I had to make changes part way through to the types of subjects that I was taking. It also meant that I did not have a steady manager throughout the whole process. I think I had four. So there was no one person at work that was getting a good overview of what I was doing long term .... Restructures hindered any long-term use of the work that I had done which I guess was the saddest thing for me in that this had built a foundation that could have progressed throughout the company but because of the restructures and changes in the company it just came to a dead end.

Additionally, although the rhetoric espoused that learning could be done at work, most WBL participants found that the writing up of their WBL awards was done during weekends and after work hours. Additionally they found that, given the changes to their work, the nature of what they wrote up as part of their award also needed to be constantly updated. Ellen tells of her experience in doing her WBL award:

Because I was a project support person in the beginning and had to move and shift myself according to whatever requirement was being called for in the company I could not set regular hours. I did not have regular hours... so a lot of the work for study ...was done in my own time. It was quite difficult...

In contrast to the problematic nature of reflection for corporate actors, on the part of the rhetoric of teaching and learning in the academy, reflective practice is highly valued. For instance, the methodology that is used in the WBL program was described with the metaphor of the 'Socratic method' by one senior manager at UTS. It is the idea that the employee, the

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academic, and the workplace manager will engage in dialogue with the result that a successful translation will take place. However, alongside this same metaphor is also the language of 'economies of scale' and 'routinisation' of WBL as an organisational practice both within UTS and AMP; concepts that would do Taylor (1967) proud. There are constant attempts to map processes and identify strict timelines and deadlines by which milestones and outcomes are achieved. My mind shifts to thoughts of the workbook and workshops that strive tirelessly to help business professionals focus on a range of critical learning outcomes as they build their customised awards.

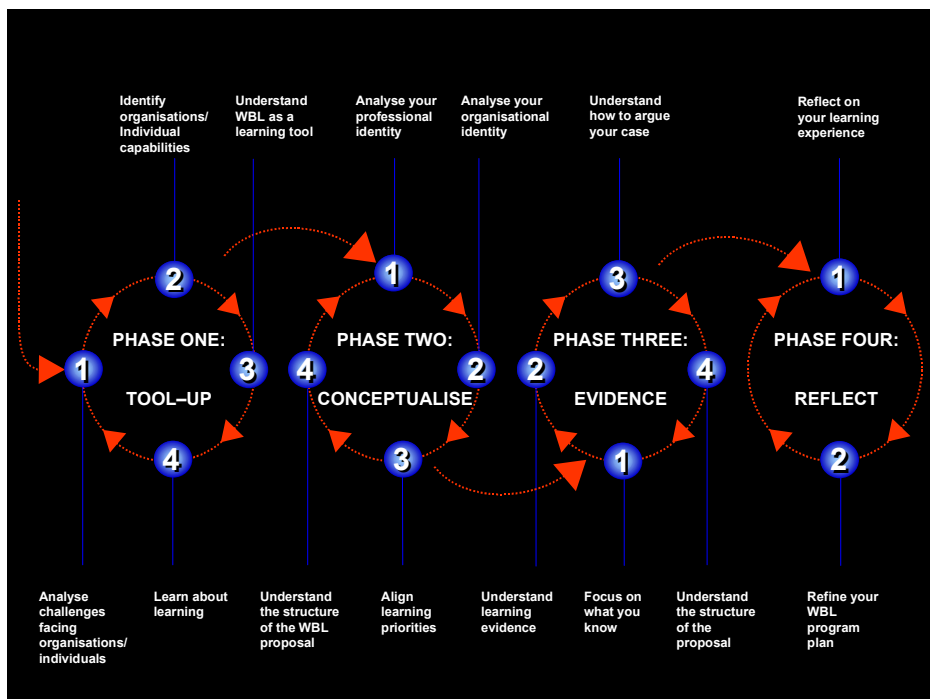


Figure 4: The WBL program planning process

In the diagram one can see how the cogs of learning are designed to whirr but there are constant jams in the machinery. For WBL and concepts of time do not fit comfortably with organisations and individuals focused on 'short-term wins', and 'hungry for the end goal of a postgraduate degree', rather than the learning that they could gain from such an experience. For many students, from the outset, the focus was on getting the bit of paper - not the

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learning. The aim was to play catch-up to what they had missed, for some, decades earlier in their career. What most participants saw in WBL was a way in which the learning that they have achieved through the 'school of hard knocks' could be legitimised. What they demanded of us in the academy was what the rhetoric proclaimed - flexibility of time organised around the contingencies of work.

WBL seemed to be an anathema to the culture of 'work hard, play hard'. It was a way of life which many corporate players ascribed to whereby work regularly spilt over into home time, but in which, however, weekends were free. Many participants had no experience with continuous formal learning - other than school experience that many had invariably hated, given that it required disciplined study. The student profile produced tensions for the success rates in WBL. For although WBL proclaimed to value knowledge gained from work, and thus attracted those students that were work experience rich and credential poor, in many ways success in the program was no different from success in other postgraduate programs. For although the focus was on the examination of professional practice the way that it was conceived was that it still largely relied on disciplined academic ways of seeing the world of work: the ability to theorise, to argue a point critically with reference to the literature and moreover to be prepared to draft and redraft one's thoughts in academic forms of writing which privileged detailed analysis of lessons learnt from experience but which were written with reference to other authoritative voices from the literature - voices which our worker-learners had not necessarily ever heard or indeed wanted to hear.

For many, as a career strategy WBL was perhaps 'a nice to have', however, it quickly became clear that there are other more efficient ways of promotion - overtime, more networking, and so on. Even Claire, who attributes much of her current clarity of thought around her professional practice to having undertaken her WBL award with its disciplined process of identifying a professional body of knowledge, admits that:

The most efficient way of getting ahead in the business is to get out there and network.

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Additionally, for many, the contingencies of life outside work once again overtook them – a struggle of work-life balance which left no time for the significant individual commitment that WBL demanded of them.

## CHAPTER 9: TRUTH IS MANAGED THROUGH SPACE

At about the same time as I heard that WBL was closing down, by chance I discovered level 7 of Building 10, a swish new award-winning building at UTS.



**Atrium, Building 10, UTS.**

Clearly those who had given out the awards had overlooked level 7. With its rough concrete floor and wire fencing left over from the time of the building's construction, level 7 remains disused – even now, three years after the building's completion.



### **Building 10, level 7**

The question, 'Why would one floor remain empty?' haunted me. It did not make sense given that it is common knowledge that like many tertiary institutions UTS struggles with the pressures of mass education with the result that there is a dire shortage of space at UTS. I sensed that something was amiss and did some more probing.

As a preliminary foray into shaping my thoughts as to what could explain such a phenomenon – six fully functioning floors which house two entire faculties with hundreds of academic staff members as well as support staff and classrooms and one empty floor, I asked some key players at UTS as well as some other folk of their understanding of the status of level 7.

I also asked a range of university players to tell their stories of level 7.

- What was planned for level 7?
- When was it to happen? What plans are in place to make it happen?
- What barriers have stood in the way of the plans being realised?

It emerged from their stories that the plan was that level 7 would be a hive of 'commercial premises and a conference centre which would help pay off the mortgage that the university had taken out to pay for the award-winning reconstruction and refurbishment of building 10'. I learn this one day when by chance I am sitting on the bus next to a senior manager at UTS on the way to work. My question innocently slips into the conversation and the answer is filed away in my memory. The plan for level 7 remains as yet unrealized. In this way, I come to understand that this space although materially empty is not one empty of meaning. My inquiry shows that empty space can be theorized for it is a further example of the complexities of instituting commercially viable activity with industry partners within the university which goes beyond our own individual failure within WBL.

However, the floor is not completely empty. A somewhat strange café come 'oasis' is tucked away at the far end of the floor.



### Café building 10, level 7

Each morning I wake early and spend an hour in the café before work. Jazz music plays. I am one of the only customers. The space has the capacity to seat hundreds. Its design is tastefully minimalist. I notice the attention to detail. The ceilings have been resurfaced. The furniture is modern. The flooring is highly polished and the huge kitchen completely outfitted with new industrial equipment. Clearly neither investment of money nor time has been spared in its design and execution. I immediately recognise the product of a labour of love. I am hooked on hearing the owner's passionate dreams for his café, mixed with stories of his past work and breathless plans for the future. I want my new friend on level 7 to succeed. However, I know that it is not by chance that I feel the need to be in this space at this particular time; a time when news of the closure of the WBL program remains shrouded in silence as it winds its way through 'official channels' before becoming named as officially closed. I am feeding off, as well as mourning, the giddy excitement mixed with fear which inevitably consumes those impassioned by a new Aramis in the making.

I have a new office as of last week. I have exchanged this space C318:

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C318

For this D118:



D118

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The exchange of space is significant. C318 was located on the third level of the Graduate School of Business. It was designed specifically for the Work-Based Learning unit. It comprised a combination of open plan and offices; a design known in architectural circles as 'the club'. As Laing, Duffy, Jaunzens, and Willis (1998:24) comment:

The club office organisation is designed for knowledge work: both highly autonomous and highly interactive. The patterns of occupancy are intermittent and over an extended working day. A wide variety of shared task based settings serve both concentrated individual and group interactive work. Individuals and teams occupy space on an as-needed basis, moving around the space to take advantage of a wide range of facilities.

The space was designed to be too big for us. It was one that we were 'going to grow into'. It was part of an unfulfilled dream. But as it turned out, it was one we shrank out of. Equally, its design was perhaps one more befitting a corporate organisation than a university in which space is traditionally designed for what, architecturally is called the 'cell' (Laing, Duffy, Jaunzens, Willis 1998:9); individual offices for:

individuals involved in concentrated work with little interaction. Highly autonomous individuals occupy the office in an intermittent and irregular pattern with extended working hours.

My new office is on the ground floor. I now have my own 'cell'. It is in the most remote part of the Faculty of Business building. It is 'sold' to me by the Faculty Manager as a so-called 'temporary space' until more appropriate space becomes available on level 4, the site of the School of Management of which I am now a part.

A lot of people have inquired where I will be located. They have heard that I am reporting to the School of Management. My reply remains consistently brief and explicitly chirpy:

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JG      Level one – Quite nice really... it's quiet, and has a pleasant outlook of the tramline.

An example of my own 'thin story' (Lee and Williams 1999:11)? The inquirers invariably respond with their own versions of 'thin stories', 'mhm... space is at a premium', the statement accompanied by an understanding nod.

The facilities staff is not at all guarded:

FS:      Jesus .... Have you been that bad huh??

JG:      (laugh) I guess so...

A Power Expert does give me some helpful advice for he knows that space is power.

PE:      Go and talk to the Head of School. She will be able to sort something out. It is important that you are up here .... seen about on level four.

However, my feeling is that his advice is more fitting perhaps for a legitimate actor such as himself and therefore I respond by saying):

JG:      Mhmm.. I don't really know her. XX (the Dean) also mentioned that I shouldn't contact her until before the transition is done. Look, it's not that important to me. I'll be okay downstairs.

Once the 'space deal' is clinched with the Faculty Manager, my colleague (a part-time administrator for WBL) and I joke with him about his skill in talking us around. We jokingly say that he has missed his vocation in real estate. He looks a bit affronted and then warms to the idea when we chortle on in a complimentary tone telling him he is very good at clinching a deal. As we close the doors of the new empty office spaces behind us which will become our new home he lets his guard down for the first time. As we mount the stairs he jokes and says,

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'have you heard that academics are more interested in space than NASA?' and goes on to tell us of various complex cases of negotiating space that he is currently engaged in.

I turn my attention to examining space at UTS from 1996 - 2003. In that time, UTS increasingly takes on a corporate 'look and feel'. 'Visual imaging' becomes a term of currency in 2000 at UTS. I search for the word 'visual imaging' on the UTS website and come up trumps in the Design Unit at UTS which now works with the templates created for them by various renowned publishing and advertising houses. Significantly, the Design Unit also reports to the Senior Manager, of the Enterprise Development Portfolio, charged with the responsibility to position UTS for the future. As part of the move to the corporatisation of UTS, in 2000 a renowned advertising company unveils their new 'look' for UTS with its mantra of:

'think > change > do'.



**Advertisements for UTS “think> change> do”**

The posters, cards, banners, and advertisements that festoon the city campus and its environs are adorned with various images of young people on scooters, young people drinking lattes, young people laughing as they stare out at us in hot pinks, vibrant blues, yellows and greens. The advertising screams - “this is where life is at”, “life is fast”, “life is fun”....

The UTS signature colour (teal blue PMS 321) is abandoned and with it the UTS logo of “the anchor”:

The emblem embodies three main components. The most prominent feature is the anchor drawn from the coat of arms of the City of Sydney

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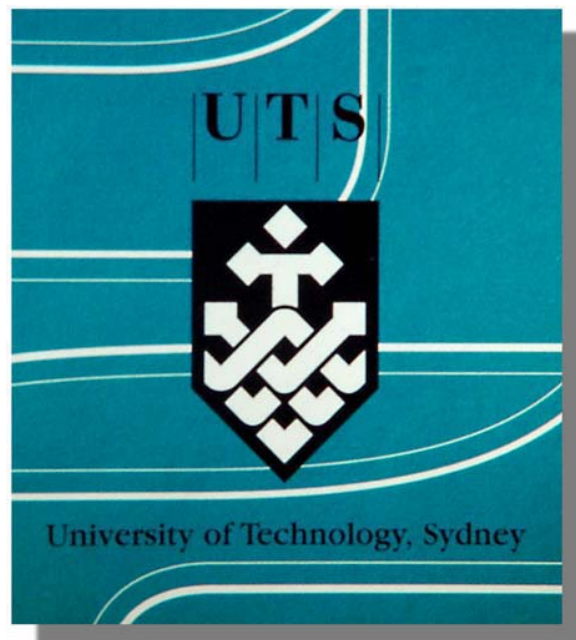
where the largest campus of UTS is located. It reinforces the University's traditional close links with government, commerce and industry within the city.

The base of the anchor also forms one of the spirals of the double helix in the representation of the DNA molecule, the basic building block of life itself. The symbol, therefore, reflects the innovative, technological character of the University.

The wave motif at the base complements the other elements in the design, and underlies the maritime position of the City of Sydney.

This contemporary design is contained in a heraldic shield which provides a sense of continuity with tradition for institutions of higher learning through the ages.

Our new image contrasts significantly with the old as can be seen from various promotional material which date back to 1998 and 1999:

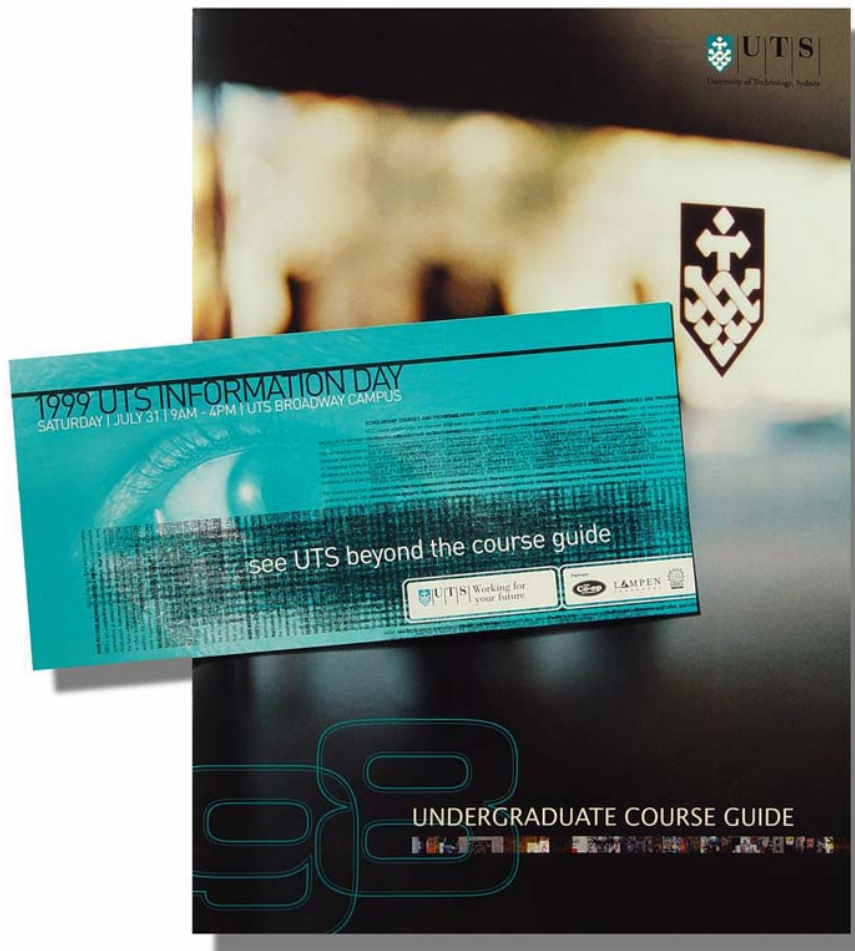


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By 2000, the idea that the UTS logo sought to convey with its intricate three-layered meaning dominated by the anchor is delegated to the forgotten past because its meaning is seen to be too obtuse - a sensemaking that only the initiated can decipher and therefore not 'good marketing sense.' The anchor, previously proudly printed full size on official documents and posters is reduced to a thumb nail and incorporated into a new logo that focuses on our name THE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY written large in our new customised UTS font. Note that the comma is missing as well.




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With the image make-over, we want to create a new space for ourselves at UTS. An anchor is no longer that which conveys where we are, nor where we want to be seen to be.

- How do you think the makeover of 'think > change > do' was meant to reposition UTS in the hearts and minds of academics and students at UTS?
- What new space has 'think > change > do' created for UTS?

In the words of a marketing manager:

The UTS tagline, think.change.do, is a component of the overall corporate identity so was not meant to work on its own but to act as part of a cohesive corporate identity system that supports the UTS brand values which are: - clever (think) - dynamic (change) - real world (do)

We mirror the new look in WBL - we have young executives - 'having fun', 'drinking lattes', 'having inspiring conversations with fascinating people'.

In this time, at UTS we also come to see ourselves increasingly as a one-campus institution. The 'outlying' campuses of Kuring-gai and Gore Hill fall into disrepair and are increasingly abandoned; no one seems to want to teach there or to study there. A spate of 'renewal' projects are launched at each site; particularly Kuring-gai. For example, in 2000 a lavish conference centre is built which seeks to be self-funding through linking with the local industry or providing a 'bushland setting' for corporates seeking a retreat from the city. However, the centre falls quickly into financial difficulty as the clients do not flow in its doors as first anticipated. In 2003, when the state government pulls out of a deal to build a train line connecting the Kuring-gai campus directly with the city its fate is sealed. The move is on for all faculties and functions to be relocated to the city campus.

And what of spatial arrangements at AMP?

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AMP is famous in Australia for its physical presence at Circular Quay. It built the first skyscraper in Sydney in the 1960s. Later a range of further AMP buildings were built so that in 1996, at the beginning of our story, AMP dominates the Sydney cityscape when viewed from the quay:



AMP buildings dominating the cityscape at Circular Quay, Sydney

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AMP is proud of its past but increasingly from the 1980s onwards AMP seems to want to create a new space for itself which culminates in the steps it takes to demutualise as well as launching a strategy to 'go global' with the result that the AMP experiences a severance from its history.



By chance, late in 2003, I hear an unofficial story of space which seems to metaphorically sum up the story of the AMP and its desperate desire to break with its past; evidently a desire not held by all its employees. I raise the question of the 'renovations' which I noticed on entering the head office building to attend a Christmas morning tea to which I had been invited by several members of the AMP staff. The morning tea is held in a cavernous, seemingly 'empty space', located on level 7 of the head office building at the AMP. In response to my inquiry, I am told that we are in fact standing in the showroom for Workspace; a company which has been hired by the AMP to dispense with the 'old' furniture and bring in the 'new' and 'uniform model' for all staff. My conversation partners politely point to various samples of chairs, desks and so on scattered around the room. An old medical nurse who has been an AMP employee for her entire working life is also present at the morning tea gathering. She overhears my question. The topic is clearly one close to her heart, for she breaks off the conversation she is having with someone on the other side of the room to express her chagrin that the new furniture policy of 'one size fits all' has meant that the beautiful old antique cedar medical cabinet that has stood in her office since the AMP head office was first erected in the

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1960s also 'had to go'. She adds that she had felt so connected to the piece that she had submitted a special request to buy it and relocate it to her own home because as she put it:

I couldn't stand the thought of it being thrown out. It is .... (or was)... a part of me and my working life here at AMP.

'But my offer was refused', she adds. Encouraged by seeing my visible distress on hearing her story, she went on to tell of yet another 'furniture fiasco' which, to her mind, was even more 'abominable'. As part of the refurbishment exercise, the boardroom table had also been replaced because it was an 'olden style' one and 'had a few scratches'. Clearly, identifying with the table she added:

What are a few scratches anyway? They are like lines on a person's face... They add character and relate to its history and experience. Don't you think?

Apparently the boardroom table was very large and well crafted from one continuous piece of cedar, not assembled in panels. Thus, it presented a particular challenge for the removalists who were charged with the responsibility of dismantling the table as expediently as possible, to ensure that 'business could continue uninterrupted'. Given their dilemma and responsibility to save time rather than take care they decided to cut the table into two with a chainsaw. The only questions that were raised about their decision was:

How to stick it together again ... So that it would not be noticed.... So as not to adversely affect its resale value. (Laugh) ... Can you believe it?

When I prompted her to say what she thought the story had to say about AMP and the changes which were taking place, in more recent times at first her response was a little careful (yes, the question was too direct and interview-like). She shrugged her shoulders ever so slightly and with downward-looking glances said:

Well I guess we live in a world of change.

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But then, after a brief pause, she changed tack and tone. She responded to my question in a forthright manner which mirrored my own line of questioning and, looking me directly in the eyes, replied:

I see it as indicative of concerted efforts to erase all signs of the past. It is assumed that new is always better.... But from my experience that is not always the case.....

I start investigating WBL in the light of stories of space. I return to the beginning of my story when AMP made first contact with UTS. I begin my analysis by re-examining the story of WBL from the perspective of how it was spatially represented at UTS.

- Where was WBL located in its early days?
- Why did academics originally appointed to the WBL unit stay in their own offices in various faculties rather than move to the space where the rest of the WBL team was located?
- When WBL was located at Insearch who was in the team?
- What were the priorities?
- How involved was Insearch senior executive? UTS senior executive? Who were they?
- Why was the move to UTS made?
- Who was pushing for the move?
- How was this received by Insearch/UTS?
- Did the move change the dynamics or ownership felt for WBL by any of the stakeholders?
- What was AMP's attitude?
- Was it ever mooted that WBL academics/staff should work on site at AMP?
- Why was this decided against?
- Which stakeholders were located at AMP? and describe their interrelationship.
- Are you aware of any internal politicking going on at the time that WBL started up?

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The spatial dilemma that WBL represents is reflected in the 'location' of the WBL unit within the university. The WBL unit is not attached to a school (the basic university academic unit) but reports as a 'special project' directly to the Dean's Unit in the Faculty of Business. The WBL unit's lack of embeddedness in existing organisational structures within the university, and at times, the hybridity of the WBL team's employment status, provides a freeing-up of identity and structural boundaries. This allows freedom and space with which to develop a 'new model of learning' for higher education but at the same time this freedom and autonomy produce a disconnection with the broader academic community. It perpetuates a lack of ownership on the part of the academics for the WBL program and hence also a lack of responsibility and even a questioning of the legitimacy of the program, making recruitment of academics as advisers and assessors for the WBL program more problematic. In addition, it brings into question the degree to which the WBL program is able to bring about significant change to the identity of the university as an organisation or the identity of individual academic actors within the university field, a point reflected in the long-standing questioning of the 'location' of the WBL program, with alternative, more centralised, shared-services locations muted at various times at Academic Board. In short, the WBL unit seems to have been designed as an organisation innovation that has troubles circulating throughout the system. Commenting on the tensions produced by innovation in large organisations, Dougherty puts it that 'commitment to innovation cannot be separated from the organisation as a whole. ... To be innovative... organisation as a whole needs to embody the tension between freedom and responsibility' (Dougherty 1996:180). As we can see, this applies to WBL as an innovation. The production of space, as Lefebvre (1991) reminds us, is more than just physical space. The responses that I get to my various questions about space - even when framed by the physical dimension of space - point to this. The typology of space which he constructs is also social and mental. I examine what this might mean in the context of WBL.

WBL also presented some spatial dilemmas in terms of in which sector the university is located. To say we are located in the 'tertiary sector' as opposed to the 'knowledge services sector', which WBL presumed, changes the way we think about who 'we' are and who we are not, what we are doing and not doing here, and what is at stake for us now and in the future. Changing our understanding of the space in which we were operating opened us to the market of corporate learning and development.

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However, we may have assumed because few universities had yet colonised the 'space' of corporate learning that it was indeed a 'terra nullius'; however, if we had cared to take a closer look we would have seen that the territory was indeed successfully colonised by professional consultancies.

I talk to the trusted consultant from the financial institution with whom I had recently worked on the *Action Learning Initiative* who has had over twenty years in the 'game' of working with corporate organisations in the field of the learning and development of executive staff. Significantly, in the past he had also worked extensively for AMP. I want to hear his story on how he thinks that you can move an idea about corporate learning in the business.

- Explain your role at with your current client and how you connect with this space. Explain how you think that you continue to get work here.
- Tell me the story about how you worked the space to get the *Action Learning Initiative* up and running.
- Explain what you see to be your role in programs such as the *Action Learning Initiative*.
  - You have talked to me before about being a safe pair of hands and creating a space for people. What do you mean by this?
  - You have also used other language such as 'where the skin hits the road' which seems to indicate that a program such as the *Action Learning Initiative* has a certain edge and may not be a totally safe space for participants and indeed others. What do you mean by the term 'when the skin hits the road' in terms of a learning and development program such as the *Action Learning Initiative*? And why is this an important element determining the effectiveness of the program?
- You have mentioned to me that the *Action Learning Initiative* has taken on a life of its own - what do you mean by this? Why do you think that this has happened?
- From your experience in corporate contexts and specifically in the area of learning and development what is the place of universities in corporate learning? How does this compare with the positioning of professional consultants such as yourself in corporate life. Why do you think this is so?
- You once told me a story about how you were really involved in a learning program and you were really proud of their results - something about your ego getting in the way. Can you tell me that story again.
- You have talked to me about not integrating work and other parts of your life but then your dissatisfaction with meaning creation at work. Explain.

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For our trusted consultant, getting business is integrally linked to three elements, as he puts it:

I think it is a convergence of an internal track record... linked to the people that mentioned my name and I think positively align to me... They are fond of me. Or they trust me as an individual. And then the third was being able to get on with the client.

Central to the trusted consultant's success in the corporate environment is also his ability to work the space by linking with the dreams of other powerful internal players. He works the corporate space artfully. Talking of how he connects with a prior learning experience which an Executive Director had in order to sell the concept of his own brand of learning and development to the business, the trusted consultant explains:

he (the Executive Director) had a particular experience which meant that people came together and they worked on issues and they worked for long hours and they came up with sort of this stuff.... He made the association between that and that is what he was asking for ... and when he was asking for that then people said 'Have you thought of TC because he does something like this?'

And then it was my job to bridge the gap between the views that he had in his mind and what I could actually do.

So I framed the *Action Learning Initiative* in terms of his experience.

The consultant operates as an outsider in the corporate space but at the same time it is clear that he needs to be able to move freely and frequently within the organisation as any insider would do so that connections can readily be forged and maintained. Using the metaphor of 'wet' and 'dry' the trusted consultant explores the boundaries between being 'inside' and 'outside' the organisation:

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if you are standing on the shore you are in a different condition than if you stand in the water. So if you are on the sand or in the water it is very different. So that if you are in the water you lose that sense of dryness and the mobility which comes from being dry and being on sand.

If you are in the water you actually start picking up more of the environment ... of the wetness of the environment.

But you are initially brought in because you are dry but you lose that - you lose that dryness by being immersed in the culture and being a part of it.

So my role has been to have one foot in the sand and one foot in the water and to be able to describe what dry feels like because once you are in the water you can't describe what dry feels like.

The trusted consultant also talks of a tactical career error that he made when he accepted a job that the corporate organisation offered him. Initially he thought that he would work best being 'wet' rather than being 'half wet, half dry' but as he puts it, 'Once I got wet I realised very quickly... umh... I needed to be dry'. For the trusted consultant, organisations:

are very good at making Superman into Clarke Kent. They feel enamoured or feel that they need a particular capability that they don't have and there are reasons why they don't have it .. it is almost like (they) are yearning for something which just doesn't live in (their) culture and there is a good reason why it is doesn't live because it just cannot survive.

... but it is quite palpable that you do not have it so you bring it in but once you bring it in the culture wins all the time and then you don't have it anymore ... So it becomes a waste of money.

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But you feel better because you identified it and went out to get it ... but you can't work out why it isn't there anymore.

Although clearly skeptical of corporate culture as a space in which a free-thinking individual can operate, at the same time the trusted consultant clearly feels the pull of organisation life. For being a full-time employee can mean more security and a sense of belonging absent from the life of a consultant:

you get sucked into the everyday minutiae and you are always feeling the pain of neither being in nor out ...

It gets played out in some really funny ways. For instance, I was in the office of this other organisation and someone was having a morning tea.

But I was the only one that didn't get an invitation. So I don't get invited to those things.

So that is how you feel the pain. You feel a difference there.

And then it sort of resumes that you are part of them.

Having to work that duality you have to be pretty robust about that otherwise it would be painful I would imagine.

But that's the premium.

But that is why you get paid a premium for what you do to move beyond that.

But no one names it. No one talks about it. But you just kind of live it.

Significantly, the trusted consultant is fully aware of the political elements of the corporate space in which he works. As he puts it, the most important way to survive in a corporate space:

is being able to stay on top of the power lines. So having the relationships in the right places, which is always interesting because one of my observations around consulting is that depending on who brings you in will determine who is not going to talk to you for the next six months or so.

As soon as someone uses you, you can hear the doors shutting around the place. Because one person will use you, and six people will not use you because of the political situations.

E.g., there is an organisation that I am working with at the moment. The CEO had brought me in and that opened me up to work with some of his direct reports and not others.

Others would not trust me in their patch because the CEO has brought me in.

Similarly, as soon as someone uses you, that kind of defines you.

There is an article that I remember reading years ago that I felt was quite good and I always use it as an example for myself. It talked of 'failure at entry'. That you can fail totally by the door that you actually come in.

Within his work the trusted consultant also develops a space of learning which in some senses is forged out of two paradoxical concepts 'safe hands' and 'skin in the game' and it is by juxtaposing these two concepts that he manages meaning in his field. He explains 'safe hands' as follows:

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If you look at a program like the *Action Learning Initiative* there is no organisational sanctioned leadership. The process is proxy for leadership. Now in organisations that are schooled in leadership as determined through formal authorities it is quite a challenge so they need to feel trust in you, of the process and that the process will do them no harm. Minimally...And that there would be a benefit for them to allow themselves to succumb and in the *Action Learning Initiative* that is what you work hard to do - succumb: to get them to lie down and pat their bellies. So that they can work with each other in different ways.

Now the role easily is about a safe pairs of hands. It is about creating the space where people feel emotionally safe and they feel that they can dare to relate, you know and to open themselves up a little bit and the rest of the stuff is really, you know, tied into that of the process, who you bring in, who you don't bring in. At the end of the day that really does not matter. What matters is being about to set up a psychological and emotional framework for people to be accepting and to try to risk and do things a little bit better, to do things a little bit different.

So it is about creating an environment in some ways.

The environment has to be robust enough to cater for adolescent tantrums and all kinds of things.

It becomes proxy for other people's issues as well.

They will drop anything into the environment. They will use it for whatever they need to use it for.

It has to be solid enough to do this.

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'Skin in the game' by contrast builds the necessary tension which makes it possible for worker/learners to take the program seriously:

a program such as this tries to create some kind of an environment that is transparent and is hard to hide in the process. It is hard to hide in the data. Because you are actually saying to people: 'This is the problem. What is the solution?' and you need to present that to people who are two or three ranks up in the organisation so it becomes an opportunity for you to demonstrate your capability but it also becomes an opportunity for you to demonstrate what you do not have so it becomes an opportunity for you to disappoint or to actually excite....

So it is a kind of fine balance. And the skin in the game is about accountability. You try to make people in the program accountable for their learning, for the results.

Although the trusted consultant can see a space for universities in corporate environments in that they 'can provide a broader context often than that which exists in that system and that is useful' as well as 'one of imprimaturing, or giving credibility to knowing' he stresses that:

if you want a business solution you don't go to a university necessarily. If you want something imprimatured and da, da, da, da then you would think of universities.

It is not the first place I think of when I think about a business solution.

I think of a consultant with credibility.

In terms of those solutions you are also competing with consulting houses for instance and they are much nimbler, they have better powerpoint presentations, they can relate more industry examples.

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They are also, I think, much more costly. If you go to a university for a solution immediately the first frame that comes up is that they are too academic, too theoretical. You have to work your way around that: too theoretical and too academic. The instances where I have seen that work differently is the people have actually been through a university program who have developed an attachment to a particular professor or idea and then they will bring that into the business, but often with the full expectation that they will need to commercialise the idea.

The trusted consultant's thoughts on universities and the minimal role they play in corporate learning and development is supported in the statistics as outlined in the report, *Employer Training Expenditure and Practices* published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2003) which reflects a massive expenditure on corporate learning in Australia with a very small percentage extended to the sponsorship of university education programs. According to the report, 47.2 percent of training is provided to organisations of 100 or more employees by private training providers compared to 4.9 percent of training provided by universities. Furthermore, the 'gross direct expenditure on structured training during 2001- 2002 financial year was \$4,018.2 million an increase of \$1,500.1 million compared with 1996 (\$2,518.1 million).'

For the trusted consultant his brand of corporate learning has been heralded as a success in the business. As I listen to his words he brings into focus a startling contrast with the fate of WBL:

I think that in a program or an innovation anything that has some degree of success about it, it then is likely to be adopted and embraced by the organisation in lots of different ways. It is just that notion that everyone loves a winner and in an organisation where you want to be politically in the right place you will align yourself with anything that remotely attached to it - that has a winning feel about it. The other thing is that if you have a program such as this that has X number of

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dollars attached to it a lot of people are invested in the success of the program irrespective of what it kicks up.

Two things tend to happen. (He laughs in anticipation) There will be a big party and you never hear anything else about it because it will be buried silently and there is such a large number of people involved in it that there is a kind of unconscious solution about 'don't mention the war'. (I laugh in retrospect, given my own recent experience in WBL).

Or in the other fate that it grows beyond its own context and people generate more enthusiasm about it and more people set up groups about it and it becomes a cult thing.

"Have you been?" "No?". "I have."

See, it actually fills a space and takes on a life of its own over and beyond the parameters of the program in the first place.

The good thing about the second path is that it guarantees a second iteration and hopefully a third and if that is the case it then creates new norms in the organisations which are about this is how we do things in the *Action Learning Initiative*. "Let's *Action-L* it". It has created its own language.

Let us turn now to thinking about where spatially WBL was located in AMP. WBL was one of the learning and development opportunities that the Human Resources Unit at AMP offered to the business units in the various portfolios in AMP. Human resources was set up by AMP as a shared service which meant that HR professionals had as one of the major challenges of their positions not only to convince the various managers in the business units of the value of learning and development but also to create awareness around the nature of their various offerings. Thus, in a sense HR professionals were designed to operate as internal consultants whose own positions and budgets depended on the internal sales they were able to make of

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programs such as WBL to the business units. Initially, a dedicated co-ordinator was responsible for the administration and positioning of WBL within the business units of AMP. There was also significant strategic support for the initiative. However, the internal competitive model of HR professionals set up a tension in the way WBL was 'sold' to the business, as one HR professional put it:

The emphasis was on bums on seats. Our performance indicators depended on us getting the numbers .... the quality of the candidates was also an issue, but to tell you the truth we were mostly just concerned with reaching our targets.

Building relationships with the business units to 'on sell' a complex program such as WBL was also a poor fit with existing understandings of what constituted professional learning. Many of the other courses offered through HR at AMP were internal short courses rather than a postgraduate degree program. So already there were differences in levels of expectations, financial support and perceived benefits.

The tensions that the devolution of HR to business units represents are extensively discussed in the literature. Hall and Torrington (1998:47) talk of the devolution of HR resulting in 'changes to the allocation of authority... Devolution is to do with line managers, as the personnel function transfers some of its responsibilities and activities out of the personnel function altogether so that line managers have a fuller responsibility and scope to do their jobs'. Hall and Torrington point to differentiation in how a devolution of HR activities to the business units will be played out depending on whether it is simply the so-called operational activities or also the budget allocation which is devolved. In the case of WBL, operational activities are maintained by HR. However, the business units hold the budget for the learning activities. As Hall and Torrington put it, such an arrangement has a 'considerable impact on the structure, role and power of the human resources function' (1998:75). Gibbs (2003:285) expresses the tensions that the devolution of HR functions to line managers represents in practice:

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Some argue that the specialist role will become transformed as line managers take more responsibility, rather than being marginalised, with specialists evolving to act in roles like an internal consultant or change agent, and being advisers to the line managers. In practice others fear it will often mean the actual or practical exclusion of specialists from the L & D process; and they and their facilities, ... disappear from the scene.

At both UTS and the AMP, the WBL program represented a space that was not within each of their frames so much as, perhaps a 'fold' according to Deleuze, a 'space in-between' rather than one strictly determined by the duality of 'inside/outside'. But perhaps it can only be appreciated as 'in-between space' in 'good times'. For the fold, rather than being seen as an opportunity – as it is seen to be in so-called 'good times', is seen as 'redundancy' and that which is 'superfluous' in so-called 'hard times'. In 'hard times', there is a tendency to stretch and smooth the fabric that makes up organisational life; to retreat to the known of the inside rather than take the risk of engaging further with the 'unknown' of the 'outside'.

For many learners WBL represented an in-between space which carried with it risks as well as opportunities. For in-between represents a space which requires collapsing the boundaries between work and home, the self and others. The assumption is that it is useful to be strategically aligned to the organisation, but what about times of great change, times of redundancies? Students fear being left high and dry with partially completed awards linked to an employer for whom they no longer work. Or even one that, like the AMP, has gone through hard times and thus no longer carries with it the status it once enjoyed. The question emerges, 'who wants their degree co-branded with an organisation that is in threat of going under?'

For a new initiative such as WBL which has little brand awareness in Australia, other questions circulate: 'Is this Mickey Mouse?' It is a question which seeks to interrogate the potential difference between WBL and a standard MBA. For students and academics the question seems to remain unanswered. Furthermore, both students and academics grapple to understand 'What does it mean to create a space that operates as an appreciation of the

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personal/professional/academic in which a successful translation between one institutional space and the other can take hold?' Indeed, 'do worker-learners want to learn to think in an integrated way?' So that work and home become meshed in new ways?' 'Or is it safer and more strategic to keep a certain distance between body and soul? Work and home?'

By 2000, stories streamed back to us in the WBL unit about students sitting en masse with others in redeployment pools, suggesting that the promise that participation in WBL would improve workers' employment prospects as well as assist the AMP in succeeding with its strategy to 'go global', have not held true.

It is part of the organisation's policy to be a 'responsible corporate citizen'. This mantra manifests itself in the organisational practice of moving employees to redeployment pools rather than immediate dismissal. In redeployment pools people are provided with training and time as well as resources to apply for jobs internally as well as externally before they are officially 'shown the door'.

For the WBL student-worker-learners, now sitting in redundancy pools, integrating work and academic study is no longer a challenge from a time perspective given that the pressure of work is no longer there. However, they now have new pressures in that finding a professional focus and 'authentic problem' on which to base their work-based project is a struggle. Given that they are now sitting in redundancy pools their 'problems' have become more basic than those they should ideally have. For rather than inquiring into how to engage in a business improvement activity they are now panicked in applying for new jobs, first internally and later externally, so they will be able to get an income to pay for mortgages, school fees, groceries and so on, before they are 'managed out'.

## CHAPTER 10: TRUTH IS MANAGED THROUGH IDENTITY

My thoughts stray again to the moment when WBL was first announced dead. I start thinking about the reflections I have been picking up about my 'looking glass self' (Cooley 1902) as part of my involvement in the everyday, about what they tell me about me, and my evolving identity in the field. I examine my positioning in the field. I ask myself how I am tracking in both resisting and constructing an institutionally acceptable identity for myself. I reflect too on how the choices that I make in my everyday life comply with the rules of how to play the game at UTS. What does it mean to be an academic? What does it mean to be part of a university that promotes itself as having a capacity for change and tolerance of flexibility?

A lot of people are giving me advice at the moment – I think more so than is usually the case. At times, I have openly asked for advice. At other times, I am fairly sure that the advice has been unsolicited. On these occasions, perhaps, the advice comes more from the knowledge gained from the advice givers' own experience of being at a watershed. I want to belong but feel nervous about what belonging means. Will I have to give up some of myself? Will I be required to erase some of the memories and understandings gained when I came? Will I be able to continue with my project of integrating this with that? Will I too start to talk of 'life in here' as opposed to the 'real world' 'out there'?

For example, I gain insight about the path to gaining an institutionally appropriate identity within my own organisation by way of a friendly warning. My Friendly Warner recounts his story on numerous occasions, which I take to mean that he deems the information that he imparts to be something that I really need to 'take on board', to make it a part of me, what I value as well as what I do.

FW: I have seen many really bright people who have not made it. They would turn up to School of Management meetings and talk of quality. They would try hard. They would make suggestions for improvements with the best of intentions. The ideas would be taken up by the Head of School as a really

good idea. Not at the time, but later you would hear the groans of how much work it had created for others.

....Then, you may hear their name suggested on another occasion – ‘How about so and so to do a particular course?’. You would hear, not just from one source, but various sources.

Not a no, but rather ‘Can’t you think of someone else?’

.... You need to be someone who doesn’t make too much work: someone who makes it easier for others. Not harder and more work.

The Friendly Warner knows all about categorisation. He is an expert analyst. He has a passion for causality. He is disturbed that many research students no longer understand causality. It is no longer part of the research curriculum in the School of Management. He once almost wrote a thesis on membership. We share this common research interest. He is keen on exploring the game of life – the question of belonging and not belonging. But we do not talk of it theoretically on the day which I am choosing to describe here. Rather, we explore together our theories in practice. It is Friday afternoon. He is a bit bored with the marking he has to do. I have come into his office as a welcome distraction.

FW I heard that you are an academic now. (He shakes my hand. He pats and smooths over the fabric of his visitor’s chair in a warm gesture of welcome. Once I am sitting he makes an awkward attempt to hug me and then quickly recoils). You did not tell me. What is your title?

JG Lecturer, Work-Based Learning.

FW .... It was a problem before. Now you are in. You are one of us.

JG Mhm, I hope so. But, I am not sure. It is not that straight forward. I am just on contract. 2.5 years for a project that is now over. I went to an interview to gain permanency. I heard unofficially from two of the three panel members that 'I was successful and now in'. I went for drinks. But it did not happen. WBL was closed down in the meantime. The contract is not proof that I will be asked to stay on.

FW But you're in the School of Management, aren't you?

JG Yes, well sort of. I am in the School of Management because that is what I negotiated with the Dean. I put a series of arguments to him. First, that it made sense for both me and my students given that I am doing my PhD in the School of Management and will increasingly pick up teaching in the School of Management and most students are managers. I also aimed to convince him that this was the right choice with the argument that WBL had suffered from not being institutionally embedded. All other university activity was located within the school structure except for WBL. Furthermore, I stressed that it would be surely easier for him and make more organisational sense if I reported to someone else since WBL was no longer a strategic priority.

He is half listening. He has turned to his laptop. He takes the time to source various documents to satisfy his curiosity as to whether I have become part of the School of Management or not. He begins by scanning the School of Management contact list and website and confirms that no, I am not recorded. However, he warns against jumping to conclusions (he is after all an expert in causality). Checking the date on which the lists were

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compiled he suggests that perhaps it is just an 'administrative accident' that my name is not yet there.

As soon as he mentions the word 'accident' I start thinking of contingencies - Foucault's counter-argument to causality - but I decide against disturbing our everyday with this banal comment which would only act to sidetrack if not squash his everyday theorising and strategising in practice. For I am keen both to see what he comes up with for the practical purpose of considering his advice as one possible solution I can take up 'to go on', and also to commit the details of our encounter to memory, so that I can replay it in my mind later with a view to incorporating it into my research.

On another occasion, I see myself specifically asking the Power Expert for help about how to improve my institutional identity. I have eaten a donut in the park for lunch and bring one for him. He has been working very hard lately. I think he may need a sugar hit, but I should know better. He always refuses food when it is explicitly offered. I start talking about my abortive attempt to develop *Action Learning* with the finance institution:

JG      And not just that I am impossible. How could I consider doing the *Action Learning* thing. I tell you how. My ego got in the way. It was a chance to prove myself. To do something with my brain. I was simply seduced by the *Action Learning* thing. I could not resist. WBL is dead and I needed to feel that I am creating something new instead of just doing palliative care of the dying. But that is not what is wanted here. Well, it is not wanted of me, anyway. I knew that but I still did it. I am not sorry I am doing it but I tell you I can feel myself floating off. I am not embedded.

PE      (Laugh) Listen to your language. Seduced, embedded, floating. Julie!  
Look I can not embed you. But I can help you to get embedded. You need to make yourself useful. To become

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indispensable. We are writing a new Management textbook. It will be the new text for the undergrad course. It would make sense for you to teach it. I will put your name forward.

Interestingly, in recent times three women have adamantly assured me that I will not make it into the academy. I have ambivalent feelings about their tidings. On each occasion I have experienced their words with a jolt which extends throughout my body but also a laugh and relief as well as a thank you for their frankness. They assure me that they know this because they recognise traces of themselves and their own stunted careers in me. One woman questions why it should be inconceivable that she be the next Head of School. She is Catholic and the mother of a large family. She talks of how she does not feel comfortable in mainstream management forums. Rather, when she presents at a conference she prefers what she describes as, 'the obscure, dark, grimy and unfashionable Marxist ones'. Another woman is a lesbian. She makes sense of herself as a 'known trouble maker' and 'an anarchist'. She likes teaching. The third is a Jewish convert. She lives alone. She has difficult relations with her family. She has been badly burnt at another tertiary institution. By choice she does a job which is far below her capability. She has made a choice not to integrate - not to be drawn into the dangerous vortex that is organisational life. However, she sees herself as an expert at knowing who and how to charm. For her meaning-making is that which happens elsewhere. She loves writing and has recently begun to officially think about herself and name herself as a successful fiction writer. There are many aspects of these women's lives and sense of identity that I do not share. I am not a Marxist, not a lesbian, I do not live alone, I am not a mother, not a Jew, or Catholic nor do I seek a job beneath my capability. However, each of these women identifies herself with me and feels confident that we are 'sisters' who walk a similar path. They assert that we are particular kinds of women and as such we have made and will continue to make particular kinds of choices and represent ourselves and are represented by others in particular ways. They each talk of people being scared of us. They talk of values and of people not being able to rely on us because we will walk our own way. I consider the possibility of my identity now and in the future as being ravelled up in their stories about themselves, their past, their present and their futures. I am both convinced, and not convinced, that their story is also my story. I look at the loose, contingent coupling of contextuality and agency in the thinking tools which

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feature in my theorising of truth and its management in part one of this thesis – the representation of my sensemaking of life - and see in it that multiple outcomes are both possible and impossible.

Is my dilemma the result of a bizarre new twist to Clegg and Hardy's (1999:437) observation about the fate of ethnographers who have spent extended time in the field?:

Ethnographers distance themselves, returning from elsewhere as 'lionized' field workers with 'stories about strange people (Denzin and Lincoln 1994a:7)... Those who do not distance themselves may get so close to the subject as to 'go native' and become one of them. Part of them, unable to see past them, these researchers ignore the power structures that created not only the subject but also themselves, researcher-as-subject.

Is it that I too now feel the need after my long and arduous intellectual journey, which this work represents, to be a 'lionized field worker', perhaps in some other place? However, paradoxically, given the nature of my study, I have not geographically travelled to a strange and foreign land to conduct my ethnographic study. For in my case, the extraordinary land and people that I chose as the focus of my study are my own work practices and my colleagues in the academy. Thus, in my case, to 'go native' would mean to seek membership in the academy. Hence, there is no 'elsewhere' from whence I will return. Furthermore, given the nature of my study, I sense that it is not so much that I am 'ignoring the power structures that created the subject but also (myself)'; rather, I appear to be revelling in the analysis of such a construction of their, as well as my own, 'becoming'.

I turn my mind to examining the institutional identity of UTS in order to examine further the theoretical assumption that I had made that our sense of self as individuals and members is shaped by the identity which our organisations and indeed the broader community frame. I couch such an examination within questions of 'What do we understand both "officially" and "unofficially" about what we are about?' 'Who are we at UTS?' 'Where we are positioning ourselves and where are we not?'

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Schultz, Hatch and Larsen (2000) argue that an understanding of identity at an organisational level of analysis stems from two separate bodies of literature: corporate identity, primarily found in consultancy practice, and organisational identity, which emerges from the field of organisational studies. Corporate identity, they go on to explain, 'refers to how an organisation expresses and differentiates itself in relation to its stakeholders' (Schultz, Hatch and Larsen 2000:13). They put it that corporate identity is relatively instrumental in that it emphasises 'business relevance'. Thus, the corporate identity literature aims to draw a strong link between brand and economic value. Organisational identity, by contrast, they argue, builds on social identity theory, which 'emphasises social interaction as a site of individual identity formation' (Schultz, Hatch and Larsen 2000:15). Albert and Whetten's (1985) definitions of organisational identity being 'core, distinctive and enduring' has been taken up by much of the literature on organisational identity. However, they go on to explain that more recently other 'dynamic views of identity', which adopt a 'narrative or storytelling approach' have been proposed (Czarniawska 1997). In the narrative approaches to identity at an organisational level, as with identity at an individual level:

Different aspects of identity are highlighted at different moments depending upon who is speaking, who is listening, what speakers and listeners communicate in their exchanges, and how they react to and thus further influence the tale as it is told (Schultz, Hatch and Larsen. 2000:16).

To understand 'who' UTS is as a living organisation with its own story to tell is to think of its past and to clarify where it is positioned in contrast to other universities in the field of tertiary education. The *Dangar report*, the visual audit undertaken by an external consultancy firm in 1999, confirms the 'practice-based' and 'vocational' representation as a key strength of UTS in comparison with its competitors. The messages that the *Dangar report* raised mirror the categorisation that Marginson and Considine (2000:188-206) make of tertiary educational institutions. UTS does not have the status of a 'sandstone' such as the University of Sydney nor that of a redbrick such as the University of New South Wales. But it is clearly ahead of the pack of the so called 'new universities', such as the University of Western Sydney.

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I am interested to see what various players in the field see to be authoritative indicators of UTS's ranking and where it is heading.

- Can you explain the various indicators of status which students use to rank universities in Australia?
- Have indicators of status which students use to rank universities in Australia changed in recent time (late 1990s – 21st century)? Please give examples.
- What tensions do different indicators of status produce for universities?
- What ranking does UTS currently have from the various stakeholder perspectives in comparison with other Australian universities?
- How has UTS's status changed in the period from 1997 - 2003? Please explain in what ways. Give examples.
- In what ways do you think UTS's status/ranking will change in the future? What will be most important in bringing about such changes?

The story that Edward, a senior manager at UTS, tells of indicators of status is a complex one and highly dependent on the students' own personal experience. For status, as he sees it, is interpreted and created in both informal and formal ways:

(S)tudents are influenced by a whole range of factors when determining how they perceive the rank of universities in Australia ...(F)or some students their engagement is very much family-based in terms of the educational experience of their own family....where they went to university and what their own experience was like. .... The other factor which had a major impact was the introduction of fees....rightly or wrongly higher fees can be interpreted as an institute of higher status. The difficulty of admission can also relate to indicators of status. The difficulty of that type of model is that universities have the ability to manipulate admission scores. It is artificially controlled by the

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universities in line with the number of places which they are prepared to make available to students. Status is also derived from a range of leagues tables... such as the *Good University Guide* which attempt to give an indication of the quality of various institutions ... but they are imperfect because the public is unaware of the way in which the research has been undertaken ... nevertheless they are influential.... Students and their families are also expecting a return on their investment so employment ratings of graduates are also highly influential.... Schools themselves are another important stakeholder because not only do they see themselves as preparing students for university education but their own status is linked to the number of their students that gain entry to particular universities.

As a further strategy to gauge how the sense is made of the identity of UTS as an organisation, I engage MBA students in an activity on organisational metaphors that I run in class over several semesters. I ask students to think of a metaphor which would best represent their understanding of UTS. From their metaphors, clear patterns of their theories-in-use emerge which point to their sensemaking of the organisational image and identity of UTS. Such images contrast significantly with espoused views held within the academy. The images which UTS evokes are not altogether flattering: 'a dinosaur in a maze', others talk of 'a money-making machine'. There are also metaphors which focus on the diversity of its international student population: 'a food court' and 'united nations' and so on.

Discussing the changes that are taking place in the university regarding status Edward stresses that:

Of course the whole notion of status is much more linked now to commercial status and commercial viability and the need to actually justify its existence in an economic sense whereas the university conceptually has derived a quite different legacy and so the whole notion of status is very much more based on the context linked to employment and career path development and salary-earning potential

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versus the contribution that individuals might make within their community and uhm whereas once upon a time there was value in, and there is still of course, but once there was more focus in terms of how an individual being trained in this institution could contribute to the community in a social context. It's now about how the individual can contribute to the community in an economic context.

Government reforms, with their focus on financial viability, are clearly prominent in Edward's mind in determining the shape of such changes:

Once upon a time it was inconceivable that a university may go under for financial reasons, whereas now there is the real prospect that that might occur. There is not the guarantee that the Government would bail the university out. And the governance structures that are occurring are requiring university councils to be operating more in the sense of a company director versus a member of a board in a more community-based organisation. So the expectations are much more corporately focused on governance. In terms of real impact for a university such as UTS, UTS does not have a legacy of large cash reserves, large bequests, large land holdings unlike many of the traditional universities ... We are in a city whereby there are two major universities that are very wealthy in comparison to UTS... so that has an impact. We are trying to compete with them but we are literally 5 minutes' drive from both of them...

Clearly related to the positioning of UTS is also the way in which universities are positioned by the media. A precursory glance at newspaper headlines over any given week tells the story of universities in crisis – under-funded and lacking industry relevance.

Furthermore, making up the identity of UTS are innumerable incidental events constructed through everyday interactions whereby people from outside UTS make sense of it in various ways, through contact with insiders as well as outsiders, by which various stories are told.

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For example, in an everyday conversation over lunch a lecturer from the UK expressed his surprise to me on hearing that a Head of School from UTS had described his institution as 'crummy UTS', and on another occasion he had heard another staff member describing UTS as 'a trumped-up TAFE college'. He had remembered these descriptions and been somewhat shocked by them because they allowed him to see UTS and the staff's 'cultural cringe'. UTS really seemed to 'think rather lowly of itself... and seemed to want to position itself differently'. In the words of another academic, 'UTS is rather ashamed of its past and secretly has aspirations of being another Sydney University'. In yet another example of such a conversation about identity and positioning a staff member describes the review meeting for salary supplementation that is conducted at UTS. To her astonishment those on the committee receive the news well when applicants talk of their work at competitor universities for in the eyes of the reviewers this surely means that the lecturer is more capable than those that work solely within their own institution.

Identity examined at the macro-level of the organisation tells only part of the story. To consider what it means to 'go native' in my context of seeking membership as an academic, a key question for me is to ask, as I stand on the cusp of legitimate membership at UTS, 'how is membership gained here?' and indeed, 'What is the identity of an academic?', and how does this relate to how I see myself, my students, and our work experiences and knowledge?

I look at other marginal actors who have an academic portfolio but who do not have an academic role to see how their status influences the way they experience UTS. They are so-called 'hybrids': a category which I embraced with gusto on joining UTS because I hoped that it would 'free me up' to be able to work more effectively across boundaries - akin to the arguments presented by authors such as Gee, Lankshear and Hull (1996). But equally it was an institutional identity which, after a short amount of time, I realised carried with it significant drawbacks. As an illustration, think of the metaphor of playing the game of musical chairs with only two types of chairs - those for academics and those for administrators? The hybrid seemed simply to be outside the rules of the game. Indeed, in playing the game, I found myself continuously running between chairs and did not seem legitimately to sit comfortably on either anywhere. In practice, hybridity is potentially a cold and exhausting place to be when one's organisation is a large bureaucracy with clearly defined categories of labour.

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By posing some questions about how membership is understood at UTS, I sought stories of how hybrids are tracking, by which I mean how they are making sense of themselves in the game that is played here, and, in particular, what they think commercialism or 'working in partnership with industry' has to do with shaping acceptable institutional identities for themselves in the academy. I hatch a plan to ask these same questions of academics who see themselves as marginalised in the university (known observers of life from the fringe) as well as academics who see themselves as 'in the mainstream'. In asking these questions of various stakeholders I aim to build a picture of the multiple and complex ways in which an organisation can be seen and experienced which go well beyond the official organisational chart that contingency theorists would have define what is an organisation - the uniformity of its fit to the structure - its size, its age, its strategy, its technology, and so on.

- What sort of activity/behaviour do you think you need to engage in to become a valued member at UTS?
- Who do you think you need to be seen to be and what do you need to be seen to do to be counted as a successful academic/organisational player at UTS?
- What is your understanding of different membership groups who exist here?
- What membership groups that you mentioned do you see yourself to be a part of?
- Are there others which you are not a part of? Explain why. Give examples.
- Are there membership groups that you think as a career move it would be unwise to join? Explain why.
- How important are commercialism and engagement with corporate partners to the groups you have just described? Why is this so?
- To what extent are you thinking about the commercial viability of anything that you do related to your work?
- Have you had some experience with so-called commercial activity at the university? How did it turn out? Why?
- Can you think of an informal group of members interested in pursuing commercialism/engagement with corporate clients within UTS? If so, how are they seen within the organisation? Describe why.
- To what extent has there been a strategic change at UTS in embracing and undertaking commercial activity/work with corporate clients at UTS and how do you think this has changed in the last 7 years? What would explain this change?
- Has this influenced your choice of membership groups in anyway? Please explain and give examples.

At UTS there are multiple ways of making sense of membership groups – both formal and informal groupings. The people I talk to do not talk of organisational charts but rather see multiple other groupings - informal theorising that people engage in about the politics of UTS.

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At UTS there is, for example, a number of people responsible for an academic function without an academic title, as I had been prior to 1 September 2003. Such people emerge in specialist strategic priority areas within the university such as technology, human resources, and internationalism as well as commercialism. I seek out various players and encourage them to tell their stories to see what they say about membership in universities today. As I re-listen to the recordings of the stories of the so-called 'hybrids', my mind flashes to Bourdieu's intricate concept of life in a Bedouin house with its wet and dry areas. Wet for women, dry for men. But what of androgyny? Ah well, it is of no concern because it simply does not exist.

Mena's story is interesting within this context because, although a hybrid, she has clearly worked out how to position herself and her work effectively within the organisation. She tells of the initial shock she encountered in being employed within the academy. She emphasises that her qualifications were not acknowledged. There was talk of initial exclusion that she experienced at UTS. But now, nine years after her appointment, reflecting on her practice she muses that 'Things are far better for me now that I have the ear of the VC.'

Significantly, Mena's repositioning was achieved by her engagement with similar functional areas in other universities outside UTS. This was a strategy that she engaged in knowingly to bolster her status and credibility within the organisation. Integral to the way she worked was also attention to various internal committees. However, for Mena commercialism was not a part of her core business. She focuses firmly on activities related to the internal workings of UTS. Nevertheless, she had views on the tack that UTS had adopted to commercialism in that:

Basic naivety has been a problem for all of it ... all of the early ventures into it. Instead of partnering with someone from the commercial world who was really good at this and knew how to do it ... we just lost heaps and heaps of money because nobody knows how to cost it out on commercial grounds.... It has also taken us a long time to learn the lessons... and even now I am not sure how terribly well we are doing (with commercial activity)...In a lot of people's minds commercialisation means a number of things: one I think people see it as part of the federal government's agendas, secondly people see it as uhm.. a

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useless thing because of the early failures if you like, in terms that everything that was undertaken was meant to generate money and instead it ended up costing the university lots of money.... There is some quite reasonable skepticism about that.

I turn then to the story of hybrids who are also known for their work on commercialism at UTS. What is clear from the stories of so-called commercial players at UTS is their consciousness that commercial activity is not seen as a primary priority within the organisation. Ruby tells her story. She is both a part-time academic and works in a commercial unit within a faculty at UTS:

Each of the roles that I have would have their own behaviours and that can be challenging in itself. As a faculty member and a part-time member ....., as a quasi-academic, the behaviours that are expected of me.. are a high standard of teaching and co-ordination of my subjects so that the responsibility of doing that ethically and well is expected. The pressure of researching and publishing doesn't seem to kick into that realm as a part-timer but I have put that on myself because I want to be a valued member and the change in attitude now that I have started my PhD from full-time long-term staff members has changed substantially now that I have become a PhD researcher. As I publish and get invited as a keynote speaker to conferences their attitude to me has changed. ... In my other life as a consultant within a commercial unit of the faculty, .... the behaviours that are valued are a professional corporate trainer-come-consultant that can change an outfit, suit-up like a corporate ... and turn up as an expert in my field with knowledge as an expert trainer and adviser... so they are two quite different roles and two quite different expectations and behaviours that I need to be switching. So on days where I do both I have to dress up and down... because the clothes portray an image uhm and I have to swing in and out of .. – perhaps a more casual academic who is laissez-faire but on the ball to a corporate trainer who is absolutely in control and knows what they are doing.

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Ruby stresses that as a part-time academic it is not really important that she is seen at all. There is the impression that as a part-timer she is part of the 'invisible troops' working in the faculty:

I almost have the feeling that I actually don't need to be seen so long as I turn up to class, my results are good, that is it... In my other life it is important to be seen but you do get a reaction from faculty academics when they see me as a corporate trainer, 'Oh, you know you look all dressed up ... what is your story today?' 'I'm going off and doing such and such as a corporate trainer' 'Ohh, Ohh' So there is a sort of tension. You feel almost schizophrenic so the seen thing is definitely there. There is an image to uphold and a reaction depending on what role you play.

Ruby explains that the key complexity of doing commercial activity within a university context is that:

You are bound by reporting lines, who are you actually responsible to as a commercial unit. We are expected to make money, build our own business but then you have other units that put restrictions on you about how you approach that, how much you charge and don't charge, how you mark that up and that makes it difficult to go out and make a sale. It is a sort of complex relationship as a commercial unit within a university environment. You have got on the one hand people who have the attitude that it, the university, is about knowledge and it is not really supposed to be commercial which is still around and, on the other hand, we have to make money so there is a tension about how you do that and how you deliver content. But also having said that selling our products commercially, our standing being a university gives us a lot of credibility in the marketplace which puts us above a lot of smaller private competitors, so we have good credibility. It is just how we negotiate our pathway through the bureaucracy to get the business.

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The building of long-term relationships with corporate clients is seen as a major tension in that:

I don't think we are set up to be commercial but yet the expectation is to make money. We are not set up to really work long-term relationships to their fullest there is probably an approach that we need this and we need this now which is like the 'one shot' 'bums on seats' whatever you want to call it whereas I look at potential clients with a long-term investment approach. I might discount a course to somebody to hook that person into our product so they will either send a lot of people through the business or we will have a long-term relationship with that person. Yet I would be questioned for discounting the rate for the person that I am trying to hook because I hadn't charged the full rate which to me is a very narrow approach to customer relationships and I am in it for the long-term relationships and the repeat business which is good, cheap business rather than the one-hit wonders which is just quick bandaid, reaction solutions and that does not work. I guess that is one of the really big issues we have: trying to change people's mindsets around what we are trying to achieve in the longer term perspective and that doesn't really fit within the university framework of thinking. They just look at each qualification and say we have to fill this many seats.

In this story we can see traces, that I too have experienced, of the pull of the organisation to engage in behaviour and activities, such as presenting at international conferences, publishing and doing PhDs, in order to gain legitimacy as an academic even though it was for experience and professional knowledge other than that of a traditional academic that the hybrids were initially employed. We see too the difficulties of changing attitudes towards building long-term relationships with corporate clients within the academy and the overwhelming pressure of the bureaucracy which makes it difficult to negotiate pathways to engage with corporate clients.

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Next I turn to the storytelling of the academics renowned for their commercial activity to understand how they see this relating to their identity here in the academy. It must be noted that although a number of those whom I interviewed saw themselves as marginal players, on an organisational chart they may appear to be institutionally embedded players. I try to get to an understanding of how they see that the game is played here. What makes up the identity of an academic who also looks at commercial issues? And what tensions do they see it represents?

The first academic storyteller that I encounter had previously worked as a consultant and had worked hard when she first arrived at UTS to get a large-scale commercial activity established. The activity was heralded as a success by students and sponsoring organisations. What my storyteller identified as significant in her own story is her realisation that to be counted as a legitimate player at UTS she needed to forge an identity for herself as a successful academic. 'For promotions one needed publications'. Yet to complete her PhD, the storyteller stresses that she 'did it all wrong'. She is clear though about what makes a successful academic but it is 'not a simple question' because:

It changes with the person in power. Clearly, different key stakeholders have different perspectives....There is a groundswell that if you do establish a good publication track record, and this I don't think has changed, and become recognised in the broad academic community as a leading scholar, it does not matter about the other things. What happens is that you can become differentiated by scholarship, (or) you can become differentiated by some form of public recognition; for example, you can become a media personality or by having a lot of teaching awards. Differentiating yourself from the pack is one path. If you don't do that... the forms of differentiation are much more subtle and become more intertwined in the petty politics of managing your presentation of self... And particularly tailoring your presentation in order to be the preferences of whoever the key stakeholder at the time is and I have seen how people have been successful at that by being the 'hard worker' or 'loyal companion' kind of 'helper'. I think what gets

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overlooked in that middle ground is academic excellence. From my point of view, the critical issues is managing negative feedback.... Even though it may be out of your control... managing that is critical.

As she sees it she 'has engaged in a high risk strategy' because her research is being undertaken in a highly theoretical and non-mainstream area.

Focusing on the School of Management at UTS she analyses the membership groups that have been formed in various formal and informal ways:

They are multidimensional and overlapping .... So within schools there is a split between the power ... (There is the) pro-business lobby. They are people who are pro-capitalism, right wing, believe in the market economy and are unabashed advocates of the status-quo ... there is a traditional socialist network or constituency which still is materialistic however it is interested in questioning power and the basis of distribution of wealth and there is a range of people who are old Labour left ....There is a tiny constituency of Greenies...and then there is the indifferent mob who don't really have any particular preference ..... so there is that dimension. Then there is the paradigmatic split of postmodernists and modernists...and there are cleavages around how people get on... and there are ... Jews, and Irish Catholics and the Atheists and the Buddhists they create various cleavages too ..... and then there are gender cleavages too... the women have decided to look after each other.... So it is complex.

For the academic storyteller the most important thing to remember is:

You need to be present... one thing that fascinates me is that I used to work at home and now I spend a hell of a lot more time at the office... the reason for that is the distinction between home and office became so blurred that I was not managing that very well.... Whereas I have

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noticed that people now think that I am working huge hours but in fact I was probably working longer hours before, but I was invisible and I suspect that that was one of my other mistakes. And people now think that I am a really hard worker and two or three years ago they didn't. The only difference is that I am now visible.

Academics are not the only players who mark out territory at UTS. Another powerful group is the administrators. At a Christmas party, I spend some time chatting to a powerful administrator who some say runs the Faculty. I try to get a sense of his theorising of life and positioning at UTS. Our chat helps me to see life through the eyes of an organisationally well-positioned administrator. Given my hybrid status I have had some experience with the tensions of the administrators' lot in the academy. The focus of my experience and the goal of an academic career made me see the administrator's role as a less desirable one to have in the academy. I am interested in the well-positioned administrator's comment that 'this is a bad time to be an academic but a great time to be an administrator'. At the time the comment had struck me as surprising because the statement is contrary to the conclusions that I had drawn in this same space. At the time - perhaps because of my surprise - I did not probe him on this question. I now want to have another opportunity to learn more of his story and to delve further into why he thinks the way that he does. But in revisiting this question he now wishes to diplomatically re-paraphrase his meaning so that he now talks about the 'great challenges that administrators face' and talks little of those that academics face because such considerations are 'not directly his responsibility'.

That evening, I begin to re-read the story of AMP (Blainey 1999). To understand what identity meant for WBL, also involves the interrogation of the other party to the translation process - AMP.

I focus in particular on learning about the details of what makes up the identity of AMP. My examination makes me wonder again about what it means to be a corporate. I have a thought that we somehow get so caught up with the branding, and the image that it is easy to forget that an organisation is its people, but that statement is easily normalised into a banal truism stated by academics and corporate partners alike without really interrogating the implications

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of what that means. Moreover, an organisation's identity is more than its people. It is a living being in itself with its own lifestory made up of where it has come from as much as where it is going. I start thinking about the various stories which I glean from the text of how people saw AMP. I see replicated in this piece of research my own research gained from observations and the stories of the identity of AMP and its workers. I remind myself of Blainey's description of the AMP as 'a family business', one which has pride in the 'mutual provident concept' and a grounding in a strong Protestant ethic of 'helping people to help themselves' by 'creating a saving nation'. I want to test out these assumptions to see the extent to which it is still a part of the living memory of the AMP:

- Some people have talked to me of AMP being like a family business before the demutualisation? What is meant by this? Do you agree? In what ways?
- How did the way that business was conducted change after this time?
- In what ways did it change the nature of the business at AMP?
- What do you think that AMP's image was prior to 1996? Did it still represent itself in this way post 1996? Was its representation different internally and externally? In what ways?

I seek some people out in the organisation to get a sense of other answers to these questions. As Barbara explains:

AMP was set up by a group of men who wanted to do something for widows... I think widows of clergymen at the time... it was an organisation that took its role with the community very seriously. Not so much in giving money to other organisations (but rather) it always gave the senior management a lot of support for them to take part in charity groups. I was personally involved in helping a number of my own managers who worked tirelessly for various groups.....I do not know how aware the public were of all that. Certainly the staff was aware. And again that would have changed when the competitive pressures got so great. At the time we were doing cost-cutting and

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retrenchment so all that disappeared. The staff simply did not have time to do all that....

In elaborating on her understanding of the past and changes in attitude towards AMP's role as a corporate citizen she emphasises that:

I think in the past it was a high priority to AMP senior managers that they were good corporate citizens. They really wanted to be good corporate citizens. It was not just an advertising gimmick or anything. I think that AMP was run by people who had very high ethical standards. And that was important to them personally and they also felt that if their role was here to support Australians they should not only be supporting them in terms of life insurance but also making jobs available and to develop the country and if Australia was our market anything we could do to support the Australian economy would be good for the company. I think today the AMP Foundation is very active but just judging by the sort of publicity that we put out about it, they will only do things that they will get good publicity on ... it doesn't appear to me that the projects are actually chosen because there is a genuine need to do that. They are chosen by what will give the best publicity and I think that is a shame that that is the basis of our community efforts.

I am interested to see what various players at AMP see to be authoritative indicators of AMP's ranking and where it is heading.

- What are indicators of AMP's status?
- How has its status changed in the period from 1996 - 2003?
- Have indicators of status changed in recent time? Please give examples.
- What has been instrumental in bringing about such changes?

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Reputation is an effect of various streams of cues, each established in relation with external 'stakeholders', who often, on the basis of very limited information, construct ideas about firms and their conduct. Reputation is formed by an ambiguous assemblage of hunches about what the firm stands for. It is, therefore, a fragile resource. (Mouritsen 2000: 208-209)

AMP's listing on the stock exchange in 1998 was seen as a key way in which the AMP way of measuring itself becomes apparent. The stock exchange has the effect of shifting who counts as a 'valued customer' and who is seen to be best positioned as leaders within the organisation. In the words of one senior manager at AMP:

listing forced everyone to get away from the rhetoric and now to really worry about shareholders. What that meant was a stronger orientation on results and a stronger orientation on what people were achieving. So in the previous culture it was okay to semi get there in this culture it was not okay to semi get there. In this culture you had to get there. So if you had said this was the budget, you had to deliver against that budget. So that meant a whole range of new skills around accountability and around even simple technical skills like budget management... The tensions of course were that a lot of the major internal auditing systems were not geared for it yet so these managers were being told they were being held into account yet the internal systems did not actually give them the financial reports until after the end of financial year. There were such lags in financial reporting that they would have a meeting in April and they would be dealing with January figures so it was about managing blancmange, which caused a huge amount of tensions for line managers. So focusing on the shareholder as opposed to policyholders really did mean that it caused a tension for people. Sometimes the two were in conflict so what you want to do for a policyholder meant that it was more costly. The shareholder would reduce the cost so it might mean not accepting a claim or a liability whereas before AMP probably would have accepted the claim or liability.

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Such meanings of AMP being a 'global power' were, in the main, lost on many of AMP's employees' sensemaking long before the organisational rhetoric shifts. From the outset of our story, staff appeared to be struggling with the chimera of AMP's organisational image as a 'global power' – seeing in its stead a representation of 'the family business' which cared for its staff and was responsible to its policyholders. They also saw that their AMP was being besieged by the changes that reporting to shareholders concerned exclusively with profit entailed rather than to customers with whom loyalty could be built through the provision of competitive services.

So how, at an individual level, are the concepts of 'identity' and 'membership' categorised at AMP? Is it very different for players at UTS? Do corporate players at AMP see that different rules operate there as to how to gain membership?

- What sort of activity/behaviour do you think you need to engage in to become a valued corporate member at AMP?
- Who do you think you need to be seen to be and what do you need to be seen to do to be counted as a successful corporate player at AMP?
- What is your understanding of different membership groups who exist here?
- What membership groups that you mentioned do you see yourself to be a part of?
- Are there others which you are not a part of? Explain why. Give examples.
- Are there membership groups that you think as a career move it would be unwise to join? Explain why.
- How important is knowledge work and engagement with university partners to the groups you have just described? Why is this so?
- To what extent are you thinking about the knowledge value of anything that you do related to your work?
- Have you had some experience with so-called knowledge activity at the university? How did it turn out? Why?
- Can you think of an informal group of members interested in pursuing knowledge work with university partners within AMP? If so, how are they seen within the organisation? Describe why.
- To what extent has there been a strategic change at AMP in embracing and undertaking knowledge work with corporate clients at AMP and how do you think this has changed in the last 7 years? What would explain this change?
- Has this influenced your choice of membership groups in any way? Please explain and give examples.

In the 'brave new world' after demutualisation, Rick gives a particularly strong picture of who one needs to be seen to be to be a valued corporate player:

I think you definitely need to be ambitious. You need to be seen as a player. It is no good being the sort of person who just wants to watch

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from the side. You need to be involved. You need to be a quick thinker. You need to come up with the ideas, to implement them.

A lot of the time it is just a lot of impressive showmanship. If you are seen to be out there and impressive and you can talk, ahhh.... you can do presentations, and you sound confident uhmm... that actually moves you up. And there have been some incompetents that have been moved up simply because they look good, they present well. Now it's all about the superficial, the surface reality of how you sell yourself. It is really about selling yourself very well and less about whether you can actually deliver... and the ambition is a very important part because it is something you have to work with ... you have to put in the hours. You have to decide I want to progress, I want to head up there and then it is a matter of strategy. And then it is a matter of strategy: how do I get to each of these places to get me to where I ultimately want to go? It is all about the individual, however. I mean the overall emphasis on where / want to go and not where what is good for the company or good for the corporation as a whole. So I see it as actually being driven by a whole lot of ambitious people working their way up. As a side effect they'll make good decisions, bad decisions for AMP depending on what their goals are.

Similarly, Allen, who describes himself as a manager who is more interested in the 'people side' and 'cultural aspect' of management notes that the financial difficulties that AMP has been experiencing since its demutualisation have also changed the type of manager who is more valued in the company:

Before AMP got into the strife it did with the UK operations... AMP was a very good employer and they had this whole program around *Employer of Choice*.... So they encouraged people to have a work/life balance, uhm, to you know, spend time with the AMP foundation: doing volunteer work, and to do some study and self-awareness and when the money was flowing it

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and the revenue was coming it was all great. Then the UK shit hit the fan and then suddenly all those things have gone out the window. I have really discovered that AMP as an organisation is no longer as supportive from a fun, personal a growth perspective... Very much the focus has really swung around into recognising people who can deliver projects, drive dollars to the bottom line - the delivery focus people rather than the people that focus on the people management, the cultural improvers, the EQ people... I have really noticed in the last 2 years a real shift in that sort of aspect of AMP.

Of primary concern to my organisational storytellers in determining what is valued is understanding the identity of the CEO and his executive team. Who counts as a leader is seen to shift significantly in the mid 1990s in preparation for the AMP's demutualisation. Leaders are seen to need a general business background, rather than one specific to insurance. As Barbara puts it:

I know George Trumball put a lot emphasis on being able to say that he had completely changed his senior management team so that every single person reporting to him was either new to the organisation or had had a complete change of role soon after he came so he was very anxious to get that message across that we had to change and that it was new... There was a lot of effort put into ... getting those changes down to the lower levels. Uhm there was that idea that as a mutual company we did not have to answer to our policy holders. We had to rethink everything and become very conscious of the bottom line, financial implications that we did and that that would involve pretty much retraining the whole staff to do that.... During that period there was a lot of change in the way that they remunerated people. A lot of the benefits that were taken off... there was a lot more focus on remuneration based on performance.

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In the 1990s it becomes unthinkable that an actuary should be a CEO, whereas previously it was the rule. There seems to be a devaluing of local knowledge. Actuaries are seen to be too risk averse. Furthermore they are seen to be not focused enough on the representation and strategic positioning of organisations. It is an organisational paradox that in the 1990s there is more concern with the bottom line but nevertheless financial people rather than actuaries define what constitutes the bottom line:

Traditionally it had been the actuaries that had the power. Around the 1990s it was the finance people.... (In the 1990s) there have been very few actuaries appointed anywhere in AMP to senior positions and the number of actuaries in the business are decreasing quite steadily. Whereas the number of finance people are increasing. You are still getting people who have got the selling background: the life insurance, and superannuation side. But the actual trying to understand how life insurance works does not seem to be a very high priority when they are recruiting senior managers. It is more to do with understanding how capital works and selling and marketing and how those functions work.... Actuaries are about understanding the risk of insurance itself.. what sort of expectations you have about interest rates and returns on shares those sort of issues. Whereas actuaries traditionally would have tended to be very conservative when they worked out what future returns on shares would have been. I think the finance people probably ... expected better returns because they were after the bottom line all the time... they were trying to take a more optimistic point of view on a lot of things.

Barbara remembers the title of an article which represented George Trumball's first interview with the press. It had the title 'AMP: big, fat and lazy'. She stresses that the 'lazy' referred not only to the staff being lazy but also to 'the lazy use of capital':

We had so much capital tied up in reserves to back our policies.  
Whereas the finance people judge performance on what sort of returns

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we are getting off that capital not on whether we would have the resources there if the market falls and we have to pay out on a lot of insurance. So it was a change in what is the most important thing: really it was a major change in the way that AMP operates.

Within their stories we see that membership groupings at the AMP are framed by business units. Business units at AMP are not a homogenous body. Many have been formed out of mergers, and acquisitions whereby employees still self-identify and are identified by others in AMP by the 'proper name' of the original organisation for which they were appointed and work; GIO Insurance, Pearl, Hendersons and so on. Other business units carry the informal label of 'hard' or 'soft' depending on whether they are a 'money-making part of the business' such as re-insurance, superannuation and so on, or by contrast 'a cost to the business' which include internal services such as Human Resources, Information Technology or Information Services 'which are not core to the business at AMP'. The labeling of 'hard' and 'soft' determines the status which each membership group enjoys within the organisation and therefore also the amount of funds which are deemed legitimate to expend on certain parties. Those from 'soft' parts of the business have a lesser claim than those from 'hard' parts of the business to learning and development funds.

Increasingly, 'soft' internal services are expected to make money or at least to be 'extremely lean' by operating as cost effectively as possible and in this way to become 'hard'. This is achieved through the adoption of a number of business models. For example, business units, which provide consolidated Information Technology services at AMP were outsourced to Andersens<sup>11</sup> consulting firm, for a significant management fee – arguably a more cost effective way of providing such services. However, it is a business model whereby AMP core IT staff shifted to being in the 'minority group' reporting to an AMP senior manager; a 'puppet' who was both appointed and is 'kept sweet' by the senior managers from Andersens in return for him doing their bidding and being 'seen to be a significant decision maker in IT representing the needs and interests of AMP employees and the organisation'. Also of

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<sup>11</sup> Andersens Consulting was renamed Accenture in (2001 after severing its last link with accounting group Arthur Andersen. Andersen Consulting was spun off from Arthur Andersen in 1989 and quickly began to outgrow its parent. The two firms fell out in the 1990s when Arthur Andersen began to supplement its core tax and audit operations with consultancy work. A bitter court battle ensued as Arthur Andersen insisted that Andersen Consulting must pay billions of dollars to leave the umbrella organisation, Andersen Worldwide. Accenture has 71,000 staff worldwide and reported revenues of more than £7bn. BBC News (Thursday 19 April 2001 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/1285192.stm>)

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relevance to our story of organisational change at AMP is a part of Human Resources, which operates as a shared service. Its duties became that of being a 'knowledge broker' for the WBL program and as such, for a pro-rata fee charged to its internal customers in the business units, jointly providing the learning and administrative support, along with UTS.

Now let's move a frame closer and examine the relationship between membership groupings at UTS and AMP and how it relates to the take-up of learning and development programs such as WBL. Consider first the context of UTS. Such meaning is made sense of by seeking answers to the question of who was *not involved* in WBL as much as it was about who *was involved* in WBL. Asking a range of academics to reflect on why they did not engage more fully in WBL takes us back to the point that Peter made about the way that academics need to differentiate themselves in a range of ways: the most traditional pathway is through research and teaching, commercialism is a far lower priority. Thus, engagement in WBL is passed over for more direct routes to 'gaining brownie points' in the academy.

For those who do engage in WBL it can be seen not only to be a product of particular ideas as to what constitutes identity but in itself the WBL program can be seen as a form of 'identity work' whereby participants and academics alike engage in technologies of the self, as Foucault (1988e) would have it. For in WBL, with the support of their university adviser and workplace manager, WBL participants engage in a process of collaborative critical inquiry into their work practices, which has, as its starting point, to consider the challenges facing organisations in general and the participant's own organisation in particular. From this point, participants then reflect on the implications these challenges have for their organisation's own identity and their own professional identity. These understandings inform the development of the individualised curriculum that constitutes the basis of the participant's award in which participants identify and articulate both their current capability and potential knowledge gaps. It is through this process of providing workers with ways to critically frame and re-frame understanding of their work and identity that the WBL program helps both organisations and individuals to identify, and to develop further, the capabilities that they need to better meet the challenges of today's economy. This reflects ideas of 'technologies of the self' (Foucault 1988e) in that the worker-learner-students engage in self-disciplining

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practices which shape the ways in which they see themselves, what they value and what they do.

In thinking through how understandings of curriculum can shape one's sense of self and identity, we are reminded of Foucault's seminal study of how the self is constituted through one's sexuality. As Foucault explains:

My object was to analyse sexuality as a historically singular form of experience. Taking this historical singularity into account does not mean overinterpreting the recent emergence of the term "sexuality", or taking it for granted that the word has brought in its trail the reality to which it refers. Rather, it means an effort to treat sexuality as the correlation of a domain of knowledge, a type of normativity and a mode of relations to the self; it means trying to decipher how, in Western societies, a complex experience is constituted from and around certain forms of behaviour (Foucault in Rabinow 1984:333).

For Foucault the shaping of subjectivities is not about meticulously recounting the chronology of certain events, nor of representing the self as a unified and integral construct. Rather, the self and subjectivities are dynamically constituted in context; products of and agents in producing the social relations around them.

Since the postmodern turn, identity has been thought of as being reconfigured in terms of 'a reflexive rewriting of the self' (Chappell, Rhodes, Solomon, Tennant and Yates 2003:29). Anderson and Williams explicitly make the link between learning and the shaping of subjectivities in talking of the use of autobiography and its relationship to postmodern curriculum design:

Past experiences are revisited and reinterpreted from a particular 'now' position, providing a story, a probable coherence that is in part justificatory... the authors themselves select from the vast amount of material available to them. They are central to the process of

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prioritising certain experiences and of interpreting and reinterpreting these (Anderson and Williams 2001:4).

The premise of using autobiography in a learning context is, as Anderson and Williams put it, that 'we use our present understandings of 'who we are; to reshape our past understandings, we reconstruct our biographies in an effort to bring them into greater congruence with our current identities'. Thus, pedagogy is a political arena in which people may take up or resist opportunities to work on their own 'self narration'. The concept of the 'construction' and 'reconstruction of identity clearly aligns with the notion of identity as 'fluid, fractured, and multiple' - individuals having 'contradictory subjectivities constituted through their participation in a range of discourses' (Anderson and William 2001:7 and 8). As Wenger (1998:149) defines it, identity 'yields the following characterisations' as:

- Negotiated experience
- Community membership
- Learning trajectory
- A nexus of multimembership
- A relationship between the local and the global.

Indeed, in constructing the curriculum of their WBL award, participants reflect on such definitions of autobiography and identity. They are thereby provided with some 'thinking tools' by which to analyse a wide range of learning experiences which include, but go well beyond, their current work context, when determining the areas of learning, that will make up the curriculum of their award. Such experiences may include past work experiences, educational experiences or even other relevant experiences from more private spheres of their lives. Credit is awarded on the basis of the connections the participant is able to demonstrate between the knowledge gained from these experiences and knowledge required at work.

The significance of choice to the fashioning of new worker identity and practices is, as Rose (1989:103) puts it, that:

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The image of the self as a choosing self entails a new image of the productive subject. The worker is portrayed neither as an economic actor, rationally pursuing financial advantage, nor as a social creature seeking satisfaction of needs for solidarity and security. The worker is an individual in search of meaning, responsibility, a sense of personal achievement, a maximised 'quality of life', and hence work. Thus, the individual is not emancipated from work, perceived merely as a task or a means to an end, but to be fulfilled in work, now construed as an activity through which we produce, discover and experience our selves.

For example, in considering the relationship between a home experience and the identity of 'being a foster mother' with experience and identity as a 'change consultant', the boundaries between such conceptions are collapsed and fused in new ways by engaging in new 'language games' (Wittgenstein 1965). Indeed, such experiences are no longer separated by space, or by time - 'at home' and 'at work'; nor by role - as 'foster mother' and 'worker'; or by function as 'nurturer' and 'change consultant'. Rather, links are sought which relate the experience of being a foster mother to the capabilities seen to 'make up' the 'body of knowledge' required as a change consultant which is relevant for inclusion in a postgraduate degree. Thus, what was previously constituted as mundane is reconstituted as 'operations management', 'resource management'; 'negotiation'; 'change management', 'people management'; and so on. In this way, the student-worker-learners shape and reshape their understandings of their identity and practices both of their 'own accord' and 'in their own interests', as well as doing the activity of 'writing up' such reflections part within work-time and part in their own time'. Boundaries are further blurred between home and work; the personal and the professional.

The WBL process is powerful because it makes the student-worker-learner grapple with and 'own their discovery of the 'body of knowledge that makes up their professional practice and identity (both that which they have already become and that which they are becoming), as well as to examine past, present and future conceptions of what is 'at stake in the field. As one WBL student put it:

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Through WBL I have come to understand that my dream or aspiration to gain a Master's degree in the field of Information Technology is an important part of my future, one that has a solid foundation in the blood, sweat and tears of my past. The process of reflection has helped me to understand the value of my past experiences and given me the ability to utilise that knowledge in new ways. Above all it has also given me a sense of self-worth I did not expect to get until I had that elusive 'piece of paper' in my hot little hands.

Such a process is particularly relevant for participants in 'new' or not yet legitimised professions such as 'financial planners', 'compliance managers', 'change agents' and so on. For unlike the traditional professions of law, medicine and accounting such actors can feel undermined by not having an established and authoritative 'body of knowledge' and 'canons of content' which sanction their decisions and give them the authority and confidence to conduct their work practices.

Furthermore, the forming of new worker identities does not remain exclusively the domain of corporate partners. WBL also holds significant implications for actors in the academy. One such significant shift is the idea that work and other life experiences do not necessarily fit into the neat framing of a school or faculty course offering. Thus, university administrators and academics are required to redefine their own work practices and identities beyond strict disciplinary boundaries. For in 'talking into being' the various 'drafts' for approval of the award to be sanctioned by each party, all involved in the process, including the academics, get a sense of the tensions and synergies between the value each party places on knowledge. Thus, in constructing the curriculum of the award the relations between what counts as knowledge and power to so determine it as such are exposed in the process. In this way, the 'normalisation' of what counts as knowledge within the academy is interrupted. One consequence of this is to denaturalise the sense of the curriculum that academics have developed and sustained: the security of a curriculum as a body of abstracted knowledge which exists as a social fact that is passed from master to student. In this way, we can see that the curriculum of WBL, in contrast to other course-based subjects at UTS, can be made sense

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of by referring to what Bernstein (1971) called 'integrated' and 'collection' curricula. In defining the two different types of curricula Bernstein put it that:

Strong insulation between contents pointed to a collection type, whereas reduced insulation pointed to an integrated type. The principle here is the strength of the boundary between contents.... Strong framing entails reduced options; weak framing entails a range of options. *This frame refers to the degree of control teacher and pupil possess over the selection, organisation and pacing of knowledge transmitted and received in the pedagogical relationship.* (Bernstein 1971:50)

Using Bernstein's concept of 'classification and frame' one can see that WBL is designed as an 'integrated' curriculum with 'weak framing' in that the learning experience is to a large extent self managed and thus - in theory and practice the student maintains a degree of control over the content and process of the learning experience which in turn is designed to effect the degree to which students internalise the learning they experience.

Identity then is seen as contingent and constructed. When an individual enters the presence of others they commonly seek to acquire information about themselves or bring into play knowledge about themselves that they already possess. Indeed, they are seen to be 'constrained by a web of relations that envelop them' (Palmer and Hardy 2000:272) but nevertheless work hard to reposition their representation. The diversity and fragility that individuals present is necessarily a normal part of any organisation. In this instance, this fragility and multiplicity is conveyed through the myriad of stories which they deploy making up who they are and what they want to be as well as how they position themselves within a field. The power of WBL as a mechanism of identity work can be seen in their ability to use autobiography to shape and reshape the image that they, as workers and learners, have of themselves. In this way, WBL can be seen to operate as a 'reflexive rewriting of the self' (Chappell, Rhodes, Solomon, Tennant and Yates 2003:29), in a delicate capillary of power which translates identity from one organisation to another.

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## CHAPTER 11: TRUTH IS MANAGED THROUGH CAPITAL

PP: You have to be careful about accreditation. It's our social capital, our intellectual capital if you like. We guard it.

JG: But can we advise a company on the steps by which it can be achieved as a consultancy if you like? Being careful to manage their expectations by making clear that they cannot gain accreditation now but after a process of review in which we assess the ways in which they achieved the level required and also ways in which they did not. Equally, thinking of accreditation for a single subject rather than a whole course?

PP: Don't get me wrong. I am eternally grateful to the financial institution. I have a research project with them at the moment. I know that they are a large and reputable organisation.

The conversation took place in my organisation after the close of WBL in relation to the *Action Learning Initiative*. It was a story about capital, the arguments were similar in part to those concepts that I held dear – concepts of social capital and intellectual capital.

In this conversation I gleaned how broad the mistrust of commercial activity was in my organisation. And also the paradox that faces universities and the actors that work within them, particularly for academics located in management in the Faculty of Business. There is the eternal talk of 'forging links' with corporates but when an opportunity comes up, the questions invariably turn defensively to 'What do they want from us?' with its darker undertone of 'What will they take from us?'

In the conversation the references to 'our social capital' and 'our intellectual capital' weren't premised on the assumption of mutual respect for the knowledge exchange between one

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institutional field and another. But rather the words were used to frame an argument which weighed up the worth of engaging in an activity such as the one I was proposing exclusively in institutionally established terms. My mind clicked to the characteristics, that Gouldner used to describe 'locals' in his study of his own provincial American university in the 1950s. That Gouldner's work popped into mind in exactly this instant with a focus on 'locals' is significant. Later, when I re-read his seminal papers which appeared in the *Administrative Science Quarterly* in 1958 and 1959 respectively, I make a new connection which shapes the way that I write up the critical incident. With my focus on 'capital', each of his definitions for the two latent types of identity; 'locals' and 'cosmopolitans' can now be seen as based on different strategies by which actors in given institutional fields choose to mobilise their resources. Such actors can be seen to actively make decisions about 'what is at stake', as well as powerfully to connect themselves with others as a way in which to make choices about how best to 'go on' in the action of their everyday organisational lives. According to Gouldner's study (1958:290) each latent role is defined as follows:

Cosmopolitans: Those low in loyalty to the employing organisation, high on commitment to specialised role skills, and likely to use an outer reference group orientation.

Locals: Those high on loyalty to the employing organisation, low on commitment to specialised role skills and likely to use an inner reference group orientation.

I mapped the statements of each of the definitions against particular forms of capital to make the connection between role type and capital more explicit.

Type of Capital	Types of Roles	
	Cosmopolitans	Locals
<i>Cultural/Symbolic capital</i>	Low on loyalty to the employing organisation	High on loyalty to the employing organisation
<i>Knowledge/Intellectual/Skills capital</i>	High on commitment to specialised role skills	Low on commitment to specialised role skills
<i>Social capital</i>	Likely to use an outer reference group orientation	Likely to use an inner reference group orientation
<i>Financial capital</i>	Nil	Nil

Underlying my conversation with the powerful player were local concerns. The assumption was that corporations are a resource to be *tapped into* for our own purposes – primarily research, but *trading* on other areas of our business - accreditation - for example, or listening to what business wants and engaging with them to create something new together is considered as activity which is highly risky. Such engagement is one to be avoided or, at best, we needed lawyers involved to draw up ‘watertight’ contracts, committees to consult to ensure that it is ‘safe activity’ to engage in. And moreover we needed lots of meetings (to prepare the ground so that issues can be walked past internal committee members) and time – lots of time - to smooth out organisational engagement in such activity. It all needs to be worked out before it is done. It cannot be emergent. Significantly, it should also be noted that until fairly recently ‘the outer reference group’ from which Cosmopolitans gained their social capital generally referred to a tight social network of other academics at prestigious universities. It did not, in the main refer to practitioners in corporate or public organisations outside the boundaries of the university as an organisation. Furthermore, financial capital is not part of Gouldner’s identity-kit. Indeed, that this is missing is also significant given that for Cosmopolitans and Locals alike the accrual of financial capital has traditionally been seen to compromise the balance between economic disinterest and the attainment of academic

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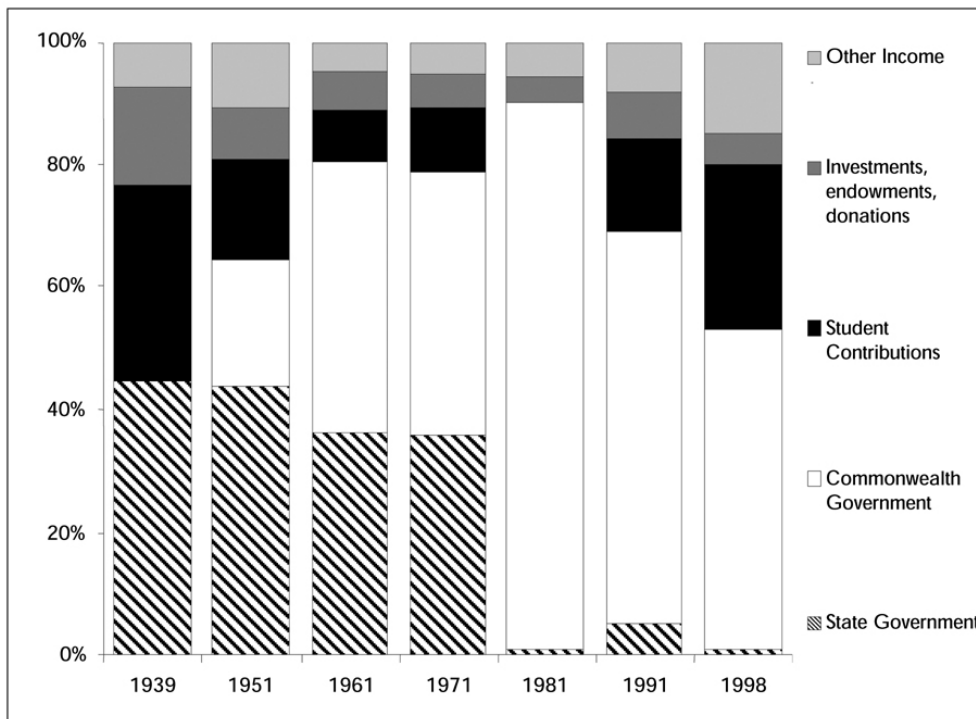
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freedom in the determination of intellectual pursuits. Such sentiments stem perhaps from the ancient 'ideal' of the academy in which 'knowledge is a spiritual gift, which ought not to be sold'. Indeed, Solomon's proclamation 'sell neither wisdom, instruction, nor understanding' (Proverbs 23:23), was cited frequently in the formative years of universities, and has remained a tension never completely resolved (Post. 1980). A manifestation of this is perhaps the standard joke that universities typically have notoriously poor systems to track finances within their institutions. Such poor tracking is not by chance. Until recently, financial capital in universities has been seen to be a resource which their main sponsor, the government, has been charged with the responsibility to provide to keep the engines of knowledge generation and dissemination fuelled for the academics to deliver their own particular brand of 'public good'. However, with the move from public to private enterprise we are also seeing clear shifts in the financial capital that is needed to keep those engines fuelled in the academic field.



Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1939, 1951, 1961, 1971; Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission, 1981; DEET, Selected Higher Education Statistics, 1991; DEETYA, Selected Higher Education Statistics 1998.

Gallagher, M. et al. (2000) *The Emergence of Entrepreneurial Public Universities in Australian Higher Education Division*, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

The graph shows clearly that the Commonwealth Government's contribution, in terms of percentages of income peaked in 1981. Since this time universities have been required to seek other forms of funding. Gallagher (2000:6) goes on to argue that 'In 2000, Australia's Higher Education sector receives more than half its total income from non-government sources and that share is projected to continue to grow'.

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Parallel to the need to access alternative sources of funding beyond the Commonwealth government coffers, moves have been made by academic players to extend what constitute academic networks to incorporate engagement with external, industry-based proponents and even popular culture. Until recently, social capital in universities has been exclusively a concern for internal actors or academic peers. The academic voice has been the only one that has 'counted' or been 'heard'. For universities the main purpose of 'listening to' other voices is to generate 'material' profit given dwindling financial support from government. However, it is naïve to contemplate that such a move can be enacted as an isolated activity without broader shifts occurring in the nature of what constitutes identity, as well as practices at an individual actor level and organisational level throughout the academy.

The conversation with PP has also made me keen to understand what we see our own capital to be in the university. What is our concept of how we may 'value add' both individually and organisationally to corporate organisations? Additionally, I am also interested in exploring how such concepts shape what we see to be at stake for us personally and communally.

The stories I gain about that which we 'value' and 'what is at stake for the academy' from two so-called 'corporate-focused academics' at UTS are remarkably similar. One talks of corporate organisations being 'like our laboratories'. He elaborates:

Certainly in a Faculty of Business the community at large becomes the business community. I have always taken the view that like scientists have their labs, the business academics have the businesses out there.... They are our labs; we learn from them and we are hopefully in a position to expand on them from time to time in implementing some of the business methods, or structures or techniques. So I think that that part has a fairly strong link to work-based learning. In terms of..... traditional research and teaching, they are not all that useful to the organisations out there.

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Another talks of his experience of how to generate and nurture business leads so that they convert into social capital and why he has found this to be particularly problematic within an academic context:

UTS is desperate to have a great image with the community but it doesn't praise or reward people who assist with that but they would like it to emerge magically on a plate..... they see me as valuable with my industry contacts, with my government contacts, and more recently my ability to raise research funding with the current regime and strategic objectives. Unfortunately, having a culture of research means that many of the senior people are not particularly good at talking to outside people, particularly government and industry people, and that is where they see me, if you like, try to fill the void that they don't have...unfortunately, the university has not quite caught on to the wavelength that while I can introduce they will give money, resources, help from the people in power and they haven't quite understood that yet and after one or two not very pleasant experiences where I was naive enough to think I could get the money and the contacts and the university would pull through and deliver I have learnt to use my contacts in situations where I can ensure delivery of whatever they want.

Additionally, both commercial men talk of how, culturally, UTS is not currently operating in such a way that commercialism is fostered:

At the moment it is mouthed as a value but efforts in that direction are not forthcoming.. Commercialism is a funny animal it is high risk for the people who want to do it: seed money has to be given and failures accepted. Writing academic papers, provided that you have some experience, failure is getting to a lesser established journal and that is accepted whereas unfortunately commercial ventures take a while to put together and can be failures. I think that too often the current group of people have not had the experience with commercial ventures

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and I am not sure that failure is celebrated ... as long as the effort is good... So I just think that we don't have a culture that is comfortable with commercialisation. This is a great pity, particularly in the Business faculty we are there to promulgate knowledge that is useful to the business community and therefore if we can't reach them and do things that they will pay for with money then we are probably not doing the right things ... which is a pity but I think that these things go through phases...

I decided to seek further stories of how various forms of capital including social, symbolic/cultural, knowledge and financial capital were viewed at UTS. Similar to Bourdieu, I am keen not to focus on any one form of capital but rather to explore the interconnection of various forms of capital in situ. I am also interested in examining the various forms of capital in terms of both current and past conceptions and, in this way, to trace change in the field as it relates to concepts of what is 'at stake' or 'valued' at UTS.

**Social capital:**

- What social networks do academics traditionally value? Give examples from your own experience of the social networks that you have fostered and the ways in which such networks have contributed to your academic career.
- Does commercialism suggest that our social networks as academics should change in anyway? If so, in what ways?
- What tensions do the extension of networks to incorporate commercial interests produce for academics?

**Symbolic/Cultural capital:**

- What constitutes symbolic/cultural capital of universities in general and UTS in particular?
- How is symbolic/ cultural capital generated at UTS?
- In your opinion do corporate organisations value such symbolic/cultural capital? For what purpose? And in what ways do they express the value of symbolic/cultural capital of universities?

**Knowledge capital:**

- What is the nature of the knowledge, which is traditionally valued in the university field?
- To what extent does such knowledge align with that which is valued in the corporate organisational field?
- How are the tensions between creating and disseminating industry-relevant knowledge as well as maintaining academic rigor being played out at UTS?

**Financial capital:**

- In what ways is the need for universities to be financially viable changing what is 'valued' or 'at stake'?

The social networks that academics are seen to value are primarily research networks. Traditionally research networks were seen to be tightly bounded within a specific discipline, however, increasingly, according to my storytellers, research networks are taking on an interdisciplinary focus. Furthermore, the key problems encountered for academics in ensuring that they are able to achieve their goals of knowledge creation are that articles and books can take so long to publish. Thus, attendance at conferences is seen to be a central networking strategy to ensure that they keep abreast of recent research trends.

It is clear from the conversations I have with various players that such social networks are changing so that academics are not only interested in engaging with academics but also with industry-based practitioners. However, such forging of links is also seen as problematic. As one academic, Daphne, put it, it is a question of:

Who should be leading? I have a bit of a problem with that. I don't necessarily think that business should be leading us. I am a bit reactive to that. But that is because of my background..... I am interested in theory. That is why I am working in a university. I really dislike a totally applied approach. It seems to me .... that the faculty is really split. There are two networks. There is the applied network and the theoretical network.... So that is a big division I think and commercialisation is driving more people into the applied perspective. As to how it is changing us? Obviously it will change the research we do to being much more geared to what business or industry wants us to do and what the Government wants and not in the direction of knowledge development as pure knowledge creation.

Thinking through the implications this has for changing the knowledge that the university is creating, she goes on to explain:

I guess that means that the knowledge will be... partitioned more in terms of observable outcomes, tangible benefits, deliverable outcomes, accountability is an issue. That's good in a way. But it is

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not good in another way. For me, it doesn't suit me at all as a researcher. There are bound to be people like me who struggle in other disciplines. In business it is not such an issue but what of other more humanity-based disciplines... how are they going to bundle up what they do into little packets of knowledge which can be sold?

From her recent consultancy work that she engaged in with corporates she reflects on corporate players and their relationship to theoretical knowledge:

What is really amazing is how really intelligent people can just go day in and day out and not think at a theoretical level at all and in quite senior positions... whether they are doing any reflection, how much reflection they can actually do (pause).

Talking of the tensions that the corporatisation of knowledge brings to the university, Daphne refers to the 'cooption to what the company wants to know, the tendency to produce the sort of results that make them happy'. She goes on to explain her experience in being involved in so-called 'linkage grants' whereby industry and academics form partnerships to engage in research projects which are also jointly funded by the Federal Government:

there is a real danger... and I am not sure we are really equipped to deal with some of these issues.' .... Supposedly you work together to develop a field of knowledge. It is a field of knowledge that that particular business or industry has a stake in getting developed but it is the race for us to get industry money. Having been involved in a couple of these it is very hard not to be submerged by their dictates in a way.... I don't mean that they are dictatorial I just mean that they really do have the hard bottom-line perspective... even organisations that .. pronounce themselves as not having that, they do...It is all about finances.

The problem with a partnership approach to research as Daphne sees it is that:

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Sometimes there might be a different angle on a particular question which is much more problematic, much more intrinsically worthwhile and the applied aspect is much further down the track but if we just did this more basic bit of research first we could get on to the applied, more utilitarian approach later... but they don't want to do that, which means that you have to go off and get another type of grant and they are much more difficult to get.

So you sort of feel like a beggar going around and pleading with industry. It really annoys me. You sort of feel like that you are crawling to corporates... You know they are quite negative to academics....

Just recently we were supposed to be going for a tender with a corporate ..... (laugh) and they said that they did not want the application cluttered up with academic names. They were the actual words that they used. They did not want too many academics on board. They really only wanted a big name academic and a project manager. It was just the attitude that academics don't really count. They just want the big name.

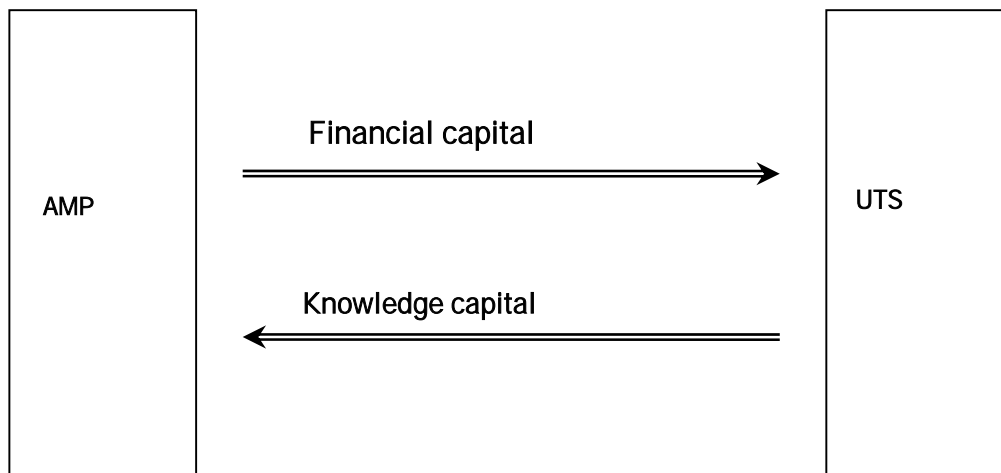
Parallel to such an examination of concepts of capital at UTS, I am also interested to see what people at the AMP have to say about what is at stake for them in their field. What is significant in the story of the AMP is that after the demutualisation, with the added transparency that the organisation's listing on the stock exchange provided, there is increased focus on shareholders and share prices rather than policy holders. All those that I speak to comment on the paradox that in this time when the organisation is talking more than ever of the need to be more strategic and long term in its planning, the business is increasingly short term in its practices.

> What changes did the AMP's listing on the stock exchange bring to the business?

Allen explains. Interestingly, he talks of AMP as though it is a living being:

AMP went from a happy, fat, self-governing mutual to someone that ... had to be regulated by the Australian Stock Exchange, and by the shareholders. That was a real big cultural shift... I think that before that the policyholders were the real owners of the company. They were many millions of sort of anonymous people but suddenly there were regulators to deal with and shareholders, and shareholder meetings ... I think that was a real tough change. And I think it took us a long time to get away from the sleepy mutual-type company.

I go back to the beginning of the story of WBL and examine how capital was first conceived in that context. I find that the premises on which the partnership was conceived in both university and corporate organisational contexts were clearly consistent with rational business thought in that they were based on an unproblematic exchange of one form of capital for another across two mutually exclusive fields. On the one side was seen to be the university with its promise to operate as a 'one-stop knowledge shop' in exchange for new sources of financial capital – an important new need in the field given recent cuts in government funding. On the other side were seen to be corporate organisations replete with financial capital, however, in need of developing their knowledge resources for the purpose of maintaining the organisation's competitive edge in an uncertain and increasingly sophisticated and complex global knowledge economy. The rationality of its planned outcomes was framed optimistically and non-problematically in its sales pitch of 'a win-win for all'. Seen this way, the world of knowledge and financial capital each require the other for the increased profit generation in both organisational contexts, as shown in figure 5 below.



**Figure 5: Rationality of WBL 'translation' process of capital exchange**

However, organisational change is neither an abstracted, nor a 'linear historical progression that displays an intrinsic order, logical consistency and predictability' (Gardiner 2000:184). Indeed, if change and indeed, exchange, were to occur within the framework of such rational processes then perhaps the outcomes of the WBL program, may have been quite different.

In talking of the failure of megaprojects worldwide in their comprehensive study of over two hundred large scale projects Flyvbjerg, Brazelius and Rothengatter (2003:73) come to a similar conclusion:

In terms of risk, too many feasibility studies and appraisals of megaprojects assume projects to exist in a predictable Newtonian world of cause and effect where things go according to plan. In reality, the world of megaproject planning and implementation is a highly stochastic one where things happen only with a certain probability and rarely turn out as originally intended. The failure to reflect the probabilistic nature of project planning, implementation and operation is a central cause of the poor track record for megaproject performance.

Central to the critique of rationality is the recommendation to look at a phenomenon in terms of 'local and particular settings and relationships' (Smith 1999:20) rather than 'extra-locally'.

By calling for a closer analysis of the concept of capital in which the WBL program is embedded, such questions problematise the rationality of the 'capital exchange process' of a simple equation of money in exchange for knowledge on which the WBL program was founded. Furthermore, the questions raise alternative theoretical interests to those presumed by rational models of organisational change in that they seek to uncover the contextual contingencies, which influence the process and outcomes of change.

The rationality of the premises that underpinned WBL was framed by the intense optimism of early proponents of the knowledge management literature who viewed the exchange of knowledge unproblematically without regard to its embeddedness in capillaries of power (Nonaka 1991; Collison and Parcell 2001; Housel and Bell 2001). Furthermore, the rationality of the approach adopted in the design and implementation of WBL also shows a certain naivety about the financial modelling of the WBL program. Its premise of being able to give individualised support to participants and yet still make a significant profit contrasted sharply with the student to staff ratios experienced in the rest of the faculty as student numbers in both undergraduate and postgraduate courses soared as part of the move to mass tertiary education 1996-2003. Equally, WBL required significant amounts of funding from the faculty, given that it was in start-up. Indeed, in spite of the program being a university-wide initiative, funding support from the centre was not forthcoming. Applications for reduction of tax rebates from the centre were continuously rejected even though WBL was, for the most part, conducted remotely and thus did not draw on much of the university infrastructure and resources such as classrooms, administration and so on.

Throughout the story of WBL there have been significant contestations regarding how capital was conceived and who and how one had access to it. On the side of UTS, multiple membership and stakeholder groups proposed answers to the question of 'What is at stake?' and the answers that they gave changed based on the dynamic nature of WBL and its positioning in each field. At the beginning of the story of WBL, protagonists included senior management from both UTS and its entrepreneurial enterprise, Insearch, as well as multiple

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faculty representation. For each of the stakeholders, the WBL program presented different interests. For senior management it represented an opportunity by which to forge for themselves and the organisation the image of being 'work-relevant' and 'industry-focused' and thus fulfilling one of the government's key strategic goals for the tertiary sector, and, as they saw it, to populate for itself a relatively under-colonised market niche in order to be more competitive. For Insearch the venture was primarily framed as an opportunity to 'build better relationships with UTS'. A relationship, which was clearly in need of some work, given that various members of the senior management at UTS had publicly referred to Insearch as 'the bastard child of UTS' on more than one occasion: a turn of phrase which suggested that the relationship between UTS and Insearch; its money-making enterprise, acknowledged that, while it was part of the organisation, its legitimacy however, was somewhat questionable. Hence it was not granted the 'full membership' of UTS to which mainstream parts of the university such as the faculties could lay automatic and 'taken-for-granted' claim.

WBL also prompted some crassness of language: terms such as 'cash cow', 'bums on seats' and 'high class escort agency' reflect a disregard for the financial underpinning of the enterprise. For each of the three faculties involved in WBL; Business, IT and Education, WBL represented a new revenue stream which was designed to feed into the funding structure of mainstream university activity. It was also one of the 'exemplary' work-relevant initiatives which could be showcased and written up in various responses to government inquiries and research initiatives demonstrating fulfilment of the government's work and industry partnership agenda and in this way generate cultural and symbolic capital which in turn could be used to generate financial capital through government grants. However, although its label of 'exemplary' continued to be the official rhetoric at both a faculty and senior management level such rhetoric was also accompanied by considerable concern about the WBL program's ill fit with mainstream university practices; both academically and administratively.

On the part of AMP we can also see various stories of capital which related to the story of WBL. That AMP re-signed the MOU with UTS for a further three years in 2001 even though, until then, there had been only a small number of graduations, would suggest, for example, that for corporate organisations the WBL program represents something beyond financial gain for the organisation. An answer to what this may be was perhaps to be witnessed at the

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elaborate ceremony staged for the signing of the MOU. Located in the salubrious environs of level twenty-six of the AMP tower, with panoramic views of Sydney Harbour, the CEO of AMP and the Chancellor of the University signed the MOU for a further three years in the presence of senior management from both organisations. From the AMP the speeches focused on 'people being our greatest asset' and WBL representing an 'investment' in the 'strategic positioning of the AMP within the finance sector'. On the part of the university the focus fell on the 'academy meeting the business on mutual ground' and the 'synergy of business and university interests and knowledge'. Paradoxically, there were also some precursory jokes about 'financial gain'. And, perhaps even more importantly, photographers were present with the promise of a spate of stories for both AMP and UTS on WBL in subsequent weeks. Significantly, however, the re-signing was only made after it had been agreed, at AMP's behest, that the clause outlining their commitment to provide a base number of participants per annum was waived from the contract, thus minimising financial risk.

Forming partnerships with universities whose dominant capital is 'cultural' and 'symbolic' is a way for the organisation to demonstrate an investment in its people and the strategic thrust of the business. The implied message is that the corporate organisation is not exclusively concerned with amassing economic capital. It is prepared to invest in employees within the organisation. However, this is balanced by the corporate organisation's need for improved staff retention strategies to stem the flow of employees leaving organisations, and consequently also retention of corporate memory. Supporting employees to undertake tertiary study may also be flagged as a tactic to prepare individuals and consequently the organisation for the knowledge economy and beyond. However, nothing will save the individual employee from redundancy if their business unit is not making money. And, paradoxically, in the hyper-competitive environment of the finance sector today, especially in a situation which has seen AMP's share price fall by two-thirds in three years, undertaking further qualifications can even pose a threat to the 'security' of line management (many without credentials themselves). Thus, credentialing, although engaged in by the individual employee to secure their employability, may actually result in vulnerability of employment status. As one manager 'jokingly' remarked:

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I'm not going to slog to do my Master's – none of them get to keep their jobs,

seemingly, suggesting that you can be too qualified for today's employment market; paradoxically, even if you are financially supported to undertake such study by your employing organisation.

On the employees' part, their interest in WBL remains focused primarily on the private and personal benefits of gaining a postgraduate degree. Their participation is based on the aim of leveraging or at least maintaining their professional position both within their organisation and more broadly in the financial industry given recent government-driven and internal industry mandates to credential employees in the sector. In this way, in the main, employees saw participation in WBL to be a strategy by which to 'improve their hand' in playing the knowledge game.

A common response when academic staff is being recruited is for them to ask, 'What's in it for me?' a fair enough question from academics whose working lives are becoming increasingly frenetic and whose poor salaries, by industry standards, require supplementation through other activities, including consultancy, which may be more lucrative than further engagement in the university's activities. For most academics WBL is seen to be a 'strange move' on the part of the university: in Bauman's terms where the role of the university and the academic is to be the 'legislator' of knowledge, this concern would be entirely explicable. For these academics it is a labour to be avoided, or failing this, to be done for the most part with little love, being regarded as far from the privileged pursuit of individual research.

However, for others, WBL can be useful for career progression within the university in that it is evidence of engagement with the university's primary goals of practice-based education. It is also a potential source of contacts with industry and in this way a vehicle for collaborative research and with it the possibility of fulfilling another strategic goal. For a minority of academics whose interests are in exploring 'new models of teaching and learning in higher education' WBL offers opportunities to engage in a negotiated curriculum process, portfolio development, and a focus on learning and work. Such underpinnings offer ample

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opportunities for academics wishing to rise to the postmodern challenge of the role of 'interpreter' in Bauman's terms.

The forms of capital that are valued in both university and corporate fields are multiple and are connected contingently rather than causally. Nevertheless, as we have seen in the case of WBL, there is a certain patterning in that increased commercialism in both the specific university and specific corporate field has meant that financial capital is increasingly regarded as the 'bottom line'. The idea of the translation of one form of capital for the other across two mutually exclusive fields is problematic, given that what is 'valued' or 'at stake' is dynamic and integrally embedded within capillaries of power.



## CHAPTER 12: TRUTH IS MANAGED THROUGH PRACTICES

I get a call from a previous boss. We have not spoken for two months. He has been overseas. I ask about the conference he has attended in Europe and his holiday. He answers briefly and then turns his interests to asking me some pointed questions about how I am tracking in the organisation. The main gauge he uses to estimate my institutional embeddedness is to ask whether I have been to a School of Management meeting since my new appointment. I answer that I have not. I do not go into details. However, I have some boundary tests in train of my own. I have put in a call to be added to the staff broadcast email list. It is ambiguous whether it has been done or not. I will wait. Interestingly, a few weeks later an opportunity to do a further related boundary test to assess my institutional embeddedness comes my way. There is a strike day and I decide to participate. I inform the administrator so that he can dock my pay. This I know is something which will require him to acknowledge that I am indeed in the School of Management. He agrees to organise the matter for me without hesitation as I had anticipated that he would. For on the surface the action involves taking rather than giving. However, at a deeper level in doing so he is acknowledging for the first time that I am 'in' the School of Management. As part of the conversation, I raise again the issue that I do not yet seem to be on an email list for the School of Management and therefore have not yet been invited to attend school meetings. He adds that he does not have the dates at hand. He will not add me to the list but will send me the dates as soon as they are confirmed in a separate email. I protest that that would surely be a waste of his time to deal with my case separately. 'Surely it would make more sense to simply add me to the general list?' In as casual a tone as I can muster. He reiterates that he 'would prefer to do it his way'. It is such a small matter that in practice I cannot allow myself to discuss it further. I walk away with the sense that the matter has been resolved for him today but not for me. I laugh at myself, as I find myself humming the words to Paul Kelly's song:

Special treatment, she got special treatment<sup>12</sup>

I tell myself to chill out for I too can play a waiting and watching game. After all, I have 2.25 years to do something more about it: a struggle for positioning – an example of inclusion and exclusion in the everyday.

At about the same time as WBL's closure, a broadcast email invitation from the research office in the Faculty of Business is sent:

Date: Mon, 08 Sep 2003 11:30:02 +1000  
Subject: REMINDER - Faculty Research Workshop: REALISING THE COMMERCIAL POTENTIAL OF YOUR RESEARCH  
Sender: Faculty Mailing List <[FACULTY@WWW.BUS.uts.edu.au](mailto:FACULTY@WWW.BUS.uts.edu.au)>

**FACULTY OF BUSINESS RESEARCH WORKSHOP**

**REALISING THE COMMERCIAL POTENTIAL OF YOUR RESEARCH:  
A Conversation with the Experts**

*Issues:*

- Turning your research ideas into \$\$s
- Developing opportunities for growth & profit
- Bridging the gap between innovation & commercialisation
- Challenges... strategies... solutions...

I accept the invitation and attend the forum. It is the inaugural faculty-wide forum to discuss commercialisation and research in the Business Faculty at UTS. The sessions unfold in an interesting way. After the introductions and welcomes it becomes apparent that the two main experts that have been invited to speak are industrial scientists with a particular 'product' or 'invention' to sell. They speak of their experience. For the first speaker, an academic, he

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<sup>12</sup> Words which tell of various trials that generations of Aboriginals have encountered in a clash against norms of a dominant culture.

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talks of the difficulty in engaging in commercial research in a university setting and his subsequent withdrawal from the university to seek venture capital in the private sector. His innovation has been his lifelong passion. He talks of his eternal quest for funding and delves into the intricate details of his innovation. The second speaker is a medical doctor. He works outside the university sphere. There is a certain uncertainty about the role of UTS as 'sponsor' of his innovation - a bionic ear. Once again he talks of his product. It is a smooth sales pitch. We do not learn of the pointers behind commercialism. Nor do we talk of how to commercialise knowledge beyond the tangible; the product, the invention. There is no talk of books, consultancy, or of how to establish a research niche, target markets and so on.

The final speaker is an enthusiast from the Research Office in the tower. His experience is as a scientist in industry. He sees the legalities in sharing knowledge. He immediately turns the discussion to talk of patents, and contracts. For example, he begins his session by asking who in the room is not from UTS and hands out confidentiality agreements for the 'outsiders' to complete. The action is done in jest, but there are undertones of seriousness. He uses the language and instruments of intellectual property (IP), confidentiality agreements, patents and so on. For him knowledge and commercialism is something which needs to be 'harnessed' and 'protected'. He does not see knowledge sharing is also a game of seduction and translation? Of relationship building and co-construction? With its integral link with power.

I think a good deal about this forum. I can see replicated in it the rational approach that was adopted in the thinking behind the commercialisation of teaching and learning which embodied and finally unpacked WBL. The commercialism of research, the most highly valued practice in the academy, needs to be approached in such a way that implications of how it will fundamentally shift conventional views of research are scrutinised and understood. What of the new skills that the gaining of large scale research programs with industry will produce in the academy? For the operation of an effective research partnership with industry involves far more than the gaining of the initial grant. For example, deliverables need to be monitored and met, partner relationships need to be sustained. And most importantly, expectations need to be managed. One of the most critical issues is the differences in academic and commercial interests in research: a tension between critique and commercially viable recommendations.

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I decide to send some feedback:

Dear XXX

Thank you for the forum. It gave me a lot to think about. I feel enthusiastic that some conversations are beginning around this issue.

As feedback, in addition to focusing on IP issues I liked the suggestion that a few people in the forum made that we could perhaps look at some of the cultural and philosophical issues around commercialisation in the university context (I guess this is covered by your reference to environmental?). It would be very useful if we could problematise it a bit so that we understand why commercialism is currently so difficult to achieve in our context:

i.e

How does commercialism fit with the concept of legitimate academic identity and practice? How does it relate to what we value or what counts here? How we are rewarded etc? Implications at an individual and organisational level. How does it relate to our past, and understanding of realistic change scenarios for the future?

How to adopt a model which appreciates some of the tensions b/n a rational approach to commercialism and cultural/contextual issues (rational = legalistic contracts, patents designed to protect knowledge and deny access but may also kill innovation, trust building, community/relationship/dialogue building and be seen as too bureaucratic, not flexible enough etc)

Perhaps look at some models of organisations (public sector/other universities that are also going through transitions to commercial models/reflection on professional consultancy firms )? - however, in looking at case studies it would be useful for presenters to highlight the issues which allowed the framing of an innovation as commercially viable rather than discuss the specifics of their particular innovation. It would also be useful to explore examples which have been developed within an institutional context rather than start up companies operating outside a university/institutional context. The point of how this specifically relates to the social sciences particularly areas which have not adopted a scientific model to their R & D is also particularly relevant in helping us to move forward.

Hope these thoughts are useful.

Thank you again

cheers

j

I also begin to reflect on how commercialism is being played out in the research arena within the university. I recognise some synergies with the commercialism of teaching and learning which we encountered in WBL. To test my hypothesis that engagement with commercial actors and the construction of commercial activity changes established practices regardless of the nature of the activity within the academy, I decide to seek out some stories of current commercially-focused research projects:

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- What do you make of the strategic move to relocate commercialism from a separate strategic theme at UTS to research?
- What is your understanding of how commercialism of research will work?
- In what ways is commercialism of research being approached as a UTS-wide initiative?
- What challenges do you think that commercialism of research presents?
- Have you had ethical issues in engaging in commercial research? How do you maintain the integrity of your research? Have you felt under pressure by industry partners in any way in writing up the findings or making recommendations?
- What new capabilities is the commercialism of UTS requiring of individual academics and UTS organisationally? In what ways is UTS acknowledging the need to develop such capabilities? Please give examples.
- Do you think that some lessons about the commercialism of research can be learnt from the attempted commercialism of other aspects of academic practice i.e. teaching and learning through short courses and programs such as WBL? If so, what do you think that these lessons are?

Zena, an academic at UTS, tells an evocative tale of the economic rationalist approaches that are operating at UTS and the way in which they are changing how academics are engaging in various practices, including research. In answering the question of what she makes of the strategic move to relocate commercialism from a separate strategic theme at UTS to research, she responds:

At one level I think that it is bizarre and at another level it doesn't surprise me because it is actually consistent with the whole shift to economic rationalist approaches within the university and I have seen that shift occurring now occurring over a number of years. I started at UTS 12 years ago and it was still very much a cottage industry in terms of commercialisation, but increasingly as the university has made more

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and more and more commitments, ahh financially, (and they now have a serious debt burden), in a sense it does not surprise me that they have put those two together, because I am sure they are of the view that through research they will get some commercial benefits out of it now. At one level I think it really interferes with the integrity of the research area and academic independence but on the other hand it is just more of the economic rationalist policy being implemented by the economic rationalists at UTS.

Elaborating on what she saw to be the 'cottage industry' approach to commercialism when she first arrived at UTS she explains:

Well I think that if we go back even a little bit further to the point when UTS became a university... about that time education was still pretty much a public good and in the interim it has become a business and it is up to universities - the lack of funding .... now requires universities to think differently about how they run their business as opposed to how they provide a public good. So when I first came here you could just see the beginning of that and I remember having a discussion with a colleague not actually about research but it was about what the future of our program was ...and I'd said to my colleagues that the client organisation was becoming more focused on developing their own people and therefore our market would soon be diminished and when I started talking about 'market' and my colleagues at that time just looked at me as though I had come from Mars. They really didn't understand what I was going on about. So it was in the very early years of transition towards economic rationalism. I had been through that in the public sector but I could see that the university was certainly following down that path. It was very much at the early stages of it and the university did not have a very good understanding of what the implications of government policy would be.

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The way in which the commercialism of research will work is also 'a puzzle' to Zena. She qualifies this statement by adding that 'in some areas it is more obvious how it may work than other areas'. As it turns out Zena was also at the seminar which discussed the commercialism of research in the Faculty of Business at UTS. She shares her concerns about the difficulty which commercialising research represents:

My concern about making commercialism work means that other research that has an intrinsic value that is not commercial will begin to be less valued, so how you strike the balance ... I think is problematic. If you make commercialism work, you then you may not make other parts of your research work... you end up having commercialism overwhelming research. But obviously from the development of intellectual capital in other areas of the university where there is a tangible instrument or tool or test of some kind then I think it is much easier to examine the commercial value and proceed to patents, proceed if you want to register a company ... to sell the product. But I think that when we are dealing mainly with concepts and ideas it is more difficult.... I think the other tensions are cost and benefits so the amount of time that you put into this kind of development and the return you might get and how that is recognised then within the academic environment - whether the fact that you've spent 99.9% of your time trying to development a product that then in the end doesn't run for a whole lot of difficult reasons. Is there going to be any recognition for that? Or will you get knocked out because it actually hasn't become commercial? I haven't done research in the area, but I am sure if you looked at the area of innovation you would find that only a small percentage of things that are worked on actually get up. So I guess that would be one of my concerns about how you actually allocate time and how you get rewarded within the academic environment....The only thing I have heard is commercialism is good and we should do it ... The

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focus is so in the tunnel I think that it will be driven by tunnel vision rather than vision per se.

Furthermore, Zena felt that the ethical issues around commercialism are 'highly problematic'. She talks about some of the instances that have emerged whilst working in a research centre within the Faculty of Business. For Zena the main problem is that academic practices are not clearly 'bounded.' For example, she explains:

There are very fuzzy lines between ... what is research and what is consulting. I spent a number of days going around the university and trying to find out how to differentiate them. Finally, I was told by someone in the Faculty of Business that as long as you can defend what you are doing on the basis that it increases or adds to knowledge in some way then you can call that research rather than consulting. There is an imperative there because if you do research you get more money back into the research centre. If you do consulting more than 50% of the income from that consulting goes to other parts of the university and you see very little. So you are putting in tremendous effort for very limited return. So the ethical issues internally then become, 'are you really defining what should be consulting as research?'

Writing up commercial research poses additional ethical dimensions. Questions come up about what one can publish and how one is going to report to the client - and perhaps in other ways to the academic community.

I turn now to reflect on stories of changing work practices at AMP. At the AMP there are also numerous stories of its bid to commercialise its work practices and thoughts on how it changes the nature of the practices in a workplace. One such story comes to me in learning of the so-called 'industrial policies' also known as 'collector policies' or 'home service policies' which are in the living memory of many policy holders, as well as employees at the AMP. The

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policy holders, many of them blue-collar workers, made monthly contributions to their life insurance schemes in cash which were personally collected by a local insurance collector. Blainey (1999:290) explains how the scheme operated:

In many households the adults were at work during the day, and so a collector had to look for the money in a hiding place. The society's collectors carried a long and narrow book, in the back of which they wrote down special instructions so that, when they were on holidays, the person doing their round knew where to look for the cash. Here are the abbreviated entries from the book of a collector operating in an older suburb of Sydney in the mid 1970s:

Tarragindi Rd:	'Look in Meter box'
Bankside Street:	Look in B-B-Q cupboard If Out
Toohy St:	IF Out look in Breadbox beside steps.
Allendale St:	Under FRONT Door mat
Dulcie street:	If out, In washing machine.

I read on and discover that this quaint work practice continued until 1984: only twelve years before our story of when UTS first connected with AMP to assist with its positioning as a global power! This quaint work practice is juxtaposed with more distancing techniques of payment by cheque, bankcard and direct deposits by phone and internet whereby there is little connection between customer and the organisation.

Furthermore, I learn too that AMP's practices had not always been structurally organised in business units. Business units were in effect a structural way of commercialising the organisation. The practice of business units stemmed from changes which took place in the mid-1980s. In 1988, under competitive and economic pressure, CORDS (at that time the commercial consulting arm of the Australian Graduate School of Management of the

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prestigious University of NSW) was bought in by CEO Ian Stanwell to restructure the business so that the costs were more transparent and greater business control could be exercised in the running of the society. CORDS was responsible for the business unit rather than the product focus. The business unit structure has more or less remained as the structure of AMP until today. However, such a commercially focused way of structuring the business had costs in terms of the rupture of traditional 'knowledge networks' that had existed in the business. As one AMP employee puts it:

Whilst CORDS might have made the society more efficient in terms of identifying and reducing costs, it broke down the knowledge networks that AMP as an employer had deliberately encouraged for most of its existence. The impact was not immediate but would be felt eventually as natural attrition. It removed the employees who had a deep and broad understanding of the business. Newcomers were expected to be effective in their own jobs. AMP practised just-in-time knowledge acquisition, hiring experts and experience when required rather than training up, thus commodifying knowledge and reducing the value of the person who held it. This was not an uncommon practice in the rest of the corporate world as competition forced companies to be more efficient with their capital and more emphasis was placed on short-term results. Business units are designed to concentrate effort where the business thinks it can be the most effective but they tend to blinker those working within them.... By making business units responsible for their own strategies and expenses, the AMP encouraged a culture of putting the business unit requirements ahead of the whole company's objectives by fostering internal competition and maintaining power by withholding information.

Simon tells a further story of how the structural arrangements of the Shared Services HR, where the WBL program was located, impacted the relationships within AMP and the effect they had in promoting activity such as WBL to the business units:

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Because training and development sat as a shared service we were actually external to the business. So we were in many ways selling our wares. We were like an external company and we were selling them through the agent which was the HR executive or the HR Manager. So we had to win the HR executive or the HR manager over to what we were trying to do first and then have them to be the mouthpiece back into the business and that actually proved to be quite difficult. It was personality-based, it was power-based so where individuals were wanting to appear to be more influential or whatever.... so it was using the HR executive and managers as a broker when things started to stumble: we were playing politics now. There were times when we tried to market directly to the business units and then we had increased politics because HR was saying they were not included in all this that we were doing.... The role clarity was not crystal clear: there were grey areas. In fact there was even a working party at the top entitled 'the grey areas'. It was Shared Services and the HR individual working through all these dilemmas and the grey around responsibilities. The grey areas brought us unstuck because it brought out a lot of dysfunctional-type behaviours. So therefore the business never got a really clear, direct, cohesive package from the whole HR community around Work-Based Learning. So where you had parts of the business that had the HR executive well and truly on board, where there were joint presentations and joint initiatives you actually had some connection and traction. Where the HR executive saw it as 'Oh here is another thing I have to worry about' and we were a bit like an annoying fly saying 'When are we going to do this?' then it was not successful.

Rick provides a further evocative tale of how practices intersect with power and how the espoused ways of seeing and talking about organisational practices are not always those which one experiences. He draws on Orwell's novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to explain the effect of commercialism on established organisational practices:

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(AMP's story is about) changing the past by refusing to acknowledge it ...or that our communication strategy seems to be based on George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* where the Ministry of Information will tell you anything but (pause) Have you read any of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*? I think that it is hilarious the way that he predicted things like news-speak and the Ministry of Truth whose whole purpose was to disguise whatever the truth was according to what the leaders of the day want. I mean I think that goes on in organisations of all sorts. It is part of their control. They need to control the perceptions of the company. They need to control how the staff perceive the company and where they think it is going. Today is a great example; the CEO sent out an email that the launching of the new totally Australian business has been a huge success. (Turns to her computer, opens relevant email in her inbox and reads), 'We will build the company into a financial powerhouse, we have the ability, we have the efficient means and methods and processes of building very efficient financial services products and we have a great distribution network'..... I mean I don't know enough about the finance industry whether what they are telling us true or not and I am content enough to wait about and see what happens.

I turn my thoughts back to how the framework of WBL presented some tensions within the academy which mirror the questions that I asked regarding the planned commercialism of research. For the academy, commercial engagement is based on the premise that one will gain financial support for work framed in organisationally established ways of doing things. However, engagement with corporate partners brings other stakeholders and ways of doing things into the relationship. Taking WBL as an example of this we came to see how at an organisational level WBL was premised on the basis of its being client-focused which means organising activities in ways that are most convenient for the client rather than the university. Furthermore, ideas of what constituted teaching and learning were challenged within the partnership model. For in the negotiated process of the WBL program, learning is defined as a social practice which provides a site in which what 'counts' as knowledge is reached through

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critical conversations between the learner and mentors located in both the university and the workplace rather than one of individual endeavour which reproduces the insights enabled by other authorities. Thus, the individual, the workplace and the university are each seen to have a stake in contributing to the enrichment of the learning context and curriculum. Such conversations between partners clearly shape the outcomes which are experienced. However, for many academics this did not represent an opportunity to do things differently or to learn other ways of knowing. Rather, it represented a 'violation of their work practices'. As one academic put it:

We have our frame and it is hard to break out of that frame. It is really hard. And we can't see why we should have to break out of our frame to suit the WBL program.... It is too good and too tailored and too intensive for its own good basically.

Such thoughts were also obvious to our corporate partners. Simon in reflecting on how UTS was first chosen as a partner to engage in WBL explains:

We spoke to all of the universities at the time and UTS were the only ones prepared to have the conversation with us. All the other universities were not client-oriented. They were dispensers of learning. And that is their paradigm and that is all they were prepared to take on board. UTS was at least prepared to have the conversation with us. So we decided that UTS was probably more innovative and we went with them. They were interested because they needed to establish a differentiator in relation to the more established universities back then so we did see them as being client-driven initially anyway, wanting to meet our needs. It then became evident though that they were still caught up in the university paradigm which is: we are dispensers of learning. And there were huge challenges in our relationship when they wanted to repackage what was offered in the university and then just put it into AMP.

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However, after the initial teething problems, once the fully negotiated model of learning is rolled out in the business, WBL produces various further tensions for corporate organisations. The emphasis within WBL is on the examination of the relationship between learning and work. A negotiated process of learning, involving representation and support, is privileged over an exclusively 'expert-driven' content focus from either field. However, engagement in critical analysis, although an integral part of postgraduate work, is not always welcome in corporate organisational life, as Garrick and Clegg (2001) note:

To make sense of the world through formulating and asking critical questions can be made 'out of bounds' (... and ...) seem to be 'uncool' in the drive for performativity because they might be interruptive of privileged work-based learning sensemaking.

That it is 'uncool' to be 'critical' is clearly reflected in dialogue with numerous students. For example, one WBL student, Mark, demonstrates this in refining the focus of his work-based project. In discussion, Mark outlined the problems with a merger which he described as 'two warring parties' where one set of practices was clearly being defined as 'ad hoc' by the dominant party in the merger who then proceeded to 'enforce its systematic way of doing things without a regard for the other company's practices'. He explained that each partner engaged in 'double-speak': of 'negotiation', 'collaboration' and so on, whilst simultaneously forcing their own practices on the other party and instituting mass redundancies. When I suggested that critical theorists may help him to frame such arguments in his project report, he looked shocked at the thought of writing such things as part of his report - particularly since his manager, who was instrumental in instituting the 'change management' process, a process which in conversation he was now critiquing, would also sign off on his WBL report. He then retorted, 'Look sorry for whinging ... I have had a bad day'. He then went on to explain that it was clear from discussions he had already had with his mentor about the focus he should take in his work-based project. The mentor had assured him that he was 'expecting (him to discuss) efficient ways of engaging in a change management process' within his work-based project. 'Talking critically about the problem (in his report) ... would ... not be appreciated as it would not be seen to be part of the solution' and even worse be seen as 'criticism of (his) manager' which would 'only bring (him) more grief'. Imbued in Mark's

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comments is also his understanding that to 'play the game' effectively in organisations involves a certain 'sanitisation' and 'rationalisation' of 'organisational reality'. As ten Bos put it (2000:36):

The belief in hard facts is still firmly in place. They are the stuff reality is made of. Managers, therefore, should find and describe these facts and base their decision on such activities. That facts are fabricated, conjured up, or invented during the decision-making process and that managers are part of reality rather than subjects outside it has no place in rational work.

The belief in hard facts is also held by many academics in the Business faculty. For the majority of them, the world as they know it is constituted by facts delivered by empiricism, validated by positivism, and written up as science. In this sense a typical learning experience that WBL participants (and potentially advisers) may encounter in undertaking WBL is initial excitement about the flexibility of the program as they engage in their role as 'constructor' and then mounting anxiety about its lack of 'factual content' and prescribed boundaries. As a learning experience it is not neutral - it is the student's responsibility to decide what is important and what is not in negotiation with other stakeholders. Equally, the student has to justify these decisions and finally has to argue and present their case in writing.

Before closing this reflection on practice within the university it is worth noting that one major difference between the commercialism of research and that of teaching and learning is that the commercialism of research, thus far, lies firmly within the boundaries of the practice of prestigious academics at UTS. But how long before they too - like the academics engaged in the design phase of WBL - will feel the pressure of the overwhelming workload that the engagement in the commercialism of their practices as well as the maintenance of more traditional ways of doing research brings to bear? How long before they too find ways to delegate the implementation of commercial research to outsiders more familiar with commercial genres? It is at that point where the commercialism of research is devolved to other less powerful players in the academy that the commercialism of research will be at its most vulnerable state - particularly if such activity is hived off to specialist units rather than

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maintained within the framework of existing research centres. As with the story of WBL, it was most vulnerable at that time, not necessarily because externals do a worse job of the commercialism of academic practices than mainstream academics, but more so because of who defines what counts as 'quality practices' and what is most valued in what we do.



## CHAPTER 13: TRUTH IS MANAGED THROUGH CAPILLARIES OF POWER

Date: Wed, 22 Oct 2003 10:39 +1000  
From: The Vice-Chancellor <void@uts.edu.au>  
Subject: [Broadcast] UTS Executive Structure  
To: broadcast-staff@uts.edu.au

Dear Colleague

Over the past few months I have been engaged in a consultative process to review the Executive Structure at UTS.

The objectives of the review were to identify the issues inhibiting optimum efficiency in the current structure, and to develop a senior executive structure which will deliver my vision for UTS and enable us to manage our response to significant changes in the external environment.

Council has now approved a change in the executive structure. The main changes are as follows:

1. Disestablishment of the University Enterprises portfolio and disestablishment of the position of Vice-President (University Enterprises)

2. Change in titles of some existing senior executive positions:

- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) to Deputy Vice-Chancellor (i.e. brackets removed)
- Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Quality Enhancement) to Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning)
- Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Development) to Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research)

These titles will also have the respective titles of Vice-President for international purposes.

3. The creation of the senior executive positions of

- Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (International) and
- Executive Director (Organisational Support).

The recruiting process for these positions will begin immediately.

The changes in titles in 2 above will be effected immediately. The structure, portfolios and consequent changes in reporting relationships will take place from late March 2004. These dates align with the intention of Professor XXX (Vice-President (University Enterprises)) to retire and is when we expect the two new executive positions to be recruited.

If you would like more information, copies of my paper "A new UTS senior Executive Structure" are available from Human Resources or your Dean or Director's office.

The new management structure can be found at:

<http://www.uts.edu.au/about/executive/UTSMGTStructure2004.ppt>

XXX  
Vice-Chancellor

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Part 2: Managing truth theoretically

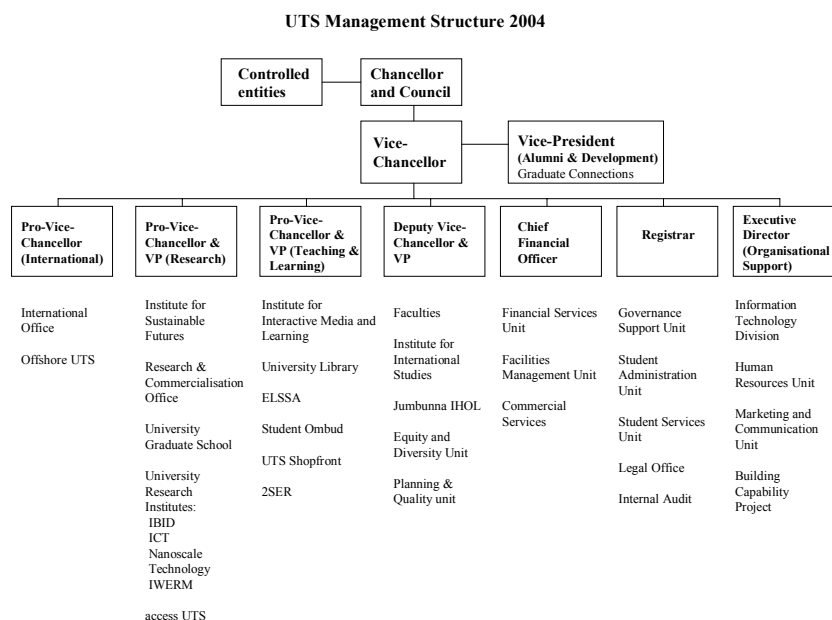
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Lots of things fall into place when I see this email and examine the new management structure. The email reports on the 'disestablishment of the University Enterprises portfolio and disestablishment of the position of Vice-President (University Enterprises)' to whom WBL had reported. The commercialism of teaching and learning has not brought in the cash. Commercialism is moving out of being a separate category at UTS and is now explicitly and formally embedded within the research portfolio.

I click on the link to the 'new management structure' which is referred to in the email:



The new structure indicates the renamed - 'Research and Commercialism Office'. Commercialism is being relocated within research rather than being one of the key strategic goals of UTS (significantly now the very last entry on the long list.) The push has been formalised structurally to create money through research grants with corporates rather than through learning programs. We notice too that recent changes have seen that the key positions of Vice-Chancellor (VC) as well as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) and Vice-President

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(VP) have recently been taken up by an economist and an accountant respectively, pointing to the seriousness with which UTS is addressing its commercial imperatives.

At AMP too there are numerous stories of power. It is a clear manifestation of power that the HR unit has been decimated as times in the business get tough. In our story of WBL we have also told a most significant story of power, that between the actuaries and 'financial men' whose different visions of financial accountability within the business had devastating results.

But the power of relevance for this story is not to be found only at the giddy heights of the organisation. Power is not only to be understood as formal roles and formal lines of authority conveyed in organisational charts. Power can also defy the laws of gravity. Up is down and down is up. So what of power in the WBL program? Was it not of empowerment that it first spoke at its naissance?

WBL drew endless hopeful preludes from the empowerment literature (Senge 1990; Drucker 1992). It talked of knowledge workers and the collapsing of the boundaries between learning/work. Such talk was engaged in with the student-worker-learners, their managers, senior managers – indeed, with anyone who would care to listen. WBL was a so-called 'democratic space' whereby each party was both learner and expert - bringing their knowledge to the table for examination. It was consistent with the philosophies underpinning the work-based learning literature which stressed the importance of establishing tri-partite relationships which bound the individual employee, to their employer as well as the university (Boud and Solomon 2001). The tri-partite relationship carried with it significant gains if the worker-learner did well but what of those who did not? Given that WBL was perceived organisationally as training for new worker identities – could failure in WBL be generalised to mean that workers were not fit for their new world? That they were 'dinosaurs' too steeped in old ways of thinking about the business? Ways which were no longer valued. Performance in WBL could be over-determined.

The ceding of power, however, was only potential, for many student-worker-learners the excitement induced by the burgeoning 'empowerment' which such a process promises was mixed with the anxiety and complexities of operating in a stakeholder environment whereby

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the learning process is no longer a relationship exclusively forged between learner and teacher but rather a three-way, multi-level relationship whereby their progress is tracked organisationally at a strategic level as well as involving their direct line report in their business unit in addition to other organisational players and an academic adviser from UTS. This carried with it significant gains. The negotiated curriculum also meant that decisions about what to include as 'areas of learning' in their award and what to leave out needed to take into consideration the views of their workplace manager and academics who patently seem to have more authority 'vis a vis' both the work environment and the abstractions of knowledge than they do.

There were also particular tensions around the role of the line manager in the learning agreement. As Field put it, 'despite initiatives designed to foster empowerment and learning (..) and despite management espousing organisational learning and associated ideas, the reality often observed is that managers act in ways that disempower employees and undermine opportunities for positive, contributive learning' (Field 1998:77). Citing Hirschhorn (1991) and McCaffrey, Faeman and Hart (1995) he argues that organisational learning presents a paradox for managers in that 'in organisations where employees are encouraged to exercise power and to learn, how does management stay in control? After all, genuinely empowered workers may not want to apply themselves to management goals' (1997:150). Thus, a tension is produced whereby:

Managers become increasingly insecure. They respond by tightening the controls, and by undermining activities likely to facilitate learning. However, when controls become too tight, employees hold back, and creative input is inhibited (Field 1998:78).

This was particularly evident in various incidents throughout WBL. One such incident unfolded whereby both a manager and his subordinate were enrolled in the WBL program. It was a practice that was explicitly celebrated by the WBL coordinators at both UTS and AMP for it was anticipated that such a relationship could facilitate the 'development of strong learning support mechanisms'. However, outcomes as we know can manifest themselves in ways other than those that are planned. The relationship became one of a subtle power struggle –

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the jockeying for positions, bargaining as well as conflict. There were few traces of a 'supportive learning relationship' as the learning literature would have it (Senge 1990). For the subordinate, a recent graduate, had an undergraduate degree but her manager did not. He intended to do a Graduate Certificate. She wished to pursue the higher award level of a Graduate Diploma. Her manager was clearly unsettled. By workshop 3, without explanation, she had shifted her decision to a lower award. By workshop 4 she had completed her WBL tasks but was denied permission to gain access to her files for she had been made redundant. Her manager continued as planned and was awarded his Graduate Certificate. Other students talk endlessly of their managers' desires for them to focus on 'practical issues' whereas UTS advisers seemed more concerned that they learn how to 'conceptualise', 'theorise' and 'reflect on' their practice in ways that related to the business literature.

Initial responses by many managers asked to perform their role as operating as a coach for their subordinates involved in the WBL program declared themselves to be 'too busy', 'uncomfortable', 'incapable', or 'unwilling' to engage in their role as coach or mentor in the learning relationship when participants sought their support. Indeed, in spite of the role of 'manager as coach', being widely espoused in both the management literature and organisational practice as an integral part of their role in supporting knowledge development and hence also increasing their competitive advantage within the organisation (Reich 1992; Kinlaw 1989; Keichel 1991), many line managers did not seem to relish being coaches. As one WBL participant explained:

My manager never read any of my work. I'd even given him just a summary rather than the real thing because he always said he was too busy... but he still didn't have any time. I was really pleased with some of the ideas I was having, especially with the directions I was taking in my Work-Based projects. They were real ways to improve the business. I tried to explain, but he was always too busy. So, I gave up - It's better really just to keep your head down and not make a big thing out of it.

Another participant, a senior manager at AMP, who called himself a 'pragmatist', retorted in an evaluation of management support that:

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I expected nothing, and I got nothing, so I wasn't at all disappointed.

Clearly, the role of manager as coach is not always consistent with the identity and interests of many managers operating in environments where performance remains largely measured by the short-term financial success of the business.

Tensions exist too between the knowledge of student-worker-learners and that of academics in that there are different expectations of what constitutes knowledge work. As one academic put it:

WBL was based on the idea that students have knowledge that is commensurable with a degree level... but academics have ways of knowing that are quite different to the average WBL learning student. Even senior managers who participate in the program tend to think rarely of what they do or don't know. They are more focused on getting tasks done, meeting deadlines.... They are not into reflective practice, or analysis and they don't read much on the whole. So getting them to reflect and analyse and engage in professional reading and moreover to value - that is obviously a real struggle. They don't necessarily see the point in that.

The tri-partite relationship was also based on the assumption that relationships would remain stable but for many participants engaged in the twenty-eight week program planning phase or in a work-based project which could take as long as a year – in this time many students changed jobs as did their managers.

And what of the performativity of WBL? Does it not focus on changing the way in which people work by engaging them in a process by which they scrutinise themselves and hence also challenge what is valued as Foucault would have it? As Ball, in discussing performativity puts it (Ball 1999:18):

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(workers) are represented and encouraged to think about themselves as individuals who calculate about themselves, 'add value to themselves', improve their productivity, live an existence of calculation. They are to become 'enterprising subjects'; who live their lives as 'an enterprise of self' (Rose 1989).

Seen in this light Work-Based Learning parallels workplace activities such as the negotiation of performance agreements, and peer reviews. There is an immediate contrast between WBL and workplace training: the latter is generally lockstep, whereby the learners are seen to do and thus, by implication, understand what the instructor deems as essential knowledge. A form of power is exerted through the learning process but is so effective because it is hardly noticed. Consistent with Foucault's idea of 'technologies of the self', the adviser in both the academy and the workplace has a potential role in 'controlling' what the student-worker-learner writes. For in constructing their WBL award participants have to 'name' and 'justify' the subjects or, in the language of WBL programs the 'areas of learning' in a WBL award. For these areas of learning to be 'valid' for inclusion in the program they need to align with the learning priorities of each of their stakeholders. In this way tacit knowledge is made explicit and hence more controllable. In discovering what they know they reveal who they really are, and what they really know to their corporate watchers; potentially, they render up power by making themselves less inscrutable. In this way, the forging of partnerships with universities to undertake WBL awards may be seen to be a process of control by which worker identity concepts of what is at stake for them in their field as well as questions of what constitutes established work practices are contested and reformed.

Power is seen as a web that is 'not constructed to achieve particular forms of control over its environment; rather it ... grows out of a past, changes in response to accidental events'' (Palmer and Hardy 2000:269) implicating those it ensnares. Foucault sees actors, as part of their everyday lives in organisations, constantly making assessments which provide the grounds on which decisions about appropriate actions to be taken are weighed up and adopted. These decisions are made 'in situ' such that the range of possibilities are shaped by a conception of power which is not only a force oriented towards control which dominates and says no but also to those characteristics of power which Foucault defines as 'positive'. Power

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circulates: from institutional policies and strategies down to the smallest and apparently most trivial and insignificant extremities – in the bodies, desires, habits and gestures of individual social subjects – the post-Foucauldian analyst sees power at work. Power produces our subjectivity or identity, our conceptions of practices and ideas of what is at stake for us in a field because it is that which relates to our categorisation and classification of what makes up what counts as ‘worthy’ and ‘unworthy’.



## CONCLUSION?

Interestingly, when I first started writing this part of the text, I actually had what I am writing now structured under the heading of 'Truth Is Managed Through Power' with the view to some other conclusion, at some other time. But what I was writing was an ill fit. It seemed too broad. And not only that. It was more than that. It was about it *being* finished. It was about acknowledging that the writing of this text has demonstrated what I am capable of as well as having served a broader purpose of sensemaking of that which I had come to think of as my 'madness'. As Foucault puts it beautifully in his introduction to an essay entitled *Madness, the Absence of Work* (Foucault in Davidson 1997b:97):

Perhaps some day we will no longer really know what madness was. Its face will have closed upon itself, no longer allowing us to decipher the traces it may have left behind. Will these traces themselves have become anything to the unknowing gaze but simple black marks? Or will they at the most have become part of the configurations that we others now cannot sketch but that in the future would constitute the indispensable grids through which we and our culture become legible? ... Everything we experience today in the mode of a limit, or as foreign, or as intolerable will have returned to the serenity of the positive. And whatever currently designates this exteriority to us may well one day designate us.....

So the sharp image of reason will wither in flames. The familiar game of mirroring the other side of ourselves in madness and of eavesdropping from our listening posts on voices that, coming from very far, tell us more nearly what we are - this game with its rules, its strategies, its contrivances, its tricks, its tolerated illegalities will once and for all have become nothing but a complex ritual whose significations will have been reduced to ashes....

It is hard to say what finishing is. Now when I come to think of it, I have always prided myself on finishing things. Take my degrees for instance. I finished them all. I was not a so-called non-completer. But now I realise that I was a non-completer at a higher level. I was hooked on those formal subjects: a course junky because I needed an Expert in my life, which meant that I did not acknowledge that I was an expert.

Yes, now we are getting closer to it.

In the spirit of WBL: of integrating work and life to learn new ways of thinking and doing, it is time to tell a personal everyday story - not drawn from work this time but rather from conversations from behind the scenes of my story of WBL. A story that stems from the 'family' as an organisation which for many of us - me included - is the first organisation and sense of organising from which we learn how to 'manage truth of the everyday'.

Thus, the conclusion came to me as a game of 'Chinese whispers': a telephone conversation with my parents, sharing that same conversation with my partner Tim and now my writing it up myself to make sense of it and pass it on to you.

Last week I talked to my parents - I heard that the platelet<sup>13</sup> levels were now fourteen (14). We have lived with this knowledge of death looming over us for over two (2) years. The experts gave us six (6) weeks so we are doing extraordinarily well. Some say it is a medical miracle.

I wanted to go home. To go to my first home. I leave work early. I spend the weekend. To see. To listen. To get angry. To accept. To eat. To laugh. To watch TV. To shop. To go for a brief walk. To sleep. And the talk? Well that was everyday too of course. Nothing special - but that is what made it special.

And here we have it – not the threat of the death of WBL but of someone far closer.

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<sup>13</sup> Platelets are irregularly-shaped, colourless bodies that are present in the blood. Their sticky surface lets them, along with other substances, form clots to stop bleeding. The normal number of platelets in the blood is between 200,000 to 400, 000 per cubic millimeter. If this number drops below 20,000 patients should receive platelet transfusions to prevent potential bleeding.

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I see my dad showing me what seemed at the time to be the important text in our lives. Scrawled carelessly. Ironically, I think, a letter that combines numbers and words:

I guess that irony is lost on you? Perhaps you have worked out part of it? G guessed that I am the one interested in the words? But I have not told you about my Dad's obsession with numbers have I?

To give you an example of how fully he believes in the power of numbers I recall when my nephew and his grandson was diagnosed with Bi-polar (only months after his own diagnosis). Our own "annis horribilis"<sup>14</sup>

I told this story to someone else; it was F with whom I began this story as a seemingly random act. And guess what she said? 'That's okay', 'That's okay'. And then told her own story with her own dad and his dying. She warned me gently that we never know exactly when the moment will be but that it will be that spending time is important.

Back to the story. Maths: He even said at one point that the cause of his grandson's illness could be explained by the stress that he was feeling at school because he was falling behind in his maths class!! You may laugh! I don't mind. I did. I don't think he will mind. But his explanation is also plausible if I tell a bit more. The poor kid even got shingles. He was in turmoil. He dropped down classes which meant that he was separated from friends. He had confused thoughts. He heard talking voices. He had delusions of grandeur as well as intense sadness. He was not able to put pen to paper. Hang on a minute look at those symptoms there is nothing there that I too have not experienced and somehow lurking there is perhaps the fear that we slipped through the noose of diagnosis this time? But maybe not next time? Okay - let's admit it. Symptoms of madness are normal.

Sunday. I could not write. I lay on the lounge, that was okay. I was feeling a bit down. A bit worn out. Then I started to replay the weekend. Yes it had been good. I am glad I did it. I was

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<sup>14</sup> A term made famous by Queen Elizabeth II who in giving her annual Christmas address broadcast on television to the British public and Commonwealth countries referred to the circumstances of 1992 as her 'annis horribilis' - (horrible year) given that her two eldest sons Charles and Andrew were seeking divorces from their respective wives and Windsor Castle, her official state residence, had been destroyed in part by a serious fire resulting in architectural damage as well as the loss of many valuable works of art.

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a bit hard on Mum though. Better give her a ring. We talk of everyday things and I slip it in that she is amazing.

It is Monday of the following week. I returned to work. My anxiety levels begin to rise. I even had to go in on Saturday to finish something off. Obsession. I am wondering how one could be so busy when everything has closed down??? That's because I am not working on the dead but on the living. For me what counts as living at this point in time is the *Action Learning* thing of course. It was that bit - the work bit that was vitally important - you know, that do or die thing.

Saturday evening 9 pm. Yes, I had done good work. Saturday was good. It was okay - what I was working on was vitally important at the time - an interesting story in itself which I would have gone into before but not now. That is another story: now that I have drawn that line - and written the 'conclusion'.

On Sunday I pick up the phone. I talk to my mother. She asks me how I have been. It has been a three-day elapse since my last call. Strange behaviour for me for I have developed the habit of ringing daily.

Julie: Hi Mum. It's me.

(Silence)

Mum: Haven't heard from you for a few days.

Julie: Yes. I have been busy. You know, a bit of this and that.

(Silence)

Mum: Your Dad and I have had a busy week too. There has been quite a bit of new news.

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Julie: Well, you could have picked up the phone?

(Silence - hanging in the air is a conversation which we had a few years back when I pointed out to her that the expectations that she placed on me to always call her and her silent treatment if I did not ring was just disempowering her and putting all the responsibility on me because I had to remember to ring her. In essence an account of how she uses productive power with a dash of technologies of the self on my part; a line of argument thanks to Monsieur Foucault.)

OMISSION (I dive into the confessional practice that has been our way since I have been a child. She needed to know it all to know I was okay. I need to tell it to feel okay. To know that she is okay.)

You have heard it all before, hence omission.

With the terse comment out in the open. Her turn to talk and my turn to listen.)

Mum: We did not even ring Stephen about it.

Julie: What does *even* mean?

(Brief sibling rivalry. But I know that it is totally unfounded. Because I know the *even* is because he lives closer to them than I do.)

Mum: Dad would not let me. Dad went to St George Hospital. He had his blood levels checked. We came home in the car and the phone was ringing already. They must have been ringing non

stop. They said he had to rush back to St George Hospital immediately. To Emergency. His blood level count was now 4.

(Dad has generally been positioned in the family as the dominant one. The patriarch. The rational man. The man of knowledge. The invincible. Our family relations were always defined by traditional assumptions of power)

Of course he would not go back. Because he had already been there. He went to Sutherland Hospital instead. And he met a really nice intern there. He really liked her. She was German. I guess they noticed that Dad was German and they got her for him. They're very efficient up there. Gave him all sorts of tests. As it turned out he does not need a blood transfusion after all. Their count was 9.

(Ah, there he is. The man who will never follow instructions and we can also see the imprecision of it all - words and numbers.)

Look. Hang on. That's him. He is just driving in. Tooting for me of course. Look I have to open the garage door.

(It has always annoyed me that Dad toots and Mum comes running. It is the archetypical power-over model. But there is more to that - as I have already noted, Mum is the omnipresent carer and she wields her tool of capillaries of power with precision)

Julie: I guess I'll leave you to it.

Mum: (Rustle of door opening. Pause.) Hang on.

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Julie: Mum, can you go on with a blood count level of zero?

Mum: (Shocked. Pause.) I don't think you realise how serious this is.  
(Pause) I am trying to wrap him in cotton wool but he won't have any of it. Of course!

Julie: (Pause)

Mum: I have to cook his lunch. Do you want to speak to your Father?

Julie: Yes. Put him on.

Julie: (to father) So how did Valentine's Day go?

Dad: What? Valentine's Day? That was yesterday wasn't it?

Julie: Yeh, how did it go?

Dad: Yes, I haven't bought Mum her present yet. But I will get it tomorrow.

Julie: Oh. Really? What are you getting her?

Dad: Yes. A necklace or something like that.  
..... Invented nonsense. Getting bigger than Christmas....

Julie: Yeh. I bet the Catholics invented it.

Dad: Yeh. No the Jews.

Julie: Yeh the Catholics did it! The Jews did it! The Americans did it!

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Julie and Dad: (laugh) -

(Language games. Memberships categorisation devices. Power. Identity ... Significant because Julie had always called Dad a racist. And talked critically of Germany's part in the Holocaust. Julie even had to learn German and live in Germany for three years. In fact she almost ended up living her life there to get to the bottom of that story ...)

Dad: Did Mum tell you the news?

(Julie does not answer. She is exerting power over Dad - making him wait till she is ready to acknowledge his news. Julie's role within the family has been to force the patriarch to wait sometimes.)

Julie: Tells Dad something about work (OMIT you've heard it all before)

(Dad knows what game Julie is playing because it is also his game - in fact he taught this game to Julie. Julie too will have to wait. Next move in the language game is absolute banality.)

Dad: It's been hot. Hasn't it?

(Usually, this would drive Julie to distraction because she, like he, has an insatiable curiosity. But, as you know Julie can afford to wait because Mum has already told her. Julie is so scared of Dad's death. She tracks the story day in and day out. There are multiple accounts. Micro stories. Next move in the language game is absolute abstraction.)

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Julie: Dad, I am really, really, angry.

Dad are you listening?

I am angry because you were more correct than I wanted to believe.

Dad: What did you say?

Julie: I said that you were right on things. I only worked that out later. Humanity. You know how you said that it is only so very, very thin.....

Dad: Oh. That. Yes, Stephen is like me too. It's getting older.

(Pause - recognition that translation has taken place. Next move in language game - telling of the story.)

Dad: I went to the hospital this week. Platelets are down to 4 they said. When we came home the phone was ringing. So I had to go off to Emergency. I went to Sutherland. And there was a really nice girl there. About your age. No.....maybe a bit younger.

Dad: (calls to Mum in background) How old do you think that that nice German girl was?

Mum (calls from kitchen) 27

(I am 39! Ah, parents. Don't you love them. For them, at least, we will be the eternal youth.)

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Dad: Yes. Really nice open girl. You could talk to her. She told you things. We talked about you. That you were in Munich and nearly stayed there. She told us that her parents were heartbroken. She is with an Australian boy and they plan to settle down here.

(calls to Mum in the kitchen) Mum where did she meet him? I can't remember.

Mum: (calls from kitchen) In Germany. They met in Germany then they came out here.

Dad: Yeh. She had studied at Göttingen, where Martin Luther studied. You know the one who pinned his thesis to the church gates all those hundreds of years ago. She knew stuff. Told you stuff. Not like the GP. Keeping secrets from me.

You know it is all on the internet.

You can check your own drugs. The levels. You can check it all.

Julie: Dad you haven't told him (the GP) have you that you know all that? That you are checking all your drugs on the internet?

Dad: (Pause) No. (Very bad liar)

Julie: You haven't tried my trick on him that I learnt from you. Of telling them all that you know? Remember you taught me that - knowledge is power. Telling all makes the horses nervous? Remember that one?

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Dad: You know I haven't done what they have told me to do at St George. I haven't cut down on all my heart tablets.

Julie: Why can't you just follow instructions? You know, just go along with what they say?

(Julie can't believe that she is saying this because as you know she has just spent three years writing about the importance of knowledge being seen beyond the rules!)

Dad: You don't understand. It's complicated. The GP will be put out. They are jealous of each other. The GP looks after my heart. He prescribes the Wolfram. The cancer doctors are looking after my blood - you know. There is a bit of a juggling act going on. The one giving different advice to the other - fighting over whether blood or heart is the critical factor.

(pause).

Julie: God, that's amazing - just what my research is all about, you know - experts, and contestations of what constitutes knowledge.....

Dad: You know if that nice German intern settled here I would go to her practice. You know she said I should relax at home and take my pulse at home. She said people are always so tense about going to the doctors. Anxious that their blood pressure will be high. Then the count is high. But at home, doing it relaxed, in your own time. That's the way.

(More evidence of the imprecision of numbers? And evidence that some trained in the scientific method are focused on contextualism???)

(Mum's calling from the kitchen - Dad translates)

Mum wants to know how you made that nice salad for us last week.

Julie: Rocket.

Dad: Mum she said Rocket.

Julie: Balsamic vinegar.

Dad: What... Mum, she said Balsamic vinegar.

Julie: Virgin Olive Oil.

Dad: Oil

Julie: Slithers of Parmesan cheese.....

(I pause. Mum is the expert cook. But, I know why she is doing this and so do you. Overhearing translations is seductive.)

Then I remember some extra ingredients that we had also talked about sometime last week for yet another version.)

Julie: Oh yes. You can add slithers of roasted almonds. And sun dried tomatoes - and you need to wash the rocket and dry it really well.

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(incredibly simple salad but nevertheless takes a while to explain. And you can forget things - what to put in and what to take out. Just like doing research!)

Dad: Mum, did you get all that?

Yes. She got it.

(Of course she got it. She is the nourisher. The Carer. She is there. Part of it day-in-day-out.)

Oh there's Lynette (Mum's sister) Of course right on the knocker. Right at lunch. What can I talk to her about?

That German intern, she was still keen. You know not settled down and in a business just after the money and it? all like others. She talked. She was open. Friendly girl. Smart.

(More discussion about expert knowers combined with lay knowledge and problems of commercialism)

Julie > > > > (I am struggling now - I can't seem to remember anymore. Perhaps I will remember tomorrow.)

We say goodbye.

The most important thing is that it has been a success.

Oh, yes the best part! I had forgotten to tell you the best part. Dad says goodbye by saying –

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Dad I have to go now. I have to have lunch with my  
Valentine girl.

He remembered and understands what I said! A translation has really occurred.

Then the pain of it all. I walk into our yard. I am still holding the phone. And I sob. I start blithering and he is there. Immediately, he sees what is going on. He has our dog Lucy in the wheelbarrow where she gets washed every week and she is standing there. She is not wagging her tail. She hates baths. Of course at that moment we don't see her. We stand there in the yard. He holds me. I sob. I heave. I splutter. Tears pour. Silent bits and then more. But he holds me.

Then the words come. The story comes. It comes rapid fire. But it is a different version. And look when I tell it this time I am laughing too. We are making more sense of it all. There we are, Tim and I and Lucy, standing in the yard. And we see that he is magnificent and that we are magnificent. A particularly funny bit is me thinking Dad is invincible. That he can live without blood. Other bits bring laughter too - of the rational man deciding to drive to the closer hospital rather than following the rule. Isn't that typical? Sound familiar? We also thank that smart German intern who has met an old German coot or two; knows what to say and what to do. She who already understands that science is more than rules - an interpreter in Bauman's terms. We laugh too at the jealous doctors, guardians of heart and blood - the legislators who jealously guard their expert knowledge - combating one version of truth with the other.

We can see Dad keeping them on their toes with his own records of the account, with his diligent research for prescribed drugs on the internet (he is even scanning and storing on his computer each letter from doctor to specialist and vice versa - tracking the entire account of his illness - what is said and not said. He demands knowledge of all. It is his way of maintaining some control). And so he goes on. Defying all odds. The numbers not clear. Is it 4??? Is it 9????

There it was as well in that banal yet vital conversation 'the power of the everyday in managing truth in organisations': imprinted on the family as an organisation.

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I look back for the umpteenth time at the text that I have written and as I flip through the pages the characters all change again. And yet more incidents and connections seem relevant. How can I keep up? Now I am seeing you all in ways other than those incidents that I chose to tell. But now that I have uttered the words conclusion, I have to accept that you may or may not have stayed riveted to my every word. Whether you read this text in my order or not, has to be irrelevant to me as well because it has already served a purpose for me and my sensemaking of that which I called 'my madness'. But clearly you will not see it all as I saw it. Nor, as I have already pointed out, do I still see it all in the same light as when I first typed each word and then amended this part and then the other. However, for the purpose at hand of making some sense of my world in the here and now as well as passing my PhD I have to draw a cold hard line and say:

Yes, I can live with this version.

And I can see now that I can trust you to see that this is not only a story about me and my world but rather one about *you* and the relationships that *you* have. It is a story about the things that *you* do and don't do in the everyday and the foreseen and unforeseen consequences that they have. It is the story of the *me* and the *you* which we may or may not keep secret from ourselves and others. So now that I see myself like this, that means that I can see you in this light too. I get it. I finally understand the obvious; not only because I have read about it, but also because I have lived and experienced it.

The conclusions that we draw can be various and one way of making sense of them is that they shift according to the context that we are in - and one way of thinking of that which constitutes 'context' is space, time, and discourses (but clearly we could see context in endless other ways too). I also chose to talk to agency; agency of the living and the non-living. I saw agency as operating at multiple levels of analysis. It is micro and macro. It exists at an institutional level, group as well as at an individual level. Furthermore, the way I chose to talk of agency was that it involves concepts of identity, capital and practices - hence I saw agency defining who we are and are not, what is and is not at stake for us and finally what we choose to do and not to do. Additionally, each of those elements needs to be considered temporally because

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whatever was, is or will be here as part of our world has a chance of determining how things connect with the other. Finally, the glue that I chose to talk of which sticks all this together I named 'power'. However, the way I saw power was as a force which connects as well as severs. It is emotional - full of fear, loyalty, trust, betrayal, respect, pride, greed, ambition, deception – the full gamut of the human passions and interests, the human comedy.

Remember the diagrammatic representation of truth and how it is managed from section one?

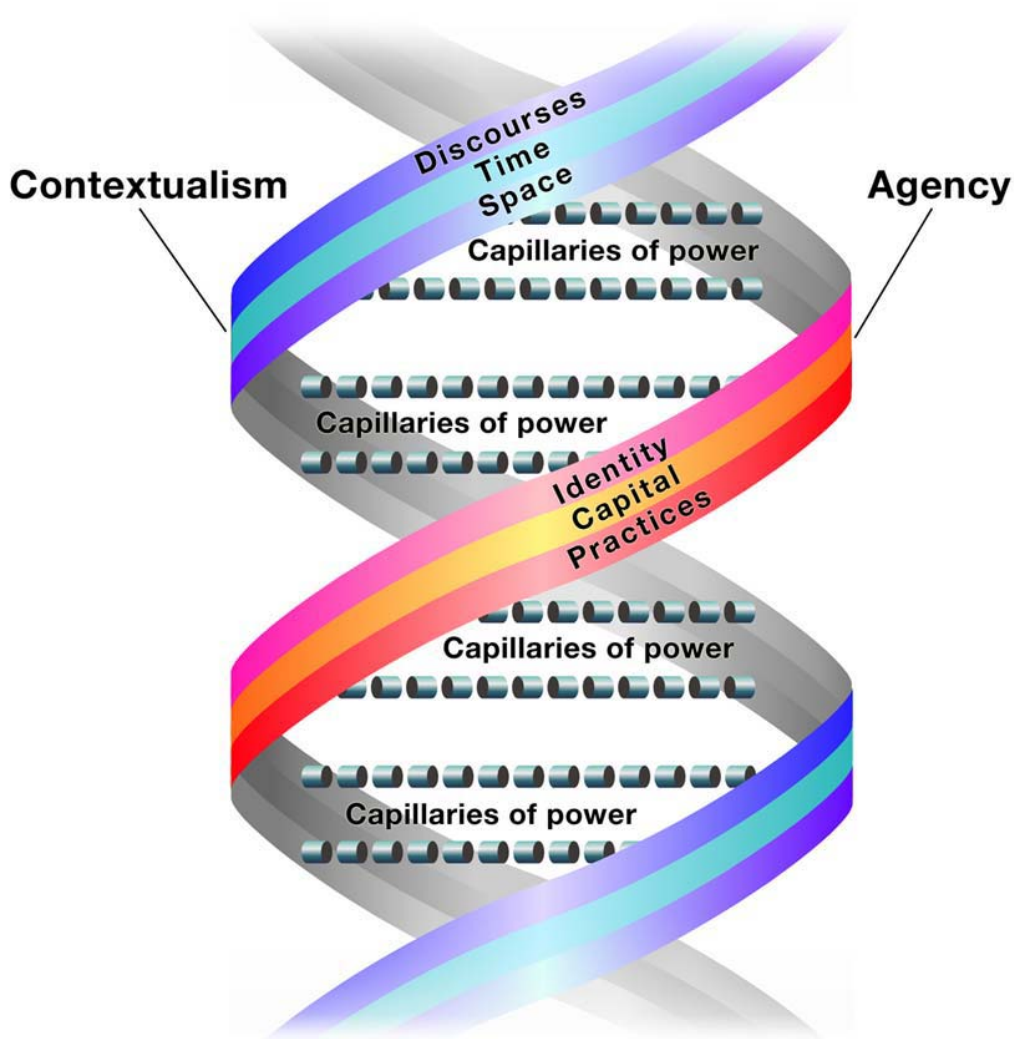


figure 6: holistic representation of thinking tools



Life and the truth that we make of it are a mass of loosely coupled connections which nevertheless have a certain patterning which we create as we make our decisions in the everyday about how to go on as we go about our world. That which we count as 'Our world' of course impacts on what is possible and equally the decisions we make - whether to push against certain boundaries and/or to stay safely inside others - shapes who we are, what we value, what we do. And also in our own way, by making our decision (regardless of how minute) we continually shape that which counts as 'the world' in which we live.

Thus, in telling the story of WBL by attending to the constitutive detail, I have brought to light various assemblages of contextualism and agency that make up institutional bodies such as a university, a financial institution or even a family. In this way, I have sought to show the ways in which particular forms of conduct are played out as part of everyday decision making processes and actions. Thus, actors shape their existence through the actions that they take. However, actors also shape and are shaped by the contexts in which they operate for clearly not everything is possible at any given time, or in any space, nor is every kind of discourse able to be uttered in a given field. Furthermore, the scope of contextual possibilities does not remain static. It is, as we have seen complex, contingent and dynamic.

WBL, I argue, is a technology of power in that it was designed to 'operate by inducing in others appropriate forms of conduct' (Allen 2003:67). However, as we have seen:

The key to the operation of power... lies with how the different schemas take hold in the imagination and serve to influence the timing and spacing of activities, rather than with any general formulae set down in advance. (Allen 2003:72)

WBL's inability, in the main, to 'take hold' when examined at both the macro and micro level of the organisations can be explained by the sheer audacity of this inter-organisational technology. It was designed optimistically to span both a financial institution, and university as well as in many cases, the family as an organisation, given that for the participants, as we have seen, reflective learning was to be sourced from private spheres of their lives,

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additionally much of their work on WBL - in spite of the official rhetoric which suggested otherwise - was done at home and thus had an impact on family life.

Furthermore, the rationality of the neatly bounded premises on which it was based: an exchange of knowledge for money - contrasted significantly with the messiness of the multiple rationalities which allowed it to be talked into as well as out of being. Juxtaposed with its neatly bounded foundations was also the reality that central to its success was its need to silently disrupt and reshape the routines of its subjects and this could only be done by them regulating their own conduct and ways of being in relation to their acceptance of institutional or societal expectations. And what greater power can reshape institutional or societal expectations than the effects of 'productive' or 'positive power' imbued in technologies which generate mutual respect, admiration and, dare I say it, even love? And there we have it, WBL in its most ideal form - the privilege of having an ongoing dialogue of organisational stories where each engaged willingly at the macro and micro level and told honestly of life with space for talk and listening rather than listening for space. Thus, creating a space where inter-organisational translations could occur which engendered love of oneself, love of work and love of the academic ways of seeing the world.

As a technology of power, WBL is akin to Foucault's concept of governmentality which contrasts significantly with the idea of the repression and unbending authority of the sovereign state. Similar to Foucault's concept of technologies of the self, governmentality provides the vehicle by which Foucault could talk of the idea of 'conduct of conduct' through which power must be exercised 'at a distance' (Miller and Rose 1988; Rose and Miller 1992). The idea suggests that under liberalism, people are persuaded rather than forced to do things. As part of the technologies of persuasion we can see the emergence of practices and rationalities which instill in people the capacities for self-regulation and self-governance. In liberal democratic societies people govern themselves according to both formal and informal rules of conduct and expectations which show us the 'way things are' and the 'way they should be'. WBL can be seen in this light as a tool of persuasion in that it was at its most effective when it was able to reach deep into the lives of its subjects, requiring them to internalise its effects and openly to want to examine and challenge their sense of self: as workers, as learners, and as human beings. However, as we have seen, such effects were rarely felt in the rush for

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more instrumental goals - and when such effects were felt, they were experienced mainly by participants who took up the challenge of self-examination as part of the process of gaining a university award. However, for many, WBL emerged and slipped from view without leaving a trace on their soul: part of the unspoken about and forgotten dead.

The increasing instrumentality of governmentally self-regulating subjects, by which people steer their lives in contemporary times, has been expressed in terms of love in Bauman's (2003) book *Liquid love*. He comments on the increasingly fragile nature of all relationships, in our contemporary times. Even love, the most intimate of relationships, is entered into as a bond that embodies the 'contradictory desire' to both 'tighten' and 'loosen' its effects when circumstances change:

As long as it lives, love hovers on the brink of defeat. It dissolves its past as it goes; it leaves no fortified trenches behind to which it could retreat, running for shelter in case of trouble. And it knows not what lies ahead and what the future may bring. It will never gain confidence strong enough to disperse the clouds and stifle anxiety. Love is a mortgage loan drawn on an uncertain, and inscrutable, future.

Love may be, and often is, as frightening as death; only unlike death, it covers up that truth by the flurry of desire and excitement. It makes sense to think of the difference between love and death as one between attraction and repulsion. On second thoughts, though, one cannot be that sure. Love's promises are as a rule less ambiguous than its gifts. Thus the temptation to fall in love is great and overwhelming, but so also is the attraction of escape. And the enticement to seek a rose without thorns is never far away and always difficult to resist (Bauman 2003:8-9).

And one last reflection:

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Finally, I realise that this thesis moved from Knowledge management > Change management  
> Truth management > Love management? A labour of love, perhaps?

How significant!!! Knowledge I disbanded because for me it sounded too rational. Change was such a tired word. And no one wants to do it. Truth became an obsession. And love management - well thank God I didn't feel the need to rewrite it all for you a fourth time because that would have been too mad. I trust you to understand my meaning.

So, not confusion after all. All the time it was in hand????

It was all part of the process:

Think > Change > Do

Thank you.

With Love

Julie

PS:

So, in other words, the lesson that I have learnt, both theoretically and in practice, is that life is not as clear cut as I had at first thought (a lesson which the rest of you no doubt knew from birth).

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