# Identity negotiation and the equality agenda in universities.

UMI Number: U584610

UMI

Dissertation Publishing

ProQuest

This thesis explores current issues in the UK student related equality agenda from the perspective of academic members of staff and specialists in equality and diversity. The polytechnic sector (now post-1992 universities) evolved with a strong student/consumer focus, which has not been true of many pre-1992 institutions. Yet with the economic, political and demographic changes to the context of HE over the last ten years, the demands placed on universities have brought this kind of logic into all institutions. The degree to which this approach to students and academic work has affected academic practice has not been even across the sector. Reactions amongst staff and senior managers to the equality agenda have varied. My research takes a comparative case study approach to identify some of these differing perspectives, sampling from the faculty of arts and social sciences in one pre- and one post- 1992 institution.

Among equality and diversity specialists there is a growing recognition of the barriers to their work in universities, most notably keeping academic members of staff informed and developing their skills in the area. I investigated these issues by interviewing academic staff and specialists about their views on equality and diversity and student-staff relationships.

In this thesis I argue that the differences between academics' perspectives in the two case study institutions are guided by their perceptions of the market position of their university. This controls the horizons of their professional identities, influencing their values and practices. The narratives given by academics reflected a conflict between multiple identities of self-as-professional — through their institutional, disciplinary and personal spheres of identity — and how each interacted with representations of the equality agenda for HEIs. The success of this agenda hinges on constructing positive discourses around professional identity and its intersection with the equality agenda in HEIs.

# CONTENTS

# Acknowledgements:

My work on this thesis would not have been possible without the support of my family, friends and university supervisors. I would like to thank Professor Debbie Epstein and Doctor Katy Greenland for their excellent advice that has seen me through the highs and lows of my work over the past three years. Friends and family have helped in many ways, small and great. Thanks are due to my husband Will and daughter Lydia who have allowed me the space and time to pursue my research and my mother, Geraldine, who read early drafts and gave the right responses in times of despair. Finally I wish to particularly thank those individuals who granted me access to their institutions, and the respondents who took the time to speak with me.

# List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| AUT | Association of University Teachers |
| CIHE | Council for Industries and Higher Education |
| COSHEP | Committee of Scottish Higher Education Principals |
| CRE | Commission for Racial Equality |
| CRHE | Commission for Equality and Human Rights |
| CVCP | Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principles |
| DIUS | Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills |
| DRC | Disability Rights Commission |
| ECU | Equality Challenge Unit |
| EO | Equal Opportunities |
| EOC | Equal Opportunities Commission |
| HE | Higher Education |
| HEA | Higher Education Academy |
| HEEON | Higher Education Equal Opportunities Network |
| HEFCE | Higher Education Funding Council for England |
| HEI | Higher Education Institution |
| LSC | Learning and Skills Council |
| LSDA | Learning and Skills Development Agency |
| LSN | Learning and Skills Network |
| OFFA | Office for Fair Access |
| PVC | Pro Vice Chancellor |
| QAA | Quality Assurance Agency |
| RAE | Research Assessment Exercise |
| REC | Race Equality Commission |
| SCOP | Standing Conference of Principles |
| SENDA | Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act |
| SHEFC | Scottish Higher Education Funding Council |
| UCU | Universities and Colleges Union |
| UUK | Universities UK |

# CHAPTER ONE: Introduction.

> We shall not cease from exploration
>
> And the end of all our exploring
>
> Will be to arrive where we started
>
> And know the place for the first time.
>
> (Eliot, 1944)

With one eye on the finish I write this introduction to my research. In answering the question of how academics work with representations of equality and diversity I align myself with a consideration of the social construction of reality. That discourse works in complex ways to shape the world that is experienced and spoken. For work on equality the terrain is both highly structured and objective, through legislation, and subjective and personal, through experience and specific occurrence. By analysing academics' performance of identity and understanding in this area, I try to capture part of the context for these academics' practice; to return to the equality agenda with a more meaningful understanding of the mechanisms that underlie its unfolding in HEIs.

## Section One — Why this and why now

> Britain can only succeed in a rapidly changing world if we develop the skills of our people to the fullest possible extent, carry out world class research and scholarship, and apply both knowledge and skills to create an innovative and competitive economy.
>
> (Department for Innovation, 2008).

This strongly neo-liberalist statement guides the work of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, the current government body with responsibility for higher education. Yet this government also promotes the message of social cohesion and social justice as objectives of the HE system. Thus in 2001 Labour announced its ongoing intentions to extend the student body of UK HEIs to include 50% of young adults (Blair, 2001). These two discourses on economic competitiveness and social justice run through much of higher education policy planning.

The mechanisms to achieve this widening of participation have partly been based on funding changes, such as reforms responding to Dearing's (1997) and Taylor's (UUK, 2001) recommendations, but also in recognition of the need to police university admission through an access regulator (OFFA) and a gamut of equality legislating with the race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age and ethnicity guidance (that I refer to as the equality agenda). The legislation has given rise to clear guidelines for how universities and their teaching and non-teaching staff are responsible for performing the measures described. In conjunction with this, alterations to funding processes also affect academic practice, coming with a greater requirement for accountability to the government, experienced through more rigid auditing of activities by external and internal bodies. So the performance of the university and its employees are controlled by each of these means.

Entwining the two discourses of economic rationality and social justice gives rise to a new language around equality, that of equality and diversity, subsuming the equal opportunities movement of the 1990s (Bogg and Gibbons, 2007). The nomenclature of equality and diversity develops a business case for inclusion and supporting difference within organisations, drawing on new managerialist ideology. This depoliticises, and individualises the arguments of the equal opportunities movement, connecting neo-liberal economic rationales to everyday practices in the institution (Hall, 2003).

The nexus between the government's various aspirations for higher education, promoted in policy and legislation, reflects and informs a time of uncertainty in the academic profession. The drop in funding per student, at the same time as expansion to the system (Deem, 2004b), has affected the lecturers' academic pay so that in 2006 the AUT[1] announced a national strike over salaries and conditions of work[2]. Research reports have shown that academia is one of the most stressful professions (A.U.T., 1990; Tytherleigh et al., 2005), being both highly competitive and requiring frequent change.

Focusing on these circumstances elicits a concept of the state of play in UK HEIs that overemphasises standardisation and control; that academics 'have certain responsibilities and must act in accord with rules' (Ritzer, 1996, p.17) put in place from above. But to comprehend non-alignment and subversive disobedience to the equality agenda, one must understand the intersection between individuals, context and policy. Through neo-liberal and new managerial discourses there is a cross over between the public and the private realm, with micro-management of the academic acting upon and taken up by the individual agent in complex ways.

Investigation is needed into how the legislative drive for student equality in HEIs has been engaged with by academics in UK universities, looking beyond the policy and considering contextual and individual influences. It is important to reflect on the link between representations of the equality agenda, steeped in new managerialist and neo-liberalist discourse, individual understanding and belief, and organisational cultures; to question how academics work with these representations of equality and diversity in their daily activities.

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[1] NATFHE also called a strike at this time and the two unions combined under the new name of the Universities and Colleges Union.
[2] The agreement to a pay rise in line with inflation led to a 5% pay rise in 2008.

## Section Two — My research questions

Guided by the rationale above, I set out to understand how academics reconfigure the recent focus on equality and diversity in legislative requirements when describing their own work(ing) identities. I wanted to consider how academics align themselves to the student equality agenda in their institutions and how they report it impacted on their professional identity. In order to unpick this question a number of related themes must be explored, to contextualise responses in wider political, institutional, departmental and disciplinary discourses, and unpack the relationship between the academic employee and university policy. The following questions move some way toward this goal and I come back to these throughout the thesis.

- How do academics perceive the implementation of successive equality and diversity policies and what impact have these changing policies had on their working lives?

- How have the principles of equality and diversity been taken up at institutional, departmental and individual levels, and what changes have been made as a consequence of this to academic roles, relationships and identities?

- What are the tensions arising between individual employee's beliefs and institutional values and how are these reconciled?

- How are specialist equality and diversity staff perceived by academics and vice versa?

## Section Three — Reflections on my approach

This thesis employs a qualitative methodology, reflecting on identity issues in academic narratives (I justify my reasons for this decision in Chapter Three). The concept of equality is inseparably linked to identity and the lecturers' subjective reflection on these concepts is the point of departure.

As a qualitative study involving in-depth analysis of interview transcripts I have gathered a relatively small sample of data, and having outlined above the rationale for this work, I tentatively note that it is not generalisable to the sector as a whole. Rather it illustrates some of the possible processes at work amongst academic and specialist staff in an institution when responsibilities for equality and diversity are discussed; to reflect on the academic profession and the changing moral order of the massified HE system. Paechter (2005) argues that the drive to promote the necessity of social science research to be generalisable works in line with dominant discourses that promote scientific understanding over other forms, marginalising the experiential and emotional. This theme of the separation of the rational and objective traditions of HE from the subjective and experiential runs through this thesis; by not making claims to generalisability I support this subordinated position.

The mission of my research is not to suggest an abstract theory to explain blockages to the equality agenda; after all the formation of an abstract principle is based on a specific event in specific circumstances (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Rather, I want to give insight into some of the patterns in responses that I have found. This is not to suggest that the work cannot complement other research in this field. There have been a number of studies that have investigated issues of equality and diversity in the UK HE system, which I draw on and expand in my own work. In particular

Deem, Morley and Tlili's (2005) research for HEFCE investigating staff perspectives and experiences of the employee related equality agenda in HEIs was a useful platform for my own work. Their research used a discourse analysis of university policy — to consider the gap between policy and implementation — and also interviews with academics, managers and administrators, to analyse their views on the work of equality in their institutions. My own study supplements this with a more in-depth exploration of student equality issues from the perspective of academic staff and specialists.

Another important study for my research was Shaw, Brain, Bridger, Forman and Reid's report (2007), for the HEA on embedding widening participation and promoting student equality in HEIs. This work considered the costs and benefits of such a project, developing a business case for the diversity agenda. They take a similar approach, again, with policy analysis and interviews with staff and students, to outline an argument for the diverse student body. My own study corroborates some of the findings in this case study but develops it into a consideration of professional identities and work relationships: moving away from pragmatic conceptualisations of the agenda to the importance of the subterranean influence of cultures and traditions.

In writing this thesis, I have drawn on a number of different disciplinary areas of knowledge. Each has offered a useful vantage point from which to understand the context and the actors in the case studies. For example, social psychology and theories of intergroup relations were essential to understanding the dynamic between professional groups in the university (as I discuss in Chapters Seven and Eight). Equally an understanding of social policy has been essential to placing my case studies within the context of equality policy and politics (which I return to in Chapter Four). Drawing on diverse bodies of knowledge informs part of the distinctiveness of my thesis (mapped out in Chapter Two). As Clark (1973) wrote it is of central importance to the study of HE to see the convergence of a sociology of HE with other fields.

## Section Four — My autobiographical account of this research

There are many different ways of telling the story of my journey to and through this study. Choosing a research topic can be greatly influenced by personal experiences. In a sense this was true of my own decision to study HE. Having worked straight through the education system, from Infant School to Masters Degree, it was this sector that structured a large part of my experience of life. At the end of my undergraduate career my choice of topic came down to four possibilities[3]. It was this question about the equality agenda that my undergraduate tutor at the time thought had most chance of succeeding in the ESRC PhD funding competition. This was the start of my awakening to the mechanisms of HE, the blunt reality of research.

My lead question was pertinent at the time because of the enforcement of requirements in the SENDA regulations coming to bear on universities. This was a forceful piece of equality legislation requiring definite active responses from private and public institutions, under threat of legal action. The public debate over such strong handed measures occurred whilst my own understanding of subjectivity was challenged in undergraduate lectures on recognition and discrimination. My perspective has been informed by my education in sociology and psychology and specifically the link to education within these fields.

During my data collection, early in the first year of my PhD, I had concluded that I did not want to work as an academic in HE. The conditions of practice were too stressful and competitive and the rewards seemed to promote certain personal characteristics that I did not have or

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[3] These prospective areas for research were: the changing role of the Teaching Assistant in primary education; managing diversity in schools and universities; changing student cultures and the apolitical student movement.

wish to develop. As will be seen in this thesis my position in the interviews influenced the identifications with participants and decisions made during the research. Nevertheless I have enjoyed the research process and it has shaped my epistemological and ontological understanding of the world to the point where becoming a peripheral member of the community is contemplatable.

## Section Five — Description of the organisation of the thesis

In **Chapter Two — Academic Professional Identity,** I consider my own position amongst identity theorists; specifically combining post-structuralist work with Bourdieu's and Wenger's theorising, to develop a foundation for my understanding of academic professional identity. From this departure I go on to consider the institution and disciplinary forces that also shape academic performance and thus how academics approach the work around equality and diversity in daily life.

In **Chapter Three — Methodology,** I explain my choices in the method of data collection and analysis and selection of case study sites, positioning this work among other research. I close with a description of each of the case study sites.

In **Chapter Four — Academic Identity and National and Institutional Policy,** I move from a theoretical understanding of academics' identity to how their identity is prescribed in guidance (specific to universities) developed from national equality policy. The national legislation is further adapted on translation into institutional policy and I draw a comparison between the two case study sites, to understand something of the interface of institutional culture with general HE discourses.

There is a complex link between general higher education discourse and what academics and specialists actually describe. As Trowler (2001) puts it, academics are not captured in the discourse but engage with it critically. In my analysis it seemed that staff grappled with the performance of equality in an environment where competing demands and the very nature of the work were at odds with the essence of equality. In Chapters Five to Nine I discuss my analysis of academic and specialist narratives to deconstruct staff truth claims surrounding student related equality in their institutions and daily lives; that is how they speak into being their academic identity. Academic narratives often drew on identity references in order to justify action or inaction and allocate responsibility. Most commonly they made reference to their institutional, disciplinary and personal spheres of identity for this practice, and I use this to structure my first three analysis chapters (five to seven).

**Chapter Five — Institutional Uniformity** explores the difference between my case study sites reflecting on the contrasting narratives between academics from each institution as they refer to their own various conceptualisations of their institution and associated organisational identity. In **Chapter Six — Tradition and Change,** I turn to another structuring influence over academic professional identity, that of the discipline. Here I suggest that the discipline that academics are socialised into influences the values and judgment positions they hold as academics frequently referred to wider disciplinary discourses in considering their own perspective of the equality agenda and their place within it.

**Chapter Seven — Personal Characteristic and the Equality Agenda** considers the personal dimensions of equality issues for my research participants. Academics not only distanced the agenda to wider group identities but also employed personalised accounts referring to their various experiences and personal characteristics. Such narratives weave together the interaction between discipline and institutional identities, translating them to make individually meaningful representations.

To some extent the equality legislation has been put into action through bolting on new auditing measures to old structures and processes and refocusing services, creating new posts. There have been large numbers of jobs created for equality and diversity specialist[4] practitioners over the last nine years. Their role is one of responsibility for promoting and policing the agenda within their organisation, to keep their institution on track when under the vigilant eye of OFFA and in a time of increasing numbers of penal cases brought against HEIs. How these individuals are viewed by academics and accepted into the institution provides another assessment of the progress of the equality and diversity agenda.

In Chapters Eight and Nine the experiences of specialist staff, as they report them, are drawn on. In **Chapter Eight — Unity and Visibility —** the specialists' discussion of issues of unity, visibility and recognition of their work in their own institution, and as underlying problems in the general movement, are reflected on. The interaction of those factors outlined in Chapter Eight and complex working relationships with staff are considered in **Chapter Nine — The Specialist/Academic Interface.** In this chapter I turn to the specialists' own involuntary reinforcement of tensions in their work and manipulation of practice within those institutional contexts.

Finally in **Chapter Ten — Esse Quam Videri —** I consider how far I have come in answering my research questions weaving together the themes from the thesis. I discuss the possible impacts of this study, improvements, and avenues for future research that it uncovers.

I now turn to Chapter Two, where I outline the numerous influences on academic professional identity described in the large body of literature on this area, starting with a discussion of my own position in theorising on identity more generally and then turning to the research on academic employee identity.

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[4] I use the term equality specialist, as this is the title that HEEON (2007) uses in their review of the equality and diversity workers role in HEIs.

# CHAPTER TWO: Academic Professional Identity.

> Identity is not as transparent as we think.
>
> (Hall, 1990, p.222)

The question driving my thesis (**How do academics reconfigure the recent focus on equality and diversity and legislative requirements in describing their own work(ing) identities?**) is based on a certain perspective of identity that considers its socially constructed nature. In this chapter I trace the theoretical influences that guided the formation of my research questions and the analysis of my data. In order to do this I situate my work in the broader literature on contemporary post-structuralist theorising on identity (Section One). In picking out the themes of this work I have found that it did not enable me to grasp the complexity of my data and I benefited from referring to the writings of Wenger and Bourdieu. These two theorists are introduced in Sections Two and Three, with a consideration of the tensions created by combining their work with post-structuralism in Section Four. Finally, in Section Five, I go on to consider the literature on academic identity, weaving in work from Bourdieu, Wenger and post-structuralist theorising on identity. Throughout this chapter and the following I make use of my own data to illustrate points in my discussion but the substantive analysis follows in Chapters Five to Nine.

## Section One — My position in post-structural theorising on identity

> 'The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and

stitched together imperfectly, and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another'.

(Haraway, 1991, p.193).

I position myself with post-structuralist writers on identity drawing on authors, such as Youdell, Butler and Haraway, who consider identity as a socially constructed state. Underlying this is the understanding that there is no person/ subject prior to its production in discourse. Identity is not viewed as some extra-discursive stable entity independent of one's actions and others' recognition. Rather identity becomes an activity, performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results (Butler, 1990, pp. 24-25). Youdell (2006), commenting on Butler, describes the performativity of language as the discursive practice that enacts or produces what it names. Not merely spoken but embodied, grounded in participation — so that its foundation becomes based not just in being part of a social category (e.g. being working class, being black) but in the performance of this. Thus it is more appropriate to consider identifying as activity, rather than to reified notions of identity (Sfard, 2007). These performances of identity can be active – like forms of dress and styles of movement, or inactive, like physical characteristic — each framed in historical, social and economic terms; the 'language' that is available in that context (see Chapter Five). 'Social identities are not like a wardrobe of clothes; we do not just take them off and put them on. We live "in the present shadow of the past" ' (Hey, 2004, p. 9). Identities are viewed no longer in a dichotomy of either/or but and/or, of multiple identities that interact in any situation (as I return to in Chapters Five, Six and Seven).

The role of identity is to limit the multiple prospects of subjectivity that are possible in the wider discursive field and to give individuals a singular sense of who they are and where they belong. These expressions of particular identities are dependent on the recognition of others (as I return to in Chapter Eight). Identity is viewed as a collection of narratives from self and other. In describing ourselves and others we position them and

ourselves, and vice versa. What we say about others, as well as the stories we tell about ourselves feed into our own identity as a reflection on self. The understanding of self and other is held in primacy (Sfard and Prusak, 2005). We may be born with certain unique abilities and characteristics but these develop in infinitely different manifestations as they are exercised and recognised in different ways. Thus the 'circuit of cultural production of identity' (Epstein and Johnson, forthcoming) depicts the two way action of the projection of self and recognition of self by others, meaning as produced in interaction. Identities are made; collectively shaped rather than god given (Juzwik, 2006); the self is viewed as both free and determined. Therefore recognition is not just taken as a verbal display but an exchange of power controlling the possibilities of participation and action (as I return to in Chapters Five, Eight and Nine).

In my data this active performance was important, as a marker of who belonged. Martin, an academic manager, describes what he experiences as misrecognition of himself by colleagues:

> **Martin Norton, Northern Lights, Professor Geography**
> All sorts of funny things like I started to dress less formally, 'cause I used to wander around here as head of department in a suit you see. And one of the, ... one of them said uhm Martin Norton is about as approachable as an angry rhinoceros and I, that's not me. What am I doing wrong?

By the description of who Martin *is like*, which identifies him with certain practices, his identity becomes reified, "freezing the picture" and turning properties of actions into properties of actors (Sfard and Prusak, 2005, p.16).

From a post-structuralist perspective, identities are culturally acquired through repetition, performed until they become second nature. The repetition of:

> 'identifying narratives one tells and hears about oneself make them so familiar and self evident to her (sic) that she eventually becomes able to endorse or reject new statements about herself in a direct, non-reflective way'.
>
> (Sfard and Prusak, 2005, p.17).

People thus produce and sustain 'coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives' (Henkel quoting Giddens, 2000, p.14). Taking this approach to identity has particular implications for research. Identity viewed as fractured and context dependent, as well as dependent on interaction and recognition, creates issues for both the representation and analysis of data. Participants' references to identity in interviews are a carefully negotiated reification of self, not purely reflecting a core, stable position (see discussion of data analysis in section three of Chapter Three). What is said mirrors the immediate interaction: it would not necessarily be expressed in the same way under different conditions. Yet a method that employs interview analysis can be used to consider the identity work that these participants carry out in interaction. More than this, when language is regarded as one of the most significant displays of identity work, of identifying, then the connection between language and action is also recognised. Thus from this stance, analysing what interviewees say is not just about considering the mechanisms for identity display that they use, like taking tools from a box, but also reflects on their behaviours (past, present and future).

## Section Two — Wenger's Communities of Practice

From this post-structuralist perspective, theorising the influence of broader group identities can further enhance an approach to this active identity representation. Where the post-structuralist theories of identity, referred to above, consider the importance of the negotiation of identity in different contexts, Wenger's communities of practice theory develops an understanding of the reasons for these participatory choices, considering communities, not just inter-individual relationships.

Etienne Wenger's (1998) book *Communities of Practice. Learning, Meaning and Identity* develops the work he undertook with the anthropologist Jean Lave on a social theory of learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991). With Lave, Wenger discussed identity as produced by learning, learning as 'the historical production, transformation, and change of persons' (2001, p.51). This work was used to counter arguments for cognitive approaches to research, analysing social practice as the way to understand human thought as it takes place in real life (Wenger, 1998, p. 281). Wenger has applied his work to both private and public sector organisations, writing a practical guide for managers on how to develop communities in organisations (Wenger et al., 2002). Most of the data in his original book (Wenger, 1998) is drawn from an ethnography of a private insurance company.

In 'Communities of Practice' Wenger develops his ideas on identity and meaning, further elaborating on the importance of social meaning negotiation in groups. The level of analysis is based on these communities, with reference to the affect of broader constellations that inform the actions and negotiated meanings among (but not requiring immediate proximity with) these group members. Identity is considered as a 'nexus of multiple membership' whereby 'identity combines multiple forms of membership through a process of reconciliation across boundaries of practice' (Wenger, 1998, p.163). A group is considered a community of practice when it has a 'domain of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a community of people who care about this domain; and a shared practice that they have developed to be effective in their domain' (2002, p.27). This has been taken up in research in multiple settings, from university departments (James, 2005) to West Coast Swing dancing groups (Callahan, 2005). As individuals cross over boundaries of communities the focus on their practice changes and with it the performance of identity.

As a social theorist Wenger positions himself alongside Giddens, considering structure as both an 'input to and output of human actions' (Wenger, 1998, p. 281), placing his work between the structure/agency divide. For this a theorisation of power, collectivity, meaning and subjectivity is mapped out. The driving theme of his work is that we form communities

> 'not because we fall short of an ideal of individualism or freedom, but because identification is at the very core of the social nature of our identities and so we define even our individualism and our freedom in that context'.
>
> (Wenger, 1998, p.212)

He works with a notion of identity from a social rather than individual perspective, so that identity is a negotiation of meanings given to experiences in social communities (Wenger, 1998, p.145). Agency is the negotiation of identity across different communities — agency considered here not just as choice but as the possibilities in participation (Wenger, 2007). The academic community thus provides structure to working identity and practice, informing boundaries between multiple communities.

## Section Three — Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

Both the post-structuralist theorising that I have drawn upon and Wenger's concept of communities of practice lack a detailed consideration of the influence of past performances of identity, and inter-personal and other experiences, on the present. For this I have found Bourdieu's conceptualisation of a theory of practice useful in its focus not just on the immediate community and interaction but also historical influences on identity. When new academics enter the university they bring with them a montage of numerous identities developed over time. Yet the performance of this is influenced by each new context, informing new identities in a translation of the old.

Pierre Bourdieu positions himself in the sociology discipline. Much of his early work is based on statistical data, although he also develops a careful ontological discussion throughout the large body of writing he has produced. Bourdieu places his work between subjectivism and objectivism with the development of a theory of practice that breaks 'with the immediate experience while at the same time doing justice to the practical character of social life' (Thompson, 1992, p.12).

His focus has been wide ranging, from studying higher education participation to mortality rates, in developing a theory of practice. His work tries to straddle the structure/agency divide — by building up the concepts of habitus, capital and field; whereby practice is informed by an interaction between prior experience and current context [practice = field (habitus + capital)]. According to Bourdieu, structure is internalised in individual habitus. It is not just that the external context works on the individual, the internal, when they move into a new context but that a continuous process of individuation and identification occurs (although establishing a self conscious and explicitly articulated public identity is likely). With this perspective Bourdieu worked to uncover social injustice in many aspects of society using what he calls the symbolic violence model of domination, which considers how domination is legitimated when field and habitus are aligned.

The definition of habitus provides quite a broad translation in that it is both embodied by individuals and reflects a collective homogenous phenomenon. Either way Bourdieu conceives of habitus as a set of dispositions which generate practices and perceptions. Field (also referred to as game) is the arena that participants perform in, attempting to reproduce or change the current distribution of capital. Actors are thus invested in the field and its rules in being a part of that particular arena. Bourdieu considers that all fields have in common the maximisation of some kind of profit (thus a broader 'economic logic'), that is referred to as capital, be it economic, social, cultural or symbolic and so on. Within each autonomous field the actor is defined by the different quantities of

capital they possess relevant to each space (Bourdieu, 1992). Underpinning his theory of practice is that different types of capital can be converted into other forms in certain fields. The interaction of field, capital and habitus produces practice. Thus Bourdieu does not consider only the subject's conscious planning of action but rather that an individual is predisposed to act in certain ways depending on their position in the field.

Bourdieu draws on the work of writers like Weber to elucidate a theory of the rise of certain groups and the struggle for power between them. Like Marx, Bourdieu often appears to have a preoccupation with social classes and economic capital and is criticised for the structuralist bent of his work (Calhoun, 1995). Structuralist ideas enter when habitus moves from an individual concept to, for example, a classed or raced position that rolls across the contexts of daily life, with a pessimistic tale of class reproduction. Yet Bourdieu emphasises the individuality and uniqueness of habitus, so that social groupings should be considered to have an effect in different ways. His method seeks to account for the 'conditions within which the object of analysis is produced, constructed and received' (Thompson, 1992, p.29).

Caught up in the discussion of personal experience is again a consideration of the importance of language. Bourdieu seeks to show that language is a social historical phenomenon (for example in his study of the development of a unitary French dialect: Bourdieu, 1992). Language has to be considered in the social context in which it is used, being appropriate to particular contexts and so, for example, the researcher cannot be extracted from their position in the context unreflexively (Bourdieu, 1992). This is bound up with notions of power — that those who are heard are reckoned worthy of attention (as has particular repercussions for the equality agenda that are described in Chapter Eight).

## Section Four — Integrating the theories

As I have written, I believe that when considering all of the complicated influences on identity performance one requires sensitivity to the various spheres of identity, of fractured selves, communities and context. I have used a range of theoretical tools to analyse my data with this consideration of identity in mind; making use of post-structuralist notions of identity, Wenger's communities of practice (looking at the micro-level and interaction) and Bourdieu's theory of practice (focusing on relations between wider groupings). This leads me to question how far these theoretical perspectives are compatible with each other. Wenger himself invites people to take his theory and run others through it, to customise or extend its reach (2007). Reay (2004b, p. 441) too, writing on Bourdieu, argues that 'the conceptual looseness of habitus also constitutes a potential strength'. It makes possible 'adaptation rather than the more constricting straightforward adoption of the concept within empirical work' (Reay, 1995, p.357). But such loose applications are criticised. Bourdieu's work has been considered to be treated too much as a 'theoretical gloss' (Mutch, 2003) by people with little understanding of its purpose. This section reflects my interest in whether these theories can be integrated or what can be brought together from each to work with my data.

As an analytical tool the community of practice is described as a 'mid level category' (Wenger, 1998, p.125). It is neither narrowly defined as a specific activity of interaction nor an abstract theory drawing purely on historical or social concepts. Similarly Bourdieu viewed habitus as a multi-layered concept working at the level of society, of the family and the individual. Habitus is a 'means of viewing structure as occurring within small scale interactions and activity within larger scale settings' (Reay, 2004b, p.439). However post-structuralism describes a general epistemological position, a style of philosophising (Peters and Burbules, 2004), positioned against grand-narratives and rejecting generalised truth claims (rather than the replacement of one theory for another). Post-

structuralism considers these theoretical concepts as interpretations; proposing that we can never go beyond language or get outside of historically and culturally specific meanings. Readings have to be considered as one possibility rather than privileged over others (Burman, 1992), as is reflected in post-structuralism itself as a very heterogeneous set of works (Poster, 1989). Jones (1997) takes this idea back round to function for the benefit of multi-theory work, arguing for the "have your cake and eat it approach" in using post-structuralism. This identifies the impossibility of coherence and unity and therefore the benefits of a mixed theoretical approach. Wenger, Bourdieu and post-structuralist theories each provide perspectives that can be adapted to open up the data.

At face value each theory has commonalities, placing more emphasis on the individual rather than environment. In communities of practice the social context is important for the negotiation of identity, as with Bourdieu's theory of practice whereby the field, in interaction with capital, informs habitus and thus the performance of identity. Post-structuralism has developed out of structuralist interpretations, not rejecting structuralism but shifting the locus toward the signifier from the signified. But there are particular differences between these theories that may make them incompatible (Mutch, 2003). These are, in particular, considerations of the unchangeable nature of habitus, the question of psychological foundations, and notions of power and agency.

## Unchangeable nature of habitus

Often the emphasis on the durability of habitus is over played (for example Mutch, 2003), suggesting that it is formed early in life and remains intact throughout. This is counter to some of Bourdieu's own writing, concluding that although habitus is formed early on, it is altered by continuous action with different situations — thus the school or university, for example, may alter habitus. It is when the habitus is confronted with new fields that changes occur, 'the field structures the

habitus' (Bourdieu, 1989, p.44). It is important to take into account the whole of Bourdieu's theorising, (practice = field (habitus + capital)), rather than focusing too narrowly on habitus, in making sense of identity. Bourdieu speaks of the 'multiple identities' of self that result from the conflict of a habitus divided against it, created by the experience of unfamiliar fields (Reay, 2004b, p.437).

Wenger correspondingly writes that we often 'behave rather differently across contexts, and construct different aspects of ourselves, and gain different perspectives' (Wenger, 1998, p.159) in each different situation. Our identity as, for example, an academic, influences our behaviour in contexts outside of work. 'Identities are not something we turn on and off' (Wenger, 1998, p.159) as we move into different communities of practice. This again is compatible with my use of post-structuralist notions of identity. The self is subjectified by discourses that constitute identities and are context dependent. So as the subject moves into different contexts, and under different lenses, it is told in different ways.

## The question of psychological foundations

The concept of habitus lends itself to notions of psychological constructs because it is viewed as embedded at an unconscious level, seen as states of mind or affective dispositions (Nash, 2003). And yet Bourdieu, as a sociologist, does not go into detail about his conception of the psychological subject. Wenger is opposed to placing analysis at this level, not viewing knowledge as 'stored in discrete units in the brain' but in day to day practice (Wenger, 1998, pp. 9-10). Much post-structuralist work focuses on discourse and language, again with no clear working through of the psychological subject. Post-structuralism developed partly out of criticism of humanist perspectives and thus the notion of the psychological subject is problematic — considering that this is based on a concept of the self as pre-existing interaction (Jones, 1997).

Yet in each theory there is a consideration of reflexivity that would suggest some form of internal dialogue. In some readings of post-structuralism 'a subject that is multiply constituted and internally diverse will always have resources of self-reflexivity via the juxtaposition and interpenetration of its own many subject positions' (Barvosa-Carter, 2001, p.128). Developing Bourdieu's work, Reay (2004b, pp.437-438) suggests that the person 'questions the self whereupon the habitus begins to operate at the level of consciousness and the person develops new facets of the self'. Wenger too considers possibilities for a self-conscious reflection on identity, benefitting self development in specific contexts.

> 'Students must be enabled to explore who they are, who they are not and who they could be. They must be able to understand where they come from and where they can go...' (Wenger, 1998, p.273).

## Notions of agency

Both these considerations, of psychological foundations of identity and the unchangeable nature of habitus, attest to the agency of the individual. Bourdieu seems to propose the controlling nature of habitus; influencing perceptions, behaviour, choices, embodied being and so on. Yet he also writes that habitus allows a huge amount of variation; 'it enables an infinite number of moves to be made, adapted to an infinite number of possible situations which no rule, however, complex, can foresee' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.9). Although habitus narrows dispositions to certain choices, action can still be unpredictable; one cannot move from knowledge of the conditions for the production of knowledge, to knowledge of the products (non-prescriptive) (Reay, 2004b). So choice is at the core of habitus, the individual as an active agent in defining the self with reference to the field and capital they experience (discussed further in Chapter Five).

Wenger too considers the agency of the individual and the project of the self. How we locate ourselves in a social landscape; what we care about and what we neglect; what we attempt to know and negotiate and what we ignore; with whom we seek connections and whom we ignore; how we engage and direct our energies; how we attempt to steer our trajectories; these are all reflective of an active identity performance.

In post-structuralist theorising the positioning of self extends this view of the project of identity, that the question is not "who am I" but "where am I" positioned in the available discourses (Widdicombe, 1998, p.200). This can be considered in two ways. First, viewing discourse as the only structuring force, we experience ourselves as having agency because we are 'produced as such by the everyday assumptions of our language' (Jones, 1997, p.263). Second, considering the proposal that there 'is no doer behind the deed...the doer is invariably constructed by the deed' (Butler, 1990, p.142), so agency could exist in the process of combining multiple identities. Butler writes:

> 'There is no self...who maintains integrity prior to its entrance into this conflictual cultural field. There is only the taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very "taking up" is enabled by the tool lying there".
> (Butler, 1990, p.145).

Butler does not suggest that the subject is completely socially determined, for her agency is 'localised within the possibility of a variation on that repetition of norms when the subject is performed' (Butler, 1990, p.144). Elsewhere the gap in Butler's theorising on how a socially constructed subject can have the agency to perform this variation is tentatively filled. Barvosa-Carter (2001, p.127) suggests that with the move between taking up and putting down "the tools", the self is caught between multiple sets of 'enabling constraints' that 'are implicated in how the subject becomes and proceeds as a subject'.

## Power

Bourdieu considers power in a generalised, unrestricted sense, like a 'nature force...which flows through the system from top to bottom' (Jenkins cited in Peillon, 1998, p.216). Capital is a resource that under certain conditions may be cashed in or translated into power, viewed as the agency to participate. Bourdieu's work on "symbolic violence" (misrecognition) considers in detail the ways in which people who lack the capital of particular fields (for example linguistic competences) are excluded from participation in them (as I return to in Chapter Nine). Thus the distribution of capital is an element of relative power positioning, capital enabling social reproduction of privileged positions.

The post-structuralist writers that I have drawn on reflect the capillary notion of power in Foucault's work, whereby power is:

> Never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as commodity or a piece of wealth. Power is exercised through a net like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between the threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always the elements of its articulation.
>
> (Foucault, 1980, p.98)

Wenger has been criticised for not having a clear, thorough theory of power (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2003; Tusting, 2005). He writes that his own theory of power is less akin to Marxist theories on political and economic terms but rather like considerations of power 'in the symbolic realm', like Bourdieu's notion of symbolic and cultural capital, and the Foucauldian/ post-structuralist notion of disciplining through dominant discourses.

Although Wenger does not theorise economic and political power as meta-theory he considers how they are worked out in micro level interaction; that our ability to negotiate meanings is 'defined with respect to our position in social configurations' (1998, p.197). Rules within the community are developed inter-generationally and change in the community is based on negotiated consensus among members (viewing non-hierarchical power relationships within the institution, as discussed in Chapter Nine). Power is reflected in the ability to negotiate the communities from which we draw our identities, 'identification without negotiability is powerlessness...negotiability without identification... is meaningless' (Wenger, 1998, p.208). Wenger suggests that this view of power and identity builds on Foucault's conception of power by offering an explanation of why 'the power of institutional discourses works in the first place' (Wenger, 1998, p.296).

## Profit of using all

As I have commented above, incorporating Bourdieu and Wenger into my analysis has allowed a consideration of both the micro and macro level involved in interactions. By using this schema to explore identity performance in university one can incorporate both the predictability and unpredictability of behaviour in the institution, the social construction of identity and the affect of power, in identity presentation. And yet the post-structuralist philosophy brings these theories back to their position as interpretations that are culturally and historically specific. So I approach my data with a sensitivity to self as object of past, present and future expectations; an internal dialogue between community and private self; a temporally and spatially situated performance of identification and individuation. Any discussion must pay attention to these non-tacit influences.

## Section Five — What is academic identity based on?

The concept of academic identity refers to a side of self identity that relates to placement in professional communities. Theorists such as Becher, Clark and Trow have focused on the influence of broad groupings on academic identity (institution, discipline and department). This research has been taken forward through analysis of the reformulation of these groups with changes in the sector (for example Lee, 2007; Tapper and Salter, 1992) or with attention to the personal attributes of those working together in the academic community (such as work by Reay, 2000; Skelton, 2005; Morley, 1999). Thus in this section I first discuss conceptualisations of the general academic identity, second those that define it by disciplinary and then institutional influences, and finally that body of work that looks at the complex negotiation of personal influences on identity in these group categorisations. At points in this chapter I make reference to my own data although the substantive analysis will follow in chapters five to nine.

## On general academic identity/professional identity

**Theodore Knight, Northern Lights, Reader History**

HB     What do you enjoy about your work?

TK     Uhm most people would say oh I like my research and the teaching, but I think it is something that transcends those things. Which is this, this, this uhm feeling of being with people who think like you and, you know, academics pride themselves on their individuality and diversity and eccentricity but they are so predictable, where they eat, where they go, their views on smoking and all the rest of it. What films they have seen, that sort of thing.

This field of literature often focuses on the formation of academic identities and what values and perspectives of work and life these individuals hold. Academic identities have been described in terms of general professional characteristics of this type of worker (Paterson, 2003), with a notion that there is something that makes academics distinct as a profession. Such collective identities have supported concepts of collegiality between groups of like-minded peers, creating the image of a non-porous collective. That within this group, even though very diverse, there is a level of understanding between members of the academic community. Becher (1994, p.151) writes

> 'operating a community culture, ... a common culture (with) ways of construing the world and the people who live in it are sufficiently similar for them to be able to understand, more or less, each other's culture even, when necessary, to communicate with members of other tribes. Universities possess a single culture which directs interaction between the many distinct and often mutually hostile groups.'

The hostility that Becher describes can be translated into what Gouldner refers to as a 'culture of critical discourse' (cited in Kogan, 2000, p33). With a culture of critical discourse comes the need to maintain and defend ownership of ideas (as was a particular issue for equality specialists, see Chapter Nine).

Despite disciplinary divisions 'a shared belief in such values as the need to demonstrate the evidence and logic behind statements, or an altruistic concern for one's students' (Becher, 1994, p.6) are found between academics. More than this, certain working styles have been promoted; with the lone scholar at their desk away from all other distractions (colleagues, students, management) (Tapper and Salter, 1992). Yet even in this isolation the individual is influenced by the context that they are within (Becher, 1989; Lee 2007) and producing work limited by a set of values that have been developed around particular traditions. For example, a striking element in academic life is that everything is graded

(best journals, scholars, students, subjects, disciplines), creating competition and comparison between peers at all levels in the institution but also a resistance to new ideas and ways of doing things, a defence of the profession from change because of strong internal logic and value systems.

Proposing a professional academic identity serves certain ideological and hegemonic purposes. Analysing what the general identity embodies, feminist writers have come to the conclusion that this ideal is a masculinised, classed and raced individual (male, white, middle class) – which will be discussed further below. These identities are considered performative and thus more diverse individuals can mirror the ideal by displaying institutionally acceptable behaviours; conforming to external pressures on identity production in order to achieve autonomy within that context. So for example the development of intellectual muscularity, a masculinised interactional approach that projects a quick thinking, quick tongued individual. Here Butler's (1997, p.83) discussion of Foucault's image of the prisoner is useful 'whereby one inhabits the figure of autonomy only by becoming subjected to a power, a subjection which implies a radical dependency'. Thus academics are pressured to pursue a correct professional identity (Brooks, 1997), to act to position themselves within dominant discourses — reproducing those discourses. Furthermore Bleiklie and Henkel (2005) have suggested that universities' central management teams now possess more powerful leaderships with a stronger emphasis on coherent and collective academic identities at the level of both the organisation and the basic units. This has been reinforced by the RAE that requires the generation of a "narrative" for departments or research groups. It is possible for academics to enhance their individual identities and freedoms in these circumstances but the power to achieve this is increasingly restricted as the inequalities of what has always been a highly stratified system increase and become more explicit (Bleiklie and Henkel, 2005, pp.162-163)

One can consider this in terms of the academic employee aligning themselves with organisational dictates. Wenger speaks of alignment as one mode of belonging that does not depend on mutual engagement within just a community of practice, but rather bearing in mind the wider organisation (known as a constellation), i.e. the broader structures that influence how practice is developed. 'The process of alignment bridges time and space to form broader enterprises so that participants become connected through the coordination of their energies, actions and practices' (Wenger, 1998, p.179). For example, alignment to the expectations of employers is an expression of individuals belonging to the broader social system in which their industry operates. 'Alignment affords the ability to invest our energy in terms of broadly defined enterprises; it can make us larger by placing our actions in larger contexts' (Wenger, 1998, p.196), sharing in a general academic identity (which I return to in Chapter Five).

These tensions were referred to by interviewees in my own research. In the extract below, Sarah Lewis considers the imperatives of the university and how workers either align themselves, leave the institution, or are less successful at their jobs.

> **Sarah Lewis, Square Mile, Pro Dean Faculty**
> So I think the people who are successful and I can see, I can see, you know, when I see colleagues who have been here for a while and stay, they are successful here because ultimately they kind of, they embrace the vision and would rather do that than a lot of other things and some would say are caught in the vision.

Boundary maintenance is also important in creating (group) identities: identities are as much about what we are not as what we are. Boundary maintenance is most visible as boundary defence, as Sarah illustrates.

**Sarah Lewis, Square Mile, Pro Dean Faculty**

In other words the academic role used to be the same and perceived as the same and kind of, you know, hostility to change was partly because it was so precious, and it was incredibly precious role you know.

In HEIs the division within the institution between the academics and the managers/administrators is keenly protected. There is a careful line for managers to tread between moving too far into the sphere of the managerial community and leaving behind an academic identity.

**Alan Dean — Square Mile, Head of Media Studies Department**

Ally yeh. Ally kept going, for the top job, uhm. And I think the one she really wanted was in Kingston but she didn't get it partly I think because she was living in Kingston and people always want to work where they live. Uhm and the feedback in the end was Ally as a very senior academic had made herself really indispensable, you know. She knew all of the HEFCE regulations and structures, you know, was a very, very good committee person but she wasn't an academic any more, she had turned herself so much into a manager. And to be a Vice Chancellor you've got to have all of that and still. And if you looked at the Vice Chancellors probably of most of the established London Universities, they are still publishing, they are still...

Research has also highlighted the strong opposition to attempts to create general academic identity that overlooks the administrator/academic divide (Conway, 2000; Szerekes, 2004); a distinction described as almost "apartheid" (UUK, 2007, p.6). Conway (2000) analyses the use of the term non-academic in universities — that staff so named are described by what they are not rather than what they are. This clearly demarcates the

distinction between what is important, central work and not; what are valid credentials; what in the field is deemed as having symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1989). For example, Szerekes (2004) notes that 'non-academic staff' are excluded in a lot of research about higher education, as if their positions are unimportant or peripheral to HEIs. What is more there is opposition to non-academic trainers in professional development from those who suggest advisors of academics need to understand academic work from the inside (Nixon et al., 2001).

## Threats to general academic identity

With the back drop of this generalised, simplified view of the academic, writers have considered the effects that national and global changes in the context of HE have had on the profession. By focusing on challenges to traditional conceptions of the purpose of HE, the notion of expertise and status of the profession, another stream of research describes the loss of academic autonomy. So, as Nixon (1996, p.5) writes, 'higher education is facing a crisis which, in part at least, is a crisis of professional self-identity'. Whether the freedom that is lamented ever existed is debateable — whereas now the academy is coming under the control of government and market, previously governance was collegial, subordinating many workers. Furthermore this body of writing tends to overlook the 'selective accommodation and resistance by academic staff themselves' (Morris, 2003, p.564) and the benefits of some changes to particular groups (Morley, 2000), relying on a generalised image of the un-reflexive academic worker.

The academic profession has enjoyed a privileged freedom deemed necessary for developing new ideas and advancing knowledge (Bourdieu, 1988). But with increasing regulation and prescriptive definitions of quality and efficiency, autonomy, as it existed before, is undermined. Halsey (1992) argues that academics' lack of ideological control over their work (being able to influence who their students are and what they

research) is, to some extent, due to the mechanism of state and the market and institutional managers. This is encapsulated by the different views of two academics in my research, one who came from the private sector — Martin Norton, the other staying in higher education for his entire career — Theodore Knight.

**Martin Norton, Northern Lights, Professor Geography**

But overall I think that we have got much more efficient at delivery and we are much more disciplined. Erh when I came here as Head of Department uhm it stressed me out greatly to think that academics had never been sort of told...

**Theodore Knight, Northern Lights, Reader History**

Uhm and not, not every cultural change has been negative uhm but I think on the whole we tend to feel uhm more bureaucratised more managed and more starved of the reasons, as we feel we need, to do our jobs properly.

These changes have been brought about by the incorporation of new managerialist ideology in running universities (Deem, 2001; Deem and Johnson 2000). The government has taken an increasingly directive approach to HEIs (Pratt, 1997), producing a myriad of legislation, with knock on effects for all areas of academic life. First there is the equality legislation that bureaucratises and regulates the interaction of staff with others (students, colleagues, peers etc). Second is the introduction of tight funding controls from the RAE and research councils, managing research grants through competition that directs new knowledge production in only certain areas. Third an impact has been felt from the creation of the QAA that has had the effect of making teaching increasingly prescriptive in method (Macfarlane, 2004), whilst placing greater value on consumer satisfaction (Shore and Selwyn cited in Morley, 2003b). This sets up a demand for skills in 'edutainment' (Morley, 2003a, p.87), which positions the student in a powerful role. Alongside this, the reduction in funding per student and expansion of the system has intensified competition for

funds from research and students (home and overseas). This has caused further stratification of the HE sector as universities develop particular specialisms. It becomes the academic workers' role to fulfil these changing institutional goals.

These developments shift conceptions from the traditional academic with expertise in and stable identifications with defined knowledge traditions (Beck and Young, 2005, p.191) to Neo-Fordist employment regimes and a politics of flexibility (Morley, 2003b). The destabilisation of knowledge and expertise has also been influenced by lifelong perceptions of professional development. The project of the professional self produces 'a morality of attainment' (Strathern, 1997, p.307) with no end point — an endless striving for improvement. Sarah Lewis, below, defended this as an integral part of professional success in her institution, that change requiring personal development has become the only reliable thing.

> **Sarah Lewis, Square Mile, Pro Dean Faculty**
> And the academics who then do well in this institution, are actually I think, are academics who are actually prepared to change. I think the preparation to change and say last year that is what I prioritised, erh this year this is what I have to prioritise. And who don't see that as, as a negative thing.

The audit culture (Strathern, 2000a) imposed on academics has created a different relationship between the individual and the organisation, the organisation imposing artificial imperatives for work, such as demanding alignment to vacuous mission statements (Beck and Young, 2005). A huge apparatus of assessment structures is used to police this regulation through quality assurance exercises. Here self regulation and external regulation are embedded in ways of working, 'combining culture management (creation of purposes and meanings) with performance management (what matters)' (Morley, 2000, p.90). Morley writes of quality assurance ensuring compliance and docility of employees by establishing goals and objectivity (2000, p.92). Academic workers must

be subordinated and integrated into the organisation to experience any level of autonomy, and sense of success, because the organisation's objectives are what their abilities are measured by (Ball, 1987).

Hand in hand with new managerialist approaches has come a new customer and market orientation within the academy (Deem and Johnson, 2000). When polytechnics were given university status, their unique character, styles of management and focus on efficiency and customer service became inculcated into the pre-1992 institutions' practices (Pratt, 1997). Combined with massification, this has necessitated changing perspectives of the importance of teaching, reducing it to managing students (viewed as self motivated learners) creating a break from traditional liberal education models (Henkel, 2000; Harris, 2005). Yet at the same time there is an emphasis on customer care and service provision, which places the academic as a service provider, whilst they are distanced from their students by their sheer numbers.

Competition and the pressurised working environment have been described as breaking down collegial working relationships (Nixon et al., 2001). In my research, academics were very aware of the need for selfish behaviours to advance their careers, see Matthew Lowry below.

> **Matthew Lowry, Square Mile**
>
> The only academics that do well, when I say only I mean 99%, are very selfish, very self-centred who focus on research. That's 90% I would say of people who advance themselves in a career way, and everybody notices that and everybody erh understands that that is going on. In my experience I don't know of ever a colleague that has been promoted up to say Professor or Head of Department who hasn't had those characteristics of self-centredness and extreme ambition.

Reflecting Beck's (1992) essay on the results of working in post-industrial society — where competition and risk are characteristic — Matthew

describes people as seeking individual rather than collective solutions because the self is viewed as the author of one's own biography and set backs are interpreted as personal failure.

## On disciplines and institutional identity

Academic identity is also described in terms of the recognised subcultures of discipline and institution (Becher, 1989, 1994; Biglan, 1973; Clark, 1980; Halsey, 1971; Halsey,1992; Lee, 2007).

Taking discipline first, a number of studies have considered the differences in practices and values between groups (Becher, 1989; Biglan, 1973; Clark, 1980; Kolb, 1981) based partly on the different epistemological and ontological approaches of each discipline. Disciplinary influences have also been found to extend beyond the immediate working environment, for example affecting political values (Bauer and Kogan, 2006; Ladd and Lipsett, 1975). The discipline thus has both cognitive and social influences on academic members (Becher and Parry, 2005 p.137). Although with recent developments in demands for knowledge (as discussed above) some researchers suggest it is the community of practice (social) rather than unity of cognitive domain that holds together traditional academic communities (Becher and Parry, 2005).

In Becher's seminal research on 'academic tribes', he recognised that different disciplines supported different values about academic work and knowledge (Becher, 1994). These values are viewed as communicated inter-generationally, as a disciplinary academic habitus (Delamont et al., 1997; Malcolm and Zukas, 2000), the student first being educated into disciplinary cultures and disciplinary values. These are sustained even after moving into a new institution (Tierney and Rhodes, 1993). Thus 'Disciplinary cultures... transcend the institutional boundaries within any

given system' (Becher 1994, p.153). Disciplinary identities can be national and even global, they are long standing, a key collective group from which a sense of community and identity is drawn despite changes in appointment level (Deem and Johnson, 2000).

Becher (1994) grouped disciplines depending on the type of knowledge produced, production levels and by density of workers on one task (urban or rural). These variations influence the goals workers strive for and the skills that they develop. For example teaching practices and expectations of students differ greatly between disciplines because of the different knowledge bases to be communicated. Furthermore groups are defined and bound by the language they use and the definitions they give to words, which are implicitly linked with the disciplinary traditions workers inherit and are embedded in (Henkel, 2000). The rehearsed repertoire of the community includes words, actions, routines, tools, methods and concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence and which have become part of its practice (Wenger, 1998, p.83), distinguishing it from other groups and creating the rules of the game (Bourdieu's field) for newcomers.

These differences between disciplines have been viewed as so great that there have been calls for the creation of separate policy (created within and externally) for separate disciplinary groups, reflecting their epistemological and social variations (Neumann, 2001).

With this assertion of uniqueness, the boundaries between disciplines are carefully guarded and maintained. For example, the two institutions I sampled had both, in the last few years, undergone restructuring of departments and the mixing of disciplines within schools. Academics questioned the rationale behind this change, resistant to economic justifications overcoming the academic purity disciplines.

> **Reese Gail, Northern Lights, Senior Lecturer Town Planning**
>
> It was about five years ago there was a lot of shot gun, you know, you will sit with these people you know. Who said brain surgery and French was a phoney course; of course you can work together.

Restructuring has been described as eroding academic autonomy when institutional rationales overcome in a competition of academic interests (Turner et al., cited in Bleiklie and Henkel, 2005) and top down policy interferes with the running of departments and disciplinary communities — affecting core aspects of academics' professional identities.

With these considerations in mind a number of writers have heralded the end of the discipline and have called for renewed action to preserve this sense of identity. Rowland (2002) accounts for the breakdown of the discipline as due to the rapid creation of sub-specialisms (e.g. 8500 different specialities in the sciences were identified during the 1990s) that individuate academics and close down opportunities for scholarly debate informed by their work (Rowland, 2002). Also with the rise in interdisciplinary research, Nixon et al. (2001) have appealed for the strengthening of boundaries, not to stop inter-disciplinary research but to help intra-disciplinary relationships.

## Institutional

This general notion of academic identity has also been considered to be informed by institutional variations. First dividing the sector into post- and pre-1992 universities and academics (Farish et al., 1995; Morley,

2003b) but also separating Oxbridge from the rest of the sector (Halsey, 1971; Halsey, 1992)[5].

Pre-1992 institutions have a charter, whereas post-1992 refers to those institutions that were incorporated after the 1992 Higher Education Bill, mostly from being polytechnics or post-compulsory education colleges. The traditional (pre-1992) route into professional academic life is through induction via an apprenticeship model where research skills are honed under the eye of master researchers and certificated with the PhD. In post-1992 institutions, entrance has been more varied; although with mounting competition for jobs increasingly high credentials are required to secure any tenured post. The missions and objectives of pre- and post-1992 universities are also considered to diverge — pre-1992 institutions are foremost research led and post-1992 institutions are focused on students and teaching (Deem and Johnson, 2000). This drives institutional development so that staff within are encouraged to spend their time on aligned tasks (as I return to in Chapter Five). Thus in post-1992 institutions, promotion criteria have been developed for non-research active, teaching focused academics to progress to professor.

If one applies the concept of habitus to academic identity one could describe how between these two groups there are quite different habituses generated within the institution; supported by the different students that each type of institution receives and retains (Thomas, 2002) and varied institutional aims (Morley, 2003b; Reay et al., 2001). Or, from a community of practice perspective, one could explain that academics align their behaviour with their institutions' objectives; coordinating their perspectives and actions and directing energies to a common purpose, as I found:

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[5] With the devolution of Scotland, Wales and the Northern Ireland there are also clear differences between governance of HE as a sector but there is no room here to elaborate further on this.

> **Sarah Lewis, Square Mile, Pro Dean Faculty**
>
> Well I think we, we don't, erhm, how can I put it? I don't
> think anybody questions the diversity agenda, that one thing we
> are is, our specialism is teaching classrooms with people from
> all walks of life. Yeh. Nobody questions that, nobody goes
> into a classroom and bats an eye lid when, you know, it is an
> incredibly mixed group with a 60 year old African and a 19
> year old Muslim woman with a, you know, I mean nobody
> questions that. That is accepted, and I think that is not
> something that anybody has to be convinced about any more.

Some institutions retain a strong link to their past history and each has
differing levels of capital in the UK's hierarchical HE sector. With these
differences, the placement of Oxbridge aside from other institutions in the
UK (fictional or not) creates another division on which academic identity
is considered to be dependent (Tapper and Salter, 1992). However as my
research is not focused on this division I mention it here only briefly.

Discipline and institutional membership have been found to interact in
their relative influence on academic identity over a number of personal
beliefs (Lee, 2007). Lee's (2007) recent study analysed a national US
survey of academics' beliefs, values and assumptions, taking survey items
and aggregating the data to determine disciplinary and institutional
cultures. She found a difference between the cultural influence of
discipline and institution. Discipline was found to have a stronger
influence on beliefs about commitment to students' affective development
and commitment to teaching, and institution was found to affect student
centred-ness, commitment to diversity, collegiality, commitment to
scholarship and prestige orientation. Again this research area is based on
a generalised view of academics not considering the possible variation
caused by personal characteristic.

The influence of institution and discipline is mediated by the relative
status of membership (as I discuss in Chapter Five). Disciplinary sub-

cultures can hold opposing values to the institution, or struggle to have their voice heard when the institution is oriented toward other disciplines. As was exampled in my data:

**Nuria Lawson, Northern Lights, Professor Geography**

The other thing I see, once you start work, working around the university, is that our faculty is not a player. You know the player really is the, is S.A.G.E (faculty of science, agriculture and engineering). What our faculty tries to do is, and I think they do a great job do Craig and Peter, particularly, but we are not the big money makers, we teach a lot of the students but erhm we're not actually taken that seriously, I don't think, around the university as S.A.G.E.

## Individuality

Within the literature on professional identities that I have considered above, attempts are made to assign behaviour to rational and explainable causes in neat and consistent actions (Becher, 1994). But this limits the enquiry, not recognising the multiple selves that inform our performance of self at any given time. Thus academics have private lives and come from many different (career) backgrounds, altering their experience and behaviour in the work place. So as with Martin Norton, below, their approaches to the job are coloured by other knowledge regimes.

**Martin Norton, Northern Lights, Professor Geography**

The mistake I made when I came in was that I gave each lecture as though I was giving an outside professional talk. So it made it, it was self advertisement because my old employers would have said go to the British Geological Society and give a really good performance and report back on how it went because it is our image.

In my work I am concerned with the complexity of academic identity, like Henkel's (2000) vision of the HE worker each with their own individual background, and who are embedded in a chosen moral and conceptual framework, each being identified within a defined community or institution by what they have achieved.

## On individual identity and academia

As I have previously noted the work on academic identities has illuminated an ideal image of the male, middle class, white individual (Archer, 2007; Harding, 1990; Wolfensperger, 1993). Models of the good academic are based on certain criteria, which members must try and emulate in behaviours and expectations to get by (Reay and Ball, 2000). The feminist movement has brought a focus on gendered inequality in HEIs producing a large body of literature suggesting that even with increasing numbers of women in academia; there is little movement away from the masculinised practices in the institution. Whilst the 'disembodied categories of worker, job and hierarchy appear hypothetical and gender free organisational structure is not neutral'... 'but organised along gender lines' (Barry et al., 2006, p.278)

The broad literature on race theory and class relationships further delineates the complex picture of academic identity. Reay (2004a) brings these embodied characteristics back to Bourdieu's consideration of habitus, capital and field. She identifies gender (male) and race (white) as forms of capital in the field of academia. Those with more capital have greater potential and power. Thus females are positioned as subordinate workers, considering that 'working methods and structures are shaped more by great personalities, nearly always great men, than by set structures, which are legally regulated and function irrespective of the person' (Reay, 2004a, p.4). Thus,

> 'The external situation determines the person's relative position, just as the position of a pawn on a chess board is considered safe or

dangerous, powerful or weak, according to its relation to other chess pieces'.

(Alcofff cited in Barry et al., 2006, p.281).

Other writers such as Wajcman (1998) find that women are judged by different criteria in management and have quite different experiences from their male peers. There is a myriad of work on exclusion and inclusion in academic identities, such as Bensimon (1995) who extends this perspective to include black staff in these subordinated categories.

With different levels of symbolic capital, dependent on the recognition of others, academics can be positioned along a continuum of core to peripheral memberships. It is not a straightforward binary of inclusion and exclusion (Deem and Johnson, 2000).

Other work has considered the effect of the interaction of individualised selves with discipline, for example: gender role (femininity/masculinity) and engineering (Faulkner 2000); the interaction of gender, ethnicity and class in science and engineering disciplines (Bebbington, 2002); and gender and economics (Ginther and Kahn, 2004). The nexus between self identity and institutional identity has also been explored in work on institutionalised racism in UK higher education (Law et al., 2004; Mirza, 2006), class tensions (Reay et al., 2005), gender (Weiner, 1998) and disability (Tidwell, 2004). Furthermore complex identities are also considered in the interaction of multiple personal identities with institutional identity, such as gender and race (Mirza, 2006).

In this literature it is easy to fall into talking in essentialist ways about the gendered or raced experiences of people in the academy, rather than considering the agency of each person (Skelton, 2005). Simple explanations of identity have described it to be held in essentialist (and realist) properties; something which is unchanging, attached to the being of the individual often in terms of a binary like the male-female divide. These theories often fall into a reliance on stereotypes because they do not

view the complexity of people's identities, instead focusing on salient categories.

By considering agency, the dynamic of relations within particular groups is added, for example by considering the tensions and power struggles between females in the academy (Morley, 1999; Skelton, 2005). This enables a discussion of 'the uneven reflexivity of individuals within different sets of power relations' (Skelton citing McNay, 2005, p.330; Deem and Johnson, 2000). The individual's action of identifying is central; turning a critical eye to the narratives of self they tell that position them in particular identity groups, rather than taking at face value their group categorisations.

## Summary

I view academic identity as a complex construction; interweaving changing individual positions in disciplinary, institutional and a myriad of personal possibilities for self – producing the entangled subject (Hey, 2004). Therefore in questioning **how academics reconfigure the recent focus on equality and diversity and legislative requirements in describing their own work(ing) identities** it seems each of these areas should be brought into consideration. I develop my primary question to consider:

- *What performance of identity do academics display in discussing their work in equality and diversity?*

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have considered how academic identity and practice can be conceptualised at this meso-level, not with a closed realist conception

of identity but a social constructionist, fractured approach. Working identities are a nexus of multiple selves displayed differently in varying contexts of the work environment. A consideration of how equality has been taken up in work identities needs to be a consideration of how identities are made use of at work – work(ing) identities.

Throughout this literature on academia, I argue, run notions of habitus (Bourdieu) — collective and personal — and communities of practice (Wenger) in disciplines, institutions and private lives. By considering identity as identification, these levels of theorisation can be usefully brought together providing a platform to combine macro and micro influences, deconstructing academic identity as in the post-structural project.

In this chapter I have outlined the literature that has informed my investigation. In doing so, I present my methodological standpoint, placing myself in a post-structuralist account of identity. In the next chapter I explain the reasons for my choice of techniques used in data collection and analysis; considering also how I was positioned, and how I positioned interviewees, in the research.

# CHAPTER THREE — Methodology

In the previous chapter I clarified my own theoretical stance and how the academic professional is shaped by a number of interconnected identities. In this chapter I explain the decision-making processes I applied in this research; I record my embodied experience of doing the research and the differences between objective plans and subjective experience. Of course the research was not carried out infallibly and in thus self-critical discussion I consider the issues that arose and methods exercised to overcome them with an assessment of how the research might be improved upon with hindsight. I begin by briefly outlining the choices that framed my research design. In section two I consider some of the issues that arose in relying on interview data to inform my conclusions. In section three I move onto discuss my experiences in selecting the sites, carrying out the interviews and analysing them. Finally, I end by describing the case study sites.

The purpose of the project was to consider some of the effects of the recent developments in the equality agenda on academics' work identities in English universities, as well as considering how this influences the student related equality agenda from the perspective of specialists in the field. The research was based in two higher education institutions and was concerned with providing an in-depth account of academics' understanding of the equality agenda and its relation to their own work. Twenty eight academics were interviewed in total from both managerial and teaching positions, across a range of disciplines. Two specialist staff in equality and diversity from each institution were also interviewed to discuss the institutional approach to equality and diversity and particular problems or strengths in their university.

As Deem (2004a, p.36) writes, there are few studies 'that focus on the sociological reality, work conditions, and identities of higher education

teachers, and why there maybe resistance by some academics to adapting their teaching to meet the needs of students [with disabilities]'. My research was guided by the relatively small corpus of work on the sociology of higher education (Deem, 2004a), as well as research on the development of equality and diversity policies in other organisations.

I chose to use a qualitative interview method as it presented the best way of exploring a broad subject area, allowing a wide range of responses, so the interviewee could inform me of key aspects of the situation for investigation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p.10). Here I followed in the methodological choices of a number of other researchers investigating the experience of academic workers (Delamont et al., 1997; Neal, 1998; Henkel, 2000; Hancock and Hellawell, 2003; Deem et al., 2005; Garcia et al., 2005; Skelton, 2005).

The questions that led this research (outlined in Chapter One) suggested a more discursive approach to data collection and required a long and in-depth period of analysis. Taking this into account I decided that two institutions would produce enough data to form some initial conclusions and that using any more than two would handicap my analysis with an overload of data. I chose to carry out a comparative case study of two contrasting sites. Case studies 'generate anecdotal evidence that can illustrate general findings' (Haigh, 2004, p.1): not making claims on the generalisability of the conclusions themselves, but viewing them as bringing evidence to a wider discussion. The nature of personalised accounts do not allow for generalisations to the group — as Paechter (2005, p.15) considers, this would be to 'obfuscate the complexities of observed detail while using this detail as the basis for our generalisations'. The aims of my research were not to make grand sweeping conclusions about the sector but to illustrate some of the issues that academics and specialists in English HEIs may experience.

My original design involved using focus groups to investigate initial themes that could be explored in more depth through individual

interviews. Focus groups have been used elsewhere in research on higher education (Deem et al., 2005) and are viewed as useful in exploratory research in a number of fields (Vaughn et al., 1996). Trying to organise these interviews with staff, however, proved very difficult because of having to coordinate a number of different schedules, without any strong incentives to offer for participation. Whether scheduling focus groups during term time or periods of non-teaching they always clashed with other commitments (research groups, conferences, marking). I dropped this approach in favour of individual interviews.

## Section One — Interpreting the data

There are certain well discussed issues that need to be resolved before approaching an interpretation of interview data. The biggest of these are the notions of multiple identities, multiple realities and the nature of knowledge as co-created.

As I discussed in chapter one, the understanding that people hold multiple identities has been agreed for many decades and has informed the methodology that researchers have employed. Goffman described (1959) how people change the self that they present with each role that they act out (different tasks, different situations). Ball (1972), too, separated the situated from the substantive identity, the malleable context-dependent and the core, more stable identity that is central to the individual's view of themselves. Again in the psychoanalytic tradition of Hollway and Jefferson (2000) the psychosocial subject is described as shaped by shared and personal experiences that influence participants' responses — which can never be fully known in the research setting.

Such researchers suggest that we should work on the assumption that people have no 'unitary perspectives' that can be harnessed in research (Hammersley and Gomm, 2000, p.7). Collins (1998, pg.4.3) writes the

'interview is a carnival of voices' expressing the different identities of the interviewer and respondent, while Stronach et al (quoted in Day et al, 2006, p.613) describe how professionals 'mobilis(e) a complex of occasional identities in response to shifting contexts'. This obviously creates difficulties when interpreting interview data as one can never gather a "whole" or "complete" perspective of an individual. However in a comparison of two universities it is the institutional difference between responses that is important and there has been some evidence for the effect of such institutional identities. Day et al. (2006) note several studies that have found teacher identities are linked not only to personal lives and technical and emotional aspects of teaching, but also 'as the result of interaction between personal experiences of teachers and the social, cultural and institutional environment in which they function on a daily basis' (Sleegers and Kelchtermans quoted in Day et al., 2006, p.603). The position I hold is that the interviewees each enter the speech situation with a myriad of different experiences but also with a shared understanding of being members of the same institution.

## Multiple realities

Connected to this question is how truth is conceived when relying on talk for data. Talk cannot be related to an independent and unchanging reality (Atkinson, 1990). One cannot take what people say as factual: this, as Hollway and Jefferson (2000, p.3) state, 'flies in the face of all that we know about people's less clear cut, more confused and contradictory relationship to knowing and telling about themselves'. People's responses may differ from day to day as they are influenced by mood and relational experience (Alasuutari, 1995), shaped also by the rapport built up with the researcher. Thus a search for an objective 'truth' in responses is unachievable in this research. Respondents may not "tell it like it is" but they may tell it how they experience it, which is important in research focusing on beliefs, such as this. Counter-intuitively, what is most likely to be "untruthful" would seem to be those

accounts that are unified and without conflicting meanings, as these would seem to draw on sanitised accounts. What they say does not necessarily reflect what things mean to them. The discourse[6] that interviewees draw upon in these accounts reflects the positions that they invest in or connect with, though the statements are not true reflections of reality. In these accounts the participants themselves get positioned as 'discursive subjects' (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, p.15). The analysis of these different truth statements is the work of the researcher, expressing the complexity of the research task not merely amplifying the voice of the interviewee and supporting its validity.

In addition to these issues, the answers interviewees give may be further distanced from actual experience by the power structures at work in the institution or the site of the interview, which focus or style the responses in certain ways. It is important to take into account the 'socio-spatial dynamics' (Sin, 2003, p.311) and the 'local circumstances' (Hester and Francis, 1994, p.679) observed in the case study site when analysing the interview data; paying a nuanced attention to discourse while locating it within the materialist constraints within which it is produced. As Britzman (1991) comments, language is not neutral and descriptive but ideological and prescriptive. The choices people make about what they say are framed by the context and position they experience.

I agree with Quinn (2000, p.36) that we need to 'analytically deconstruct what is said to reveal the uses the respondent is making of cultural narratives, rather than taking what they say on face value'. I found in recognising these possibilities that the data became more meaningful. In reading the interview text as a representation, one can note those issues the speaker draws on to position themselves and the topic in certain ways. For instance I found academics were happy to speak about bad practice that other (unnamed) staff were involved in, but rarely spoke of themselves in that manner. This is an example of self representation; it

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[6] Discourse here is defined as a set of organised meanings on a given theme (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000 , p.14).

does not invalidate the information because whether the academics are talking about themselves or others there is still a sense of the practices of the worker that can inform the enquiry.

## Knowledge as co-created

A further level of misrepresentation is added when the researcher interprets what is said. I accept that my interpretation of the ambiguities of what was spoken in interviews may not reflect what the speaker had intended; speech does not provide a clear window into the mind of the speaker (Denzin, 1989, p.14). However my interpretations are based on knowledge of the area that has built up over the period of the study and so are fairly well informed.

It is not only at the stage of interpreting the data that the researcher can control representation. An interview is an interaction and the researcher is heavily involved in the (co)creation of knowledge. The researcher must be reflexive of their own position in interpreting the data so that all those involved in this production are theorised, thus legitimating the process (Hester and Francis, 1994; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000; Rhodes, 2000). This issue created a source of tension for me during interviews, where I knew what themes were pertinent in the research and tried to draw comments on them from participants. But as in Becker's (2000) description of a story telling case study, I learnt a little about the situation and experience from the workers and used this to construct a more complete story of the phenomenon. I did not record all the outcomes, just those that were relevant, giving the research a sharp focus.

## Section Two — Selection of case study areas

I chose to do a comparative case study with two institutions that differed on a number of central characteristics to get an idea of the range of responses to common issues. Comparing heterogeneous sites allows the researcher to reflect on a wider base of the sector.

The idea of higher education as a uniform concept has long been contested (Barnett, 2000; Claes, 2005). The system has become so hierarchical and fragmented that some argue it can hardly be viewed as one sector containing similar experiences/perspectives at all. Thus my choice of two contrasting universities in fact reflects a view of the breadth of diversity in HE that I believe is likely to become greater in the future. The issues raised in this research may fit with future trends.

Of the sites sampled, one was research intensive (Northern Lights), the other teaching focused (Square Mile); one was situated high in newspaper league tables (which are generally based on entry requirements and achievements of graduates) and was a member of the Russell Group (Northern Lights); the other (Square Mile) was not recognised very highly in these traditional ways of measuring university success. I also held certain factors constant: the size of the institution – both had around 20,000 students, both were non campus institutions, both were located in city centre areas, and had relative success in attracting diverse student intakes. Later other similarities were identified that may also have affected the outcomes of the research: for example both had gone through major restructuring in the recent past.

The choice to access a post and a pre-1992 institution was based on an understanding of the different histories these institutions, and their different orientations to students and the role of the university. Work

from Pursglove and Simpson (2007) has shown that post-1992 universities are more teaching efficient and teaching effective than pre-1992 universities.

Selection of these case study institutions was based on HESA statistical data collected in 2003-2004 on full time students, as these were the most up to date records available to me in early 2006. I chose to look at student intake and retention data as this would point to whether staff had much experience of working with a diverse group of students and if there was an issue with drop out rates in the student body. Quinn (2003) notes that a problem with prior work on the area of access in universities is that it mostly focuses on universities that need to improve access rather than looking at institutions in which this has already been accepted as the norm. In this study I hoped to capture the view of both groups. Those institutions that scored well on both of these categories were highlighted as possibilities for the research.

It is hard to compare the access scores of Russell Group Institutions with less research-intensive universities because they tend to have higher, and more rigid, entry requirements due to a greater demand for places. To combat this I compared access between Russell Group Institutions as a separate group.

I felt it was important to target institutions in which the lecturers had some experience of working with students from diverse backgrounds, and from those institutions which seem to be actively working on their missions to widen access. By looking at institutions that were performing better in student access and retention, I hoped to enter those places where equality and diversity may be put into practice and student support was a recognised part of institutional life. It is important that these issues had been considered by the interviewees' in order to be able to ask them about it – as I found from my pilot interviews. However as no institution has yet achieved a fully representative intake, I was able to

investigate what the underlying problems that inhibited these actions were and what was reinforcing/ sustaining these issues.

Access criteria were measured by ranking institutions on their score as compared with benchmarks for that institution on the following indices: students in receipt of DSA, percentage from state schools, low participation neighbourhoods, with low National Statistics Socio Economic Classification (NS-SEC) and mature entrants with no previous experience of higher education. For retention the same process was carried out with the categories of: percentage of students no longer in higher education, percentage of mature students no longer in higher education, percentage of young entrants no longer in higher education and percentage of young entrants from low participation neighbourhoods no longer in higher education. Each institution was then compared on its overall ranking over these areas and those that scored well in both areas were considered for the research.

My choice of institutions was also mediated by limited resources and recognition that contacts within the institution would speed the access process and aid participant recruitment. Through my supervisor I made a contact at the executive level in Square Mile. This made it possible to have both permission for the study and endorsement of the project, which no doubt encouraged greater response rates. In total I approached four universities.

I had originally hoped to use my own institution for one of the case studies but was refused access on the grounds that the university's recent merger with the Welsh School of Medicine meant that it was in a state of flux and would not be a good choice in a comparative case study design. Using my own institution would also have presented difficulties in protecting the identity of participants and the institution. The second institution I approached proved too slow in responding to my initial contact letters. The decision to stop pursuing access was based on other researchers' experience. For example Berezi (2006, commenting on

Rossman et al) concluded that the researcher should have received a response within 28 days from institutions on whether the research has been granted access because the process of organising interviews and access can be expected to take up to three months.

Of the final selection of institutions, the first case study (Square Mile) scored well in access and retention as compared to its benchmark although the non-completion rates were high. The second university — named Northern Lights — (a Russell group institution), scored far lower on access and retention but again performed better than its benchmarks on nearly every category.

## Access

My access to Square Mile was characterised by informal lines of contact that worked very well. I happened to meet the Pro Vice Chancellor and Head of Diversity Unit at a conference about equality issues. This meant I was able to approach them to make myself and my project known and ask for their provisional support. This helped to secure my access as the Pro Vice Chancellor recalled our meeting in future correspondence and immediately offered support for the project.

The Executive Dean of Square Mile met with me to discuss my research early on and offered some comments on how to approach people in the faculty. He also suggested some clarifications to my research proposal that might make it easier for me to gain approval at other levels and at other institutions. This was invaluable advice but there were some difficulties that arose from this quasi-supervisory role that my contact took. At some points it was difficult to judge how much input he wanted to have on the research; whether he was speaking from his own perspective on what research needed to be done in his institution (and not my own interests) or whether he was drawing me away from sensitive aspects of institutional life that he thought I should not touch

on. For example he offered to draw up a list of possible interviewees (this would have posed large problems for participant confidentiality and validity of research). I felt that this highlighted how vulnerable the researcher is when forced to rely on gatekeepers for access to any institution, being conscious of trying to create and maintain positive field relationships.

At the second institution (Northern Lights) I mostly had to rely on developing contacts via email.

The interesting aspect of doing research that involves academics as participants is that they often have experience of the research process and an understanding of it that would not be found in any other area. In my own research this was beneficial in some ways and challenging in others. The response to my questions by many interviewees was often negative at first, shown through a frown or comment:

**Elizabeth Richards, Northern Lights, PVC**

Uhm, well I think uhm, erh, you know (pause). I didn't know these questions were going to be so wide ranging as this.

Academic respondents are aware of how the research process works and often have their own views on how they perceive work should be carried out, which can be quite different across disciplines. This was magnified by my position as a novice researcher — researching "up".

I found that in my first case study the institution treated me very well. I was given a desk and computer to work on and full library access as a visiting scholar. I was treated with far more respect than in the pilot studies in my own institution, where I had been treated as a student. This was perhaps a reflection of interviewees' understanding of the power that a researcher can wield in reporting on the inside life of an institution. My difficulty in scheduling a time to interview a manager academic in my own institution (a waiting list of two months) reflected

the often felt disparity between how I was treated as a novice researcher in my own institution and elsewhere.

## Interviewee selection

I tabulated those in professor/ reader, senior lecturer, and lecturer posts and emailed a range of people from these groups representing a mix of male and female and people with different responsibilities for students and research (as far as I could gather from their internet information). I found that between institutions there was quite some difference in the number of professors in each department (some departments did not have any professors in Square Mile) and also in the length of time spent as an academic before promotion (in Square Mile one senior lecturer had been appointed to that position straight from working as a teacher in a primary school – a post which would have been equivalent to lecturer B in pre-1992 universities). This highlighted for me on the one hand the importance of being aware of different nomenclature in old and new universities, for instance that 'senior lecturer' in post-1992 institutions is equal to 'lecturer B' in older ones, and on the other hand the importance of being aware of issues in the field such as difficulties in appointing experienced staff to the education faculty. In general professors in both institutions had more management and research responsibilities and less contact with students as compared to senior lecturer and lecturer positions. It was not difficult to attract positive responses from the staff and in fact I turned down some offers of support.

As I made contact with interviewees by email, asking for people to respond if they would take part, the interviewees self-selected. This is likely to have affected the sample. Although in discussion academics said they thought people would be very willing to take part and support a student, having been in that position themselves, in practice the people who responded may well have been those with a particular interest in student support. However I could not discern this from the information I

had on each individual. For example, they did not all hold student support roles in their department nor did they all have special responsibilities in that area. As I have noted before, I recognise that the sample is not representative of all academic staff in higher education and that this project cannot be generalised to make conclusions about the nature of the sector as a whole, as discussed on page 52.

In the research design I intended to carry out six interviews with academic staff (two at each level of professor/ reader, senior lecturer and lecturer), two with managers and two with specialist staff in each institution. Through a reading of the literature it became clear that academic identity is strongly related to subject discipline (Becher, 1989; as discussed in Chapter One). That this also affects how academics conceive of students and teaching has been found in prior research (Norton et al., 2005; Eley, 2006). Therefore I tried to include this variable in my dataset by accessing a broad range of subject disciplines when sampling staff. In early designs I intended to compare staff from two faculties to access the very distinct differences that one might experience between, for example, Engineering and Physics Faculty and a Sociology and Anthropology Faculty. However I found the universities I studied each turned to a model of university organisation that embraced a few 'mega faculties' (Bessant, 1993) with very mixed disciplines. So a pragmatic decision was made to use one faculty and access the range of departments within it. Comparing the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences in each university was an important choice. Here social justice and diversity issues often inform research interests and thus one could expect a certain level of knowledge of issues among staff. In actuality this combination of interest and knowledge was not strongly indicated among staff in either faculty – and became an interesting issue I discuss later in Chapter Six. Table 3 lists the range of subject disciplines I accessed across the two universities:

## Table 3

| | |
|---|---|
| Arts management | Law |
| Business and management | Media Studies |
| City and Town Planning | Politics |
| Cultural Studies | Psychology (Cognitive, |
| Education (PGCE) | Developmental, |
| English | Psychopharmacology) |
| Geography | Sociology |
| History | |

The number of interviews carried out was guided by time restrictions on the project for gathering the data and analysing the transcripts. Each interview lasted about an hour and created around twenty pages of transcription. The research schedule did not allow me to keep interviewing till I reached 'theoretical saturation' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). I did find that interviewees commented on similar things but often showed different responses that could have been guided by personal experience and thus infinitely different variations could be found as the research went on.

The response rate was very good in Square Mile and sixteen interviews were carried out in total. This was six more than planned but ensured backup if anyone cancelled or problems occurred in the interview (for example I lost half of one interview due to recording problems). Table 4 gives a break down of the different interviewee appointment levels at each university.

## Table 4

| Square Mile | | | Northern Lights | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male (M) | 7 | Gender | Male (M) | 7 |
| | Female (F) | 9 | | Female (F) | 9 |
| Work Position | Manager (2M, 1F) | 3 | Work Position | Manager (1M,1F) | 2 |
| | Specialist (2F) | 2 | | Specialist (2F) | 2 |
| | Reader/ Professor (2 M, 1 F) | 3 | | Reader/ Professor ( 2 M, 1 F) | 3 |
| | Senior Lecturer (1 M, 4 F) | 5 | | Senior Lecturer (2 M, 3 F) | 5 |
| | Lecturer (2 M, 1 F) | 3 | | Lecturer (2 M, 2 F) | 4 |

In Square Mile the gender mix broadly reflected that of the general academic population with slightly more female than male staff — female academics were less well represented at higher appointment levels. A quarter of the interviewees were also from black and minority ethnic groups. As one of my interviewees commented, accessing a range of academics is important to complete thorough research:

**Charlotte Cavendish, Square Mile**

So I hope you are getting a good feel from both you know male and female, a good spread because that really is where the story lies. If you're only getting it from one dimension, then all too often if you do ask you know your kind of atypical white British individual, you know who has been working for Square Mile for a long time, their view is it's great, that maybe different for somebody else.

I developed the interview schedule through pilot interviews and reading the relevant literature including policy texts on equality and diversity in public and private institutions. Pilot interviews were carried out in my own institution, three with academic staff (one each at reader, senior lecturer and lecturer level), one with a head of department, and three with individuals in non-academic specialist posts working in the area of equality and diversity. I recognise that my pilot interviews were carried out in Wales, which comes under different governing regulations from England where my case studies were, however this approach enabled me to test the areas accessed in answers by the question schedule and phrasing of questions. As Kvale (1996, p.95) explains, 'a good interview question should contribute thematically to the creation of knowledge and dynamically to the creation of a good interaction'.

A semi-structured approach was taken and an interview schedule was written and refined. I felt much more secure having a list of questions to hand in interviews and it helped to keep the discussion on track, as staff were very willing to offer grand theorisations of the organisation and nature of work. The choice of using a semi-structured approach was based on its scope for allowing the participant to influence the agenda of the discussion and give longer accounts (Taylor, 2001a). I attempted to initiate narratives with these open questions to allow the interviewee to tell what was important to them.

One of the issues raised in these initial pilots was the use of terminology. For instance, "equality and diversity" itself is a very vague/broad term that has supplanted "equal opportunities" in political rhetoric and policy planning (as discussed in Chapter Four) — arguably for these very attributes — and so has varied meanings to practitioners and academics in the field. Such language either had to be scrutinized in the interview for speakers' meanings or more specific language used. I employed both of these techniques, on the one hand, asking interviewees to define equality and diversity, and on the other, rephrasing questions and the

introductory explanation for the research to use other terms such as student support and fair work practice.

Similarly I found some interviews were difficult because of the need to express concepts in terms of discriminating discourses. In the example below I find it hard to vocalise these essentialist arguments.

**Hannah Boyd, Researcher**

HB    Well for example, and this is really only positing something that has been said in a previous interview, is that staff may get approached by students who say, oh you're black I'm black I'm having this issue you've got to support me in it...

Three different interview schedules were developed for the interviews with specialist staff, managers (who had all previously been or were practising academics) and academics. Generally the questions covered the same subject but accessed their different areas of knowledge, so more macro-level, institutionally relevant questions were asked of managers and more research informed, specific questions of the specialists. This is supported by Rubin and Rubin (1995, p.45) who state that flexibility is important, 'rather than being locked into one set of questions for all interviewees, you adjust the questioning so that individuals are asked about the particular parts of a subject they know best'. Examples of the interview schedules are given in Appendix 1.

## Ethics

I followed the guidelines set out by my funding council (Economic and Social Research Council) relating to ethical considerations of this research. Each interviewee signed a participant consent form (see example Appendix 2) and also gave verbal consent for the interview to be recorded. I introduced the topic of my research at the beginning of

each interview and respondents were informed that they could ask for the recording to be stopped at any time and could request to see the transcript. Nine of my participants asked to see the transcript and permission was given for each interview to be recorded without hesitation, although during a number of interviews the respondents signalled that what they were saying could be viewed negatively by colleagues if they were to be named. In transcription pseudonyms were given to each interviewee and all names and locations referenced in the data were changed.

The subject matter was seen, in both institutions, to be sensitive and I had to have clearance from a number of individuals in the executive team (Pro Vice Chancellors) as well as from the equality specialists themselves in order to be allowed access. In Northern Lights this was described as making sure I was not "stepping on anyone's toes", in Square Mile it was viewed as reflecting the tightening up on 'bureaucratic processes' in the institution. On applying for access the second institution granted it immediately, but in the first I had to wait for the irregularly timetabled ethics board to be convened. In fact I did not have official ethical approval granted until I had already carried out five interviews in that institution. I did not see that this compromised the ethics of the research, as I had been granted permission by the Head of Faculty, Pro Vice Chancellor and Head of the Equality Division to carry out the research. The need for further deliberation by the ethics board appeared just to be an exercise in increasing the reach of bureaucratic rule rather than having any relation to protecting the individual or institution (Boden et al., forthcoming). Further since the research proposal had gone through my own institution's ethics board it seemed even more needless.

Universities are becoming more tightly regulated (Boden and Epstein, 2006), which both reflects and accounts for the weakening of collegial ties, and the highly competitive nature of the higher education sector. As other researchers have commented (Quinn, 2000), managers are very

careful that information is not taken away to competitors to boost their own performance. This shapes the nature of the research field, so that there is a paucity of research in some areas, such as research on management structures, but little in others, such as mechanisms of governance (Berezi, 2006). Fortunately access to the area of equality and diversity is not as restricted as others.

Gathering data from employees about their experiences of working in their own institution, however, does raise some important ethical issues. The researcher must work responsibly because once they leave there may be repercussions for the interviewees if data is not handled confidentially. A number of times I was asked who else was taking part in the research to which I could not give an answer. This also affected the careful transcription of materials, so that participants would not be identifiable. I had been warned by my contact at Square Mile (who was the Executive Dean in the faculty) that staff would be wary of answering questions on the area of equality and diversity because of the university's strong commitment to equality and the recognition that staff there had to be aligned to this. Any contradictory comments that could be associated with a member of staff would place them in a difficult position.

It is hard to remove all identifying material when transcribing interviews because some of the references are central to the issues raised and provide important insights into the context of the institution. For example, in my data, respondents related reasons for their actions to their membership of a particular discipline. As Becher (1989) has famously explained, disciplinary differences are an important aspect of institutional life and I planned to take this into account in my analysis, deliberately selecting interviewees from across the disciplines (as discussed above). However by disclosing the department the respondent was from, their anonymity could be compromised. The balance between protecting the subject and producing good research that reflects the environment studied has been discussed elsewhere. Hammersley and

Atkinson (1995) reiterate that this goal, to produce good research, should not be pursued at all costs; in my case this meant the access agreements made with participants were honoured.

## Access and collecting the data

Interviews with academics mostly lasted for an hour and, when speaking with senior managers, this slot was carefully policed by them or their support staff. All interviews were recorded onto a digital voice recorder, and then had to be transferred onto a tape because of the lack of availability of a digital transcription program in my own department. This is just one example of the extra work created when doing research on a low budget (another would be keeping the transport costs down by travelling on the low budget Megabus!).

In Square Mile, interviews were scheduled over a period of twenty two days requiring a number of trips to the site. This allowed me a 'degree of immersion' (Schofield, 2000, p.81) in the culture of the institution. As I was given desk space in the postgraduate and hourly paid lecturer's office, I interacted with them and took part in the every day life of people in the institution, giving a better understanding of some of the tensions they experienced at work. This was in contrast to Northern Lights, for which, because of its distance from where I lived, I had to schedule interviews very closely together and visits were brief.

One issue was in replicating the research in Northern Lights as the two sets of data collection were separated by four months – my ideas had developed with experience and I had a better idea of what emergent themes I wanted to pursue in Northern Lights. I decided to keep the questions the same, giving the interviewees the opportunity to raise issues in the same areas, but having developed some themes from Square Mile I probed more deeply into staff experiences of training and perceptions of equality and diversity staff.

I found it hard to approach the task of understanding institutional cultures: moving into a new organisation there is a whole new world to grasp. For instance, in such a complex institution, with various goals and divisions, grappling with the meanings of references to people and tasks was difficult. Here it was important that I was not a passive listener, but recorded extensive field notes and made efforts to unpack those references to ambiguous processes or opinions.

Using an in-depth qualitative interview has been compared to writing a story (Hammersley and Gomm, 2000) and as such I think it is important to record my own location in the production of data. My own position as a young female inexperienced/novice researcher reflected in the way I interacted with my interviewees. I expected to be marginalised for my identity because of the research topic. Work in equality and diversity is viewed as a strongly feminised area because of the long standing action of women to create a more equal world for themselves (Neal, 1998). This had an effect on my interview style. I always used an interview schedule, I was over polite, I worried about what to wear and say. I was almost apologetic for asking them to give up their time for my research. I allowed the interviewee to take the ground; I was a good listener playing the age old role assigned to the woman (Neal, 1998). I did not challenge interviewees who made discriminatory remarks. I chose to be non-confrontational, to present myself as neutral and objective because I did not want to bias the answers of my respondents. Seeming to agree with one statement or another can steer the responses of an interviewee. Taking a neutral stance and not challenging the views of respondents can appear unethical (Neal, 1998), but as the focus of my own research was on the opinions of academics this was not an issue.

I often felt that I was being challenged by academics on the questions that I asked; I noted a certain amount of hostility to the area (discussed further in Chapter Six), which surprised me. This was hard to deal with as I knew the interviewees understood more about the institution and

higher education than I did. This may have been a symptom of the recent thrust in institutions to implement equality and diversity related policies in line with government deadlines (such as the Race Equality and Disability Equality Schemes in 2006); which meant that academics felt that they were being bombarded by the issue. I was guilty of the same misapprehension as many undergraduates (Ross and Schneider, 1992; Read et al., 2003), expecting that academics are there to serve, taking the government rhetoric on service providers too seriously and overlooking the complexity of the role.

Ideally I hoped to interview people in specialist roles first and then managers and finally the academics. By taking this approach I would develop an understanding of how the organisation planned to approach tasks and then ask the academics to compare this with reality from their perspective. Unfortunately in Square Mile restraints on the time of these individuals prevented me from doing this. One individual was employed part time and found it hard to fit me in during a busy period and the head of the managing diversity division resisted my attempts at making contact and organising a meeting (even though previously at a conference she agreed to support my project in any way she could). In fact she only responded once I had confirmed interviews from the Pro Vice Chancellor, Pro Dean and Dean of Faculty and with a specialist in another area of equality and diversity in her institution. Whether this was a question of checking my credibility as a researcher or keeping clear/clean of the research I do not know. The distance that she projected was not typical of specialists who mostly took on the typical characteristics of liberal humanistic individuals with an interest in helping others (Burrett, 2002).

People like talking about themselves, and I found academics in particular enjoyed flexing their knowledge and being given a platform to express their own views about their everyday experience. The interview seemed almost to be therapeutic to some, who seemed far more cheerful after the discussion (reflecting also my interview technique).

Notes were taken after each interview relating to the general impression I had of the staff member and their attitude towards the topic. I also recorded details about their room and my reception by them. I took field notes in each of the settings to develop a general record of the atmosphere of the institution and the different ways of approaching university life. These notes detailed my own experiences in unofficial meetings with people and observations of the building. For example at Square Mile on every notice board there were posters for students on different support networks, work experience placements and other opportunities. In contrast there were no staff common rooms and I found academics were often in cramped shared offices. Offices were spread throughout the building between lecture rooms with the effect that staff and students were always passing each other in corridors and on stairs.

## Transcription

There are many different methods for transcribing data differing with the particular focus of the study. For example in some linguistic analyses (such as Serkhanea et al., 2007) speech is transcribed to include the phonetic sounds in talk. In discourse analytic research a close study of 'language in use' is carried out requiring Jefferson's system of transcription (Taylor, 2001a). As my own research was more concerned with the content of speech I chose to use a basic style of transcription that noted direct speech and overt emotional signs such as laughter, and pitch. By recording these emotional signs I got an impression of what topics were taboo or disputed, enabling me to understand the stance of the speaker on re-reading the transcripts.

Transcripts were generally between fifteen and twenty five pages long. Initial themes that became pertinent in transcription were noted down for further analysis.

## Section Three — Analysing the data

The transcripts were read and re-read and themes were coded and marked on the text using the NVivo qualitative analysis package (an example of the transcription coding is given in Appendix 3). I found the NVivo programme very useful in managing the thirty two interview transcripts because of its ability to sort texts by their coding so all occurrences could be checked against each other. Also using a computer based software package makes the process a lot neater and less demanding of space than using paper and pen.

Many themes were noted but dropped when checking back through the data for their common occurrence (as discussed by Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p.167). Although this was a comparative study it was important that themes that were raised in one setting and not in the other were still fully discussed (Becker, 2000). In case study research the case is viewed as a whole and not reliant on any comparison (Becker, 2000).

A focus on identity was elicited by my original research question and so my reading of the data. Language is viewed as both practice and reification, each central in the negotiation of meaning necessary for daily life and identity performance (as discussed in Chapter Two). Youdell (2006), discussing Judith Butler's work, writes about the performativity of language, as the discursive practice that enacts or produces what it names. Post-structuralist writers, like Youdell, unzip essentialist discourses, considering the un- reality of identity, how it is based in certain representations of truth. Yet I had to make the interviewees' representations of identity coherent, pulling out a linear analysis of references to the self and equality from a huge amount of data. The requirements of producing a thesis encouraged a filtering and concentration of evidence, rather than listening to these silences in the

data and complex linkages. Like Derrida's explanation of the shifting voice, all uses of the voice are incomplete so how can a coherent document be written?

Once themes had been recognised, I started to read around the literature on the area, helping to form answers to my questions or writing further questions for future research. As argued by Charmaz and Mitchell (2001), my work was not and could not be purely grounded in the data: I came to the transcriptions with some initial understandings of the context of higher education and the issues that staff might raise, which is how I was able to develop the interview schedule. 'Analysis does not mean a naive or un-theorised investigation in which the researcher looks directly to material to see what is 'there'' (Taylor, 2001b, p.318); theorisation is an important part of the research and I constantly referred back to the literature to develop my ideas during the analysis. I retrieved statements from the interview on how staff positioned themselves and their work and how they rendered these stories intelligible; as I understood more about how the sector works and academics' experiences, new points of interest and tensions in the discourses arose for further analysis. Studying higher education was a great benefit in this, being able to observe and ask questions of those around me to understand the nuances in the transcriptions; helping me see the normal as abnormal (Becker, 1973).

There are multiple standpoints from which a researcher can analyse their data, each privileging different aspects of the context. I agree that being explicit about my location can produce more meaningful results than proposing that I am neutral. Location is affected by previous knowledge and experience and the conscious position one takes on the topic. Taking a standpoint for the research has been accused of running the risk of "an abandonment of research in favour of the production of propaganda" (Foster et al., 1996, p.178). Researchers who refer to their own political beliefs in framing their research project come under criticism for being unscientific and biased, making assertions without

proof (Rex and Tomlinson, 1979), although this notion of objectivity as unbiased has been debunked elsewhere (Quinn, 2000; Neal, 1998). However I did not come to the research with a strong concern for social justice, which would necessitate a particular position to be taken in collecting and analysing the data, not least because I found it unclear who the underdog was in this context. I suppose that more accurately I came to the research with an ethical/ philosophical question of how changing student and institutional cultures influences the work of academics and how this challenges or supports their commitment to student support. My own position was developed from reading the literature and moving between it and my data to make sense of what I read, which clarified my critical realist position, that there is a reality out there to be grasped but that it is so multifaceted that this would be nearly impossible for an individual to achieve. There is no "view from above [only] the joining of partial views and halting voices" (Haraway, 1991, p.197).

Without indulging in too much navel gazing (Denzin and Lincoln, 2001, p. 10), I am still unclear as to how my own background has influenced my reading of respondents' personal accounts. I understand that my own knowledge is partial and locatable rather than transcendent (Clifford, 1986) however my own location was as a passive observer until I took up the project to understand how academics were experiencing the changes. With each new interpretation I was offered, my knowledge developed, so that I was not located in one spot but could communicate different understandings (Quinn, 2000). Yet I did not choose what standpoint I took up, I am reflexive of the understandings that I drew but the story that I have told is still not my own: it is the respondent's. Like a 'grounded theoretical' approach, the lines of my research were drawn from the issues that respondents themselves reported as important, although I recognise that my 'hearing' was not impartial but rather influenced by my prior and developing knowledge. The social situatedness of the research was not value neutral, and to separate these values from the research (as Foster et al., 1996, suggest) is impossible.

The context has been shaped by dominant cultural values creating the basis of norms.

When carrying out an analysis it is important to be reflexive of one's influence. I analysed staff responses, being reflexive of their own working practices in their institutions from the perspective of one who is also working in the institution and having been a student and also a teacher. I am thus aware that my own experiences with students may also have helped to inform my questioning of academics. Or perhaps more to the point I come to the research with certain biases because of my experience in my institution. I have only attended Cardiff University and this has likely affected how I view other organisations, using Cardiff as a benchmark. This meant I had to take special care in researching the background of the study sites and the influences on their culture and goals. I should not have presumed anything about how they are run based on my experiences of Cardiff University. In the HE sector there is a huge amount of diversity because of the level of freedom that universities have been afforded in the past and that have thus supported certain developments in institutional cultures.

## Evaluation

As I have already described, this research is both 'situated and contingent' (Taylor, 2001). The claims made are based on a specific time and place and with particular participants and so the conclusions cannot have the status of an 'enduring truth'. Furthermore as a qualitative method of enquiry has been applied, the idea that the conclusions can be held up against some external evaluatory framework and described as 'valid' becomes debateable – the crisis of legitimation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Still, certain benchmarks have been agreed among researchers that assure some level of legitimacy. For example, Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) note coherence, fruitfulness and

transparency among these. These things can be judged by the reader, such as: whether the claims form a coherent discussion relating to the data, whether the analysis is fruitful and has a framework that can provide new explanations, and whether the recording of the analysis are clear so that the reader can judge the researcher's interpretations. These conventions suggest a commonly used technique for displaying the data using excerpts and detailed explanations of where patterns are identified (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002) so that evaluations can be made by the reader.

The unique position of PhD research on academics in higher education is that the reader, who is also the assessor, is a practitioner in the field themselves. As such I recognise that my description of the context of the research and interpretations that I draw from the data may be evaluated by the reader, who can attempt to connect the findings with their own context and 'imagine whether they would yield the same data if replicated in their context' (Haigh, 2004, p.2).

I recognise that as my own experiences will affect my judgement, it is important to be reflexive of how these have worked; recognising that other researchers may have picked up different nuances in the talk with interviewees and indeed the discussion itself will have gone in different directions. In this respect the data is not replicable: a different researcher may not get the same results. But this strong concern for replicability of the data is reflected in more positivist readings (Taylor, 2001; Paechter, 2005) and such standardisation is not a goal of this research. Similarly in conceptualising the results the different individual 'attributes and perspectives' (Schofield, 2000, p.71) of the researcher will bear on how the evidence is used — linking it to other knowledge.

There are a number of problems associated with judging the validity of interview data, due to multi-voicedness, the nature of truth and talk, and the co-production of knowledge, as described in section one. Talk is an interactive process (Wetherell and Potter, 1992): the interviewer's

questions naturally shape the respondents' answers as do reactions to those answers, again necessitating the reflexivity of the researcher. I know that I would nod and give affirmative reactions to what the interviewees said in order to create better rapport with the interviewee. But my judgement was that by making respondents feel confident about giving their own viewpoint I served the objectives of the research and allowed more detailed responses to my questions.

Although I am working with the language of social construction and therefore the idea of representation as the most obvious way that things come into being, I cannot easily marry this to an understanding of the structural realities that boundary and interweave this basis of perception. Am I writing about re-forming the representation that academics and specialists have offered? By adding another layer of representation to that already in place, I can create no clearer a picture of reality, of what is happening; writing stories about stories. But by gathering stories together and looking for common suggestions, for patterns, can a glimpse of an organising principle be ascertained? Would that organising principle be closer to a reality than the stories that it is hidden opaquely within? Post structuralism has called for social scientists to give up truth seeking and turn to uncovering the political processes which exercise power. For my own part I have noted those turns in narratives which have structured the responses, understanding how these are linked to the institutional discourse.

## Issues and criticisms

In my initial meeting with the Head of Faculty in Square Mile to discuss the research there was some debate over how a comparative case study would work when one institution was based in London. The London Factor (InVivo coding) was debated. At the core of this debate was that the unique position of London universities was based on the city itself, its diversity and distinctiveness affecting both staff and student

experiences. Elsewhere the London Factor has been described as creating broader student intakes due to the affect of:

> the capital having more universities – so that young people could easily live at home while studying.... In addition the benefits of graduate education were more visible – it was easy to see graduates with jobs and money.... The presence of graduates in a community is one of the key characteristics of neighbourhoods with the highest participation rates, not just household income...
>
> [Quote from interview with Mr Corver in Macleod (2005)].

In economic terms it refers to an inexplicable factor that affects various calculations (Melville, 2006) or as associated with a high cost of living (Dame Roberts in Pickstock, 2006).

As I have stated before, each institution is unique in its history, aims and many other factors and as such each case would have to be considered in light of the information known about its specific circumstances. I felt that as long as I was reflexive of these influences, and recorded the impact that they had on responses, that the London Factor would not skew the results; it would just be written in to the analysis of the data.

## Section Four — Description of the sites

## Square Mile University

Square Mile University was first established in the late 19th century as an education institution specialising in technical skills. From its inception the overarching aims of the institution were the 'promotion of the industrial skill, general knowledge, health, and well being of young men

and women belonging to the poorer classes...'[7]. The institution was made a polytechnic in the 1970s, combining a number of different colleges under the new title. Lack of integration between these schools marked the life of the institution over the years to come with lack of enthusiasm for interdisciplinary development. Through its development as a polytechnic its original mission was left unhindered, although the established mission of Square Mile was elaborated to include women, mature students and people from ethnic minorities who were and are those affected by disadvantage both economically and educationally as targeted in its founding charter. A student welfare team was employed from 1972 and the university had developed formal codes for equal opportunities early in the 1980s, informed by years of practice. Square Mile's reputation has successfully enabled it to attract a very diverse body of staff. Into the 1990s, with the unification of the sector on the horizon, there was much debate within the institution as to whether it should further build on its strong research reputation and emphasise research more in contrast to teaching. Research was supported by senior managers but as the context of HE changed, with the doubling of size of the sector after the 1992 Act, the university had to fit into a niche in the market and teaching became the main focus of its brand. In the early 21st century the university experienced a very difficult financial period. Large numbers of staff redundancies had to be made to keep the institution afloat and among other casualties was the student counselling service which was closed. The institution was restructured in the last few years with the creation of four large faculties, spread widely across the city on three campuses. The Arts and Social Sciences Faculty resided in a number of interconnected Victorian Buildings. Staff offices were spread across many disjointed corridors and hollows.

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[7] I have not included the reference details here as they would compromise the anonymity of the institutions involved.

## Northern Lights University

Northern Lights University had its origins in a medical college opened in 1834. Gradually other subjects were added to the college and in 1963 Northern Lights became a university in its own right, previously having been supported by another Redbrick institution to award degrees. The institution developed its strength as a place of academic excellence through a focus on research; 'academics coming to the university have always been very committed to research and the importance of increasing not just imparting knowledge'. The university has struggled through many periods of financial difficulty and relied upon its academics to draw on a sense of collegiality when working conditions deteriorated through lack of resources. The university has tried to maintain the collegiality of its staff by assuring them job security if not good working conditions. Relying on philanthropic generosity of local businessmen, it has also developed strong links with the local and its image is as the University of the North.

The written histories of Northern Lights mostly focus on the architectural or medical school's development, and there is not much reference to the university's mission for its students and their education. A number of steps were taken to provide support for the students but this was not presented as a central feature of the university's image. In 1920 a tutorial system for all undergraduate students was set up, based on the Oxbridge provision. The city council provided a full time social worker for the university population in 1974, complimenting the students union's full time welfare adviser. There is not much recorded about any early attempts to broaden participation. In 1992 the university responded to government calls to increase numbers in university with the, still ongoing, COOPERATE outreach programme. Pupils from selected schools in Northern Lights and surrounding districts are invited to attend a summer school and on completion are offered university places at

lower entrance requirements. This fitted in with its local identity as a university for the North. However, today the mix of students in the university population is still very much dominated by Southern public school pupils, with sharp rises in the numbers of international students. The institution has restructured in the last few years creating three large faculties of varied departments. Ongoing managerial rationalising of provision has also seen the language support centre privatised. The Arts and Social Sciences Faculty is very spread out across the university grounds – staff commented that this disjointedness affected the efficacy of the restructuring.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have recorded how my experiences in gathering and interpreting the data were informed by my position in the discursive field of each interview. In each institution this was different, being positioned as a student in my own university (for the pilot study) and as a visiting academic in Square Mile (with my own desk space and becoming involved in the day to day life of workers there), and again as a day researcher parachuting into the institution in Northern Lights. These different placements altered the discussions staff had with me and the information they thought to share.

In the next chapter I turn to my analysis of the recent policy at national and institutional levels that structures the student equality agenda for practitioners. Through this analysis I take my focus on identity a step further to consider how academics and their work is connected to the equality agenda in these policy documents.

# CHAPTER FOUR – The Academic in National and Institutional Policy

## Section One — Introduction

> *The novelty of ...(education reform) is that it does not simply change what people as educators, scholars and researchers do, it changes who they are.*
> (Ball, 2003, p.215)

In the last two chapters I have set out my methodological stance placing my work amongst post-structuralist theorising on identity. I outlined the techniques used in data collection and analysis reflecting on how this placed me as researcher and those I researched. In this chapter I consider recent policy shaping the equality agenda in HEIs, and how it speaks of the role of academics. Policy can control the choices the individual is able to make in self representation by setting the overall framework for the sector — shaping the context, as well as developing processes of micromanaging the individual. By providing dominant discourses through which the person must make sense of themselves and others, the perspective of the individual is influenced through the policy agenda. As Deem and colleagues (2005, p.17) write, the university's policies '[constitutes] the institution's intervention to (re)shape, regulate and codify cultural norms, modes of conduct and the distribution of opportunities within the institution'.

I start this chapter by considering my theoretical understanding of what policy is and does in institutions, drawing on the work of Foucault, Ball and Ahmed. I then move on to consider national policy that has shaped the student equality agenda in HEIs over the last fifteen years. From this

legislation a number of guidelines have been drawn up that place these requirements within an HE context — these I analyse to develop an understanding of their representation of the academic's role in HEIs. These national guidelines must be further translated to be made operational in organisations and finally, to capture the nuances of these reformulations, I consider institutional level documents, contrasting each of the case study sites.

The effect of the combination of new managerialist forms of governance and developments in the style of the equality legislation have brought about unintended consequences in the unique context of each university. This, when taken in the broader picture of changes to the sector over the last ten years (the reduction in funding per student coupled with the increase in student numbers, government promotion of third way activity and the RAE), has meant the equality agenda has fallen on a shifting landscape. There is simultaneously more and less going on than the policy makers may have considered. As I find in my reading of the case study institutions' mission statements, learning and teaching strategies and access agreements, the framing and sentiment of the equality agenda in each institution is very different.

A renewed focus on equality in HEIs has been brought about by the last ten years of legislating. In the field of equality and human rights there have been a number of Acts of Parliament passed that shape the public sector's approach to particular groups in the population. The new turn in legislation is toward proactive (rather than reactive) accommodation to provide for the needs of all learners. The institution must be able to demonstrate that they have tried to the best of their ability to adjust for students' needs. To fulfil these requirements universities have had to produce a barrage of paperwork to show transparency in their processes and assessment of their own performance. Yet it is the actions of staff that are the real targets in this guidance.

## CHAPTER FOUR – The Academic in National and Institutional Policy

It appears that the equality and diversity agenda has been an area used by the government to increase its control of the HE sector, partly through the production of reams of legislation that direct the actions of universities, and partly through the assessment of institutions, encouraging a performative reaction from these organisations. The emphasis is on the government as regulator rather than provider — controlling the field of judgement and so establishing how the HE market operates (Ball, 2004). The moralistic discourses surrounding the area have opened up the path for the intervention of government and its control of resources because the issues cannot easily be denied without placing the denier as morally reprehensible, thus making the university more permeable to outside influences (Kogan, 2000).

The nature of policy tends towards setting goals and stipulating processes to achieve these goals. Yet with the equality and diversity agenda, catering for a myriad of individual differences in a combination of multiple identities, there is a requirement to avoid these declarations of a final resolution. Instead the work must be viewed as an ongoing process of 'continuous debate and mutual education' (Weeks, 1990, p.99). What is needed is the creation of an ongoing discussion rather than prescriptive remedies (like Habermas's ideal speech situation; Habermas, 1989) — shifting problems need flexible solutions. Put within a theoretical model, Bourdieu describes the ongoing reorganisation of the field to maintain hierarchy — attempts to alter the hierarchy therefore must also be ongoing. There is no final solution.

The use of policy analysis has been widespread in education. Focusing on the area of equality in HEIs, Deem, Morley and Tlili's (2005) study has been very useful in informing my own research. As their work attests, it is important to build up an understanding of the context of each case study and how equality is framed and promoted in each setting. Theirs was a HEFCE funded piece of research, assessing the progress of equality in HEIs amongst staff members. For this research a total of six HEIs were sampled across England, Scotland and Wales and members

of academic and non-academic staff were interviewed (one to one and in focus groups) to discuss the equality policies in their institutions. They carried out a critical discourse analysis of each institution's equal opportunities policy, drawing on the genre, style, audience addressed, representation of social identities and inter-textual meanings in policy. From their analysis they reported that policy fell into the promotional, memorandum and legal genres speaking of staff responsibilities and obligations, and institutional promises and commitments. I will refer to their study throughout this section.

## Section Two — What policy is and does

With the complexity and variability of the impact of policy, it is necessary to recognise the action that policy performs, beyond the content recorded. This can be done in a number of ways. As Ozga (1999) considers, there are three main types of policy analysis: the reformist social administrative approach that focuses primarily on the top-down implementation of legislation; the dominant technicist policy analysis approach that is concerned with the effectiveness of solutions to government defined problems; and the critical social science theoretical approach that aims to increase our understanding of how policy operates as it does and how it impacts on aspects of equality and social justice. In this chapter I take elements of each, tracing the reworking of legislation through different institutions, drawing on the work of Foucault (1974; 1977; 1980), Ball (1987; 1994; 2003; 2004; 2006) and Ahmed (2006; 2007a; 2007b; 2008) to theoretically underpin my reading, and in considering the impact and limitations of policy.

Foucault has been drawn upon by a number of policy researchers because of his understanding of discourse and individual agency. For Foucault power is not owned, power is produced and exercised in discursive practices, described as if it were a net rather than emanating

from one source. The individual is not viewed as a fully autonomous being because they often do not examine their own involvement in producing the web of discursive themes, those legitimating principles that develop and maintain the discourse. Discourse is not just considered here as words; discourse refers to the way in which discursive practices are social practices with material effects. Thus policy documents are read as texts that present certain views of reality. The way in which policies are developed, how they represent reality, are spoken about and thought about, is the product of dominant discursive frameworks or discourses — with certain ways of thinking and talking about reality (Foucault, 1977). These dominant discourses are the product of social, historical and other structural influences, which Foucault further elaborates through his genealogical method. The development and maintenance of such dominant discursive frameworks shapes the way in which educators and others think about education and the practice of educating.

The micro-political approach taken forward by the sociologist Stephen Ball considers how policy is taken up in the local context (of schools) and interpreted and engaged with in various ways dependent on that local context (Ball, 1994), and individual agency. This de-emphasises the structural constraints on policy implementation and places more emphasis on the actors involved, making interviewing and observation of the organisations' members a key research method. From a micro-political perspective, Ball (1987) tries to reveal the ongoing processes of governance, conflict and compromise involved in policy operation in education. Power relations in the institution become highlighted when considering how dominance and subordination are achieved and maintained; how individuals position themselves within the discourse, not just working within the conceptualisation of a dominance resistance binary but extending this to understand the complex ways that policy is decoded (Ball, 1994). 'A plurality of readers must produce a plurality of readings' (Cobb, cited in Taylor 1997, p.26) and so attention turns to the production of meaning by readers, informed by the policy at the base of

the system — not just making use of a top down model. These issues feed into discussions of the limitations of policy and support the necessity of my interview based research method.

Ahmed positions her work between feminist theory, critical race and postcolonial theory and queer studies. Her research interest is in 'how difference, otherness and strangeness become "properties" of bodies through actions, words, perceptions, feelings, and judgements' (Ahmed, 2007b). One strand of Ahmed's work has brought her to a self-reflexive consideration of the university and its policies toward diversity and equality. She has carried out a number of pieces of research which focus on how policies produced in universities influence the equality practice they supposedly inform. Studying university documents and speaking with the staff that produce them, Ahmed has taken a loose discourse analytic approach to draw out the effect of phrases. From this understanding of policy as action Ahmed comes to her theory of the non-performativity of policy — that policy is taken as evidence of the action that it is trying to achieve rather than affecting cultures and actions within the institution (Ahmed, 2007a).

In her work, Ahmed tracks how policy travels around the institution, policy as processes which continue after the text has been produced. Policy, in my work, is considered as an action (Deem et al., 2005) that can shape identity directly and indirectly, in an ongoing process of engagement and interpretation. What it means to be an academic and to lecture and do research are subtly changed by the processes of reform (Ball, 2003, p. 218). The relationship between staff and students is directed; the content of teaching and the forms of delivery are tailored according to these prescriptions. The surveillance culture established through bureaucratic processes becomes internalised into self management, demands becoming naturalised, not questioned and resisted. Through this linguistic act the university seeks to control its subjects, by representing a truth and logic that tries to shape actors within the institution.

CHAPTER FOUR – The Academic in National and Institutional
Policy

Peters and colleagues (2000) describe that in education, power is
exercised through a form of politics in which managers manage and
mediate the meaning of organisational life in the context of policy.
Policy creates the parameters in which power can be exercised and
certain contexts created. The language used in policy is underwritten by
certain conceptual understandings and histories. For example equality
and diversity, as a term, has gained credence over the last seven years
and overtaken the use of equal opportunities, equality and diversity now
being the preferred term used in national policies and guidelines. The
phrase supposedly reflects the benefits of both treating everyone equally
and valuing their different abilities and needs. Yet this has been linked
to a business case rationale and economic imperatives for inclusion
(Ross and Schneider, 1992) that creates a tension within the discourse on
individual support versus business interest. Further it distances itself
from the negative associations that have been connected to the phrase
equal opportunities (Ahmed, 2006).

Terms used in social justice legislating are often very broad (for instance
'equal opportunities') possessing an 'elasticity', which produces the
effect that they can be understood in competing ways; 'often concealing
competing ideologies and a diversity of interests for those involved in
policy-making and implementation processes' (Neal, 1998, p.65).
Ahmed's (2006) research on university race equality policies found that
the term 'diversity' is associated with whatever is new and allows
practitioners to align themselves and their units with the existing values
of their universities, rather than government dictates on inclusion. Given
this, diversity can mean potentially anything: specialists have to reattach
the term 'diversity' to other more defined terms such as equality and
justice if it is to do anything. Morley (2003b) writes that institutions
using these terms ventriloquise the demands of the government, the
wording of these documents becomes more important than the issues
they touch upon. Policies made at institutional level become reactive
rather than proactive responding to government legislation (Deem et al.,

2005). The rhetoric can be used without any kind of ideological conviction — whilst the aim is really cultural change, the material demands of requiring institutional policy production, results in arguably little impact.

Policies can be viewed as fabrications, being selections among various possible representations of the organisation (Ball, 2004, p.148). Drawing on Foucault's understanding of discourse, policy representations are versions of an organisation which do not exist – they are not 'outside the truth' but neither do they render simply true or direct accounts – they are produced purposely to be accountable (Ball, 2004, p.148). Submitting to the requirements of performativity, if not the content, of the legislation — the point becomes to present the institution in a certain way, not to grapple with how to achieve change and decide what needs changing within the university.

So policy can be viewed as non-performative, that policy in itself becomes taken as an action that suffices to conclude the organisations' attempts at meeting government demands (Ahmed, 2008). Institutions put a lot of effort into the writing of these representations, window dressing their institutions. Producing good quality documents to present themselves as successful, rather than actually being reflective of their shortcomings and need for improvement. Performance is made central to the university's understanding of the action it must take. And so the university's response to the legislation is both guided by agency in controlling their own cultural responses, and yet subordinated by the processes of this display.

Ball (2006) suggests researchers need to see how clusters of policies exercise power through a co-production of truth and knowledge. The intertextuality of policy is analysed for combined influences; education links into many other activity fields. For example in one of my case study sites, Square Mile, the tension between widening participation strategies and other government policies created difficulties; the funding

regime could act as a disincentive for those trying to recruit a more
diverse student body who may also bring higher drop out rates (Shaw et
al., 2007). Square Mile was penalised for its high drop out rate which,
within the university, was not seen as a fault of the institution but a
product of widening participation.

Policy does not just work as a representation of the institution from
within to the outside but also reaching inside the organisation to affect
the individual actors it speaks of. Foucault's theorising on discourse and
the operation of power usefully identifies how policy both shapes and
obscures the work that is done on the individual. 'Discourses are not
about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in
the practice of doing so conceal their own invention' (Foucault, 1974,
p.49). Discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also
about who can speak, when and where and with what authority; power is
viewed as produced and exercised in discursive practices (Foucault,
1978).

> We do not speak the discourse, it speaks us. We are the
> subjectivities, the voices, the knowledge, the power relations
> that a discourse constructs and allows. We do not 'know'
> what we say, we 'are' what we say and do.
> (Ball, 2006, p.48)

Discourse, for Foucault (1978, p.18), is 'constituted by the difference
between what one could say correctly at one period...and what is
actually said'. The questioning of silences as well as what is expressed
becomes important when studying the discourse supported by policy.

In this sense academics are constructed by the policies, taking up the
positions created by them, making sense of what takes place in the social
field. Policies are thus both constructed and deconstructed by the
discourse (Gale, 1999), the academic as coder and decoder.

## Section Three — The National Legislation

Before moving onto an analysis of the national guidelines produced to inform HEIs practice in the area of equality, I will make a few points about the style and content of the legislation from which these guidelines are drawn.

Recent legislation and guidance for HEIs has been framed by the need to include all groups of our society and support their human rights. As Sarah Lewis comments, this extensive structure has pushed the equality agenda up the list of importance in HEIs, becoming an unignorable issue for managers.

> **Sarah Lewis, Square Mile, Pro Dean Faculty**
>
> It has made it easier for people like us who in the past, you know, in some areas who kind of have strongly cared about it, because we can actually point to the law, in a way that you couldn't twenty years ago. Right? So that the legal framework actually makes it easier because you can say to a particular faculty or department that sort of said this is not for us. You can say yes it is for you because there is now a law and we have to account for it. And the law requires now all these, all kinds of things...But in a sense it lends power to people who in some ways have been involved in this work and I find that helps.

Since 1995 the statutory legislation listed below in Table 1 has been passed (see Appendix 4 for a brief summary of the scope of each piece), picking out six strands of individual diversity — gender, sexual orientation, race, religion and belief, disability, and age. Amongst educationalists it is a concern that some key groups have not been

included that are at the heart of injustices in HE, such as looked after children and asylum seekers (Steer et al., 2007). The selectivity of worthy difference is structured by the politics of policy, heard in the silences as well as the audibly debated decisions (Lingard and Ozga, 2007). These new regulations come after recognition that prior legislation (for example the Race Relations Act 1976, Sex Discrimination Act 1975) has not fulfilled its goals, and so a new approach has been developed that further reinforces the cause through legal structures.

## Table 1

**Disability Discrimination Act** (1995)

**Human Rights Act** (1998)

**Race Relations Amendment Act** (2000)

**Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act** (2001)

**Disability Discrimination Amendment Regulations** (2003)

**Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations** (2003)

**Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations** (2003)

**Gender Recognition Act** (2004)

**Disability Discrimination Act** (2005)

**Employment Equality (Age) Regulations** (2006)

**Racial and Religious Hatred Act** (2006)

**Equality Act** (2006)

In the legislation the recognition of individual human rights is given power through the exacting structure of the regulations. National approaches to equality through the UK liberal welfare system, and assimilation approaches to citizenship, have affected the shape and timing of these equality policies (Kirton and Greene, 2005). The current emphasis has come hand in hand with calls for full participation

in education to meet economic need (Leitch, 2006) and a thinly
disguised neo-liberalism beneath calls for social justice (Archer, 2007;
Phillips, 1999).

As the multiple "strands" of difference have been recognised there also
comes a consciousness of the complexity of overlapping and multiple
identities that may lead to compounded discrimination. Although each
strand has been dealt with under a new piece of legislation, the general
message is for the promotion of a culture of inclusion and positive
regard for all people. To tackle culture an institution wide policy is
endorsed, promoting not the assimilation of 'diverse students' to the
norms of the university but a change at the heart of institutions to
valuing all individuals (Shaw et al., 2007). Prior models of differential
provision leave the rest of the institution untouched and the issues
further buried. In addition, to strengthen the case to promote a culture of
inclusion, the university is viewed as a single body in the legislation,
once one person is aware of need, the institution as a whole is viewed as
knowing and becomes liable.

The format for these acts is to outline the general and specific duties that
public sector institutions must abide by. Looking at the new wave of
legislation that has been brought in over the last six years, there appears
to be a changing focus from minimum compliance, with a letter of the
law approach, to cultural change with a spirit of the law approach,
asking that institutions follow a programme for improving relations
between all groups. In these policy justifications there appear to be clear
links to human capital theory and globalisation, the former promoting
education for instrumental ends and the latter focusing on the widening
of institutional boundaries in a new era of production. Of course there
are a myriad of inter-related influences on policy formation, some more
visible than others. For example the Stephen Lawrence case in 1998,
and plethora of related work, gave an incisive message to those in power
that institutional culture could be discriminatory. The Macpherson
Report (1999), resulting from the ensuing public enquiry, recognised

that discrimination can take the form of direct or indirect action, laying the ground for a new direction in policy as self management.

The main development on prior legislation is the requirement of a specific duty to produce impact assessments that can clearly present how successful institutional changes have been. These are to be used to update formal equality policies and to provide a source of evidence for the institution when under inspection to show that they have been making due effort to incorporate the new requirements. Impact assessments create the force for change through demanding more bureaucratic processes of surveillance. The production of such data adheres to positivist new managerial rules for truth claims. Yet they may also induce a flexible, individualised structure for change. The case study sites were in the process of managing the developments whilst my research was being carried out, so the results of these changes were not yet evident at the time of my fieldwork.

A number of auditing bodies, such as the QAA and OFFA, have been given the remit to enforce these developments. The general threat that institutions will be audited ensures that they comply with these new demands. This culture of uncertainty and penalties and sanctions has become a foundation to the equality agenda in HEIs, with a continuing threat of penalty leaving institutions and individuals nervous about their actions.

The current legislation appears to support the social model, promoting a change in culture that will both enable the introduction of equality policies and foster a community in which such legislation will hardly be needed because unmanaged social relationships already do the work. Equality must now be mainstreamed into all aspects of university life and be considered in all policy, new and old. Furthermore, recognition of the multiple disadvantages that people can suffer has been a strong force for development of policies and the creation of a united Commission for Equality and Human Rights, although one could

cynically suggest that this was also an economising scheme, by amalgamating the various equality bodies under one commission — rather than purely for reasons of promoting social justice.

Essentialism is dealt with in the policies, through a focus on the interpersonal. The focus on the individual and their voiced needs has tipped the balance toward the individual rather than institution, the power being placed in the hands of, for example, the disabled individual rather than relying on social actors around them. In HEIs this is evident in the focus of guidelines on student-centred learning and provision, which seems unconnected to the reality of the academic teaching environment with mass lecture groups and high tutor – student ratios.

Academics are considered to be frontline staff (Rose, 2006), likely to be approached by students in distress or required to communicate particular support needs (James, 2006). Therefore although the legislation has led to the development of specialist units working on the agenda, the need for information and good practice is represented as dispersed throughout the institution. It is not the job of just a few but of everyone in all parts of the institution and at all appointment levels.

## Section Four — Studying the guidelines

I will now turn to my analysis of the guidance documents.

In my reading of the guidelines and the case study institutions' equality policies, I considered the following questions:

- How is the role of the academic envisaged?
- What do they try to change, what is promoted?
- How is the relationship between the academic worker and the student consumer perceived?

# CHAPTER FOUR – The Academic in National and Institutional Policy

I do not go into an in-depth critical discourse analysis, as has been done elsewhere (Deem et al., 2005), for reasons of space. The equality acts (listed in Table 1 and Appendix 4) that I draw upon have been published since 1995. Each has been interpreted to produce guidance for those specifically working in the higher education sector. The nature of legislation requires that it is written in a very general linguistic style, to be applicable to a wide range of public and private sector bodies with various remits. To make them operational in HEIs these general regulations need to be considered in the specifics of the day to day working of universities. I have therefore chosen to focus on these guidelines rather than carrying out a close reading of the legislative statutes listed. These guidelines have been produced by various government funded bodies: CRE, ECU, EOC, HEFCE, LSDA, SCOP, UUK. Those chosen were aimed at an audience of equality specialists and teaching/academic staff in post compulsory education institutions, and covered the requirements the new legislation made of HEIs and the responsibilities of these two groups. The guidance covers both the personal tutoring and the lecturing role of academics.

In Table 2, below, are listed those guidelines I analysed that were available at the time (October, 2007), ordered according to the legislation that they respond to (see Appendix 4 for a brief outline of each piece of legislation). Far more literature has been produced concerning disability than the other strands of the equality agenda. It may be that the observable needs of these individuals make it a good platform for specialist staff to highlight equality issues from, it may often be visible to staff that change is required to cater for these individuals.

## Table 2

**Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act, Disability Discrimination Amendment Regulations.**

- Supporting learners with mental health difficulties. (James, 2006)

- Disability legislation: practical guidance for academics. (Cavanagh and Dickinson, 2006)

- Do you have a disability – yes or no? Or is there a better way of asking?

- Guidance on disability disclosure and respecting confidentiality. (Rose, 2006)

- Disclosure, confidentiality and passing on information. Guidance for post-16 providers on implementing the Disability Discrimination Act Part 4. (LSC, 2003)

- What's your problem? Working with learners with challenging behaviour. Guidance for colleges and other post-16 education providers on implementing the Disability Discrimination Act. (LSN, 2007)

**The Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations.**

- The gender equality duty and higher education institutions. Guidance for public authorities in England (EOC, 2007).

**Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations.**

- Promoting good campus relations: dealing with hate crimes and intolerance. (UUK, SCOP and ECU, 2005)

**Race Relations Amendment Act.**

- Framework for Equality Policy for Higher Education Institutions. (CRE, 2002a)

- The duty to promote race equality. A guide for further and higher education institutions. (CRE, 2002b)

**General – across strands**

- From elitism to inclusion. Good practice in widening access to higher education. (Woodrow, 1998)

The style of presentation in these guidelines was invariably through case
studies and scenarios. The reason for this is that there are no universal
models to follow in any one situation, and there are innumerable possible
situations, with a variety of viable responses within the legal framework
(Heward and Taylor, 1993, p.76). The understanding is that the law will be
beaten out when cases are brought to the courts to decide.

Interestingly the issue of inequality is not clearly explained in any of the
guidelines. Many skirt over the issues of prior educational experience
and external factors. The lack in diversity of the student body is also
evaded when making institutions develop appropriate policies and
practices in expectation of newcomers. Academics maybe asked to
prepare for unseen and unknown students who may not be on the
horizon of their institutions.

Each of the pieces of guidance commonly made explicit links between
equality issues in lecturers' work with students and good practice.

> *Much of what constitutes support for learners with mental health
> difficulties is actually good teaching and learning, so you will
> probably know most of the 'answers' already; this guide will just
> put it into a context of supporting learners with mental health
> difficulties.*
> (James, 2006, p.3)

By doing this the suggested changes to practice are made difficult to
challenge and could be generalised to all difference between student
learners — a message of normalcy not of special measures. The strong
impression is for an ideal model of the lecturer by which others are
measured. This is a powerful tool. Like a form of ideological control,
of domination, discourses become packed up in "good practice" and
naturalised.

CHAPTER FOUR – The Academic in National and Institutional Policy

A focus on good practice depoliticises the cause making it more palatable for governance strategies; it is no longer linked to radical social movements but to forms of neo-liberal control (Morley and Deem, 2005). Making this an aspect of good practice it embeds it in contractual obligations.

> *Universities and colleges have a duty of care for their students in a number of specific areas including, inter alia, breach of contract and negligence.*
> (UUK, SCOP and ECU, 2005, p.12)

Macfarlane argues (2004) that ethics cannot be reduced to a simple checklist of codes of practice or solutions dictating right and wrong. He suggests that on the one hand, such rule bound responses rob professionals of the essence of their professionalism: the ability to exercise judgement over ethical issues as individuals. And on the other hand, that due to the complexity of real life situations, academics need to have developed a disposition to act appropriately in any given situation (2004, p. 158).

In these guidelines there were few references to rewarding or recognising good practice: the changes and additions to work alluded to standards rather than excellence.

Good practice was considered as judged from above, by general national principles but also giving students the power to grade academic staff. Students' views were given more weight, quantified through student feedback records, which in my case study sites were becoming a strong force for change in departments (see below).

**Desmond Southwick, Northern Lights, Professor History**
Though one or two lecturers, cos History has gone down in the student satisfaction survey here this year... And this has been a very big, it has made a very big mark among the administration,

oh yeh it is a very big deal. And we are not, we have to get back up there. And the difference is infinitesimal. But erhm so we were looking at going through all the uhm student questionnaires from last year to find out, I'm afraid, who the lecturers were who didn't come out very well and erh those lecturers will quietly. And it will be some lecturer, I bet you, there will be some lecturer or other, there maybe more than one with a large course, who is not returning the work fast enough or within the time or turned up late for a lecture or. It'll be something like that...It, it will be something, you know, a sense of don't care, or perceived as don't care.

There is little recognition of the pressures that staff experience. As Desmond Southwick went on to comment:

**Desmond Southwick, Northern Lights, Professor History**

We are bursting at the seams with an intake of, you know what I said two hundred. Uhm courses basically in the first year run at about three hundred.

The relationship between the lecturer/tutor and the student in this good practice model, of the guidelines, did not always seem to reflect an understanding of these constraints experienced by academics.

*Only by engaging in dialogue with the learner can you help them to think through what to expect and what support might be necessary... You might want to consider having enough time available to talk things through without you or the learner feeling rushed, or worrying about the queue of people waiting to be seen; being relaxed, informal and friendly so that the learner does not feel as if they are being 'interviewed' and judged.*

(James, 2006, p.40)

Where the guidance does recognise these constraints, it does not provide a coherent proposal to remedy the issues making the requirements on the lecturer/ tutor seem less certain.

> *Personal tutors can be a vital element in the support structures within HEIs. Regular contact with a student can make it possible to detect changes in behaviour or appearance that may indicate serious problems. Regrettably, the rapid increase in student numbers of the last decade coupled with a reduction in the unit of resource has made a personal tutor system untenable in many institutions. In such cases it is very important that the widest possible range of staff is made aware of the potential risks for students and that other systems are put in place to ensure that institutional contact is maintained on a regular basis.*
>
> *(*UUK, SCOP and ECU, 2005, p.13*)*

The relationship between the academic and the student was represented similarly in each document, with the encouragement of less hierarchical and more open relationships — accentuating the interpersonal.

> *The shift from an authoritarian to a democratic approach must involve listening to learners. Provision should be developed around the stated aims and aspirations of all learners.*
>
> (Rose, 2006, p.11)

The legislation appears to be based on a social, rather than a medical, model of difference. Causes of discrimination are seen as within the institution and its members as they interact with 'different' learners.

> *Promoting mental well being is based on a principle that health is created and lived by people within settings of their everyday life. This has led to the notion of the health promoting university in which the focus is on creating environments that seek to create positive health rather than on the avoidance of ill health.*

(UUK, SCOP, and ECU, 2005, p.17)

A person centred model allows the disabled individual to hold the power rather than relying on the goodwill of others.

> *Knowing the diagnosis of a person tells you nothing about them as a learner. You will only find out what skills they bring by talking to them.*
>
> (James, 2006, p.21)

The separation between emotion and rationality, espoused in academia (Beard et al., 2007), is blurred in these requests for the acknowledgement of the emotional and physical characteristics of the student; the lecturer recognising the whole person they are educating (Mortiboys cited in Beard et al., 2007). Lecturers are involved in students' issues that they, probably, would not have formally had knowledge of.

In the guidance there was an overlap between the kind of relationship a lecturer and student, and tutor and student has, each time the academic being responsive to the student and encouraging interaction.

> *Reasonable adjustments can take the form of either practical or emotional support. Often these kinds of support overlap, but generally practical support will involve very tangible things that you do to change the way that you teach or support learning. Emotional support may involve the less tangible ways in which you build confidence in learners, encourage and motivate learners and help them to feel welcomed and valued.*
>
> (James, 2006, p.44)

This duty of care was both described as practical and emotional within this frame of interpersonal relationship between staff and students, moving away from the bureaucratic responses that policy often

encourages; and walking a tight rope between the therapeutic
relationship and teaching.

> *The second pitfall to avoid is having a paper or a process driven
> exercise, rather than an outcome-driven exercise. Disclosure and
> consent is not merely about ticking boxes, filling forms or
> following the process of a flowchart. It is about fully explaining
> the benefits of disclosure, respecting the rights of the learner to
> confidentiality and thereby dealing with the process of disclosure
> and consent with tact and sensitivity.*
>
> (James, 2006, p.50)

There is some recognition that this approach (using creative ways of
delivering the curriculum to match student learning preferences) may
mean a break away from academics' own models and experience of
assessment. But unquestioningly the new model of best practice
supersedes the old.

> *Try not to project your own values about learning onto learners
> with mental health problems, or any learners. Education and
> academic success may be important to your self esteem and
> status but it may have been a source of anxiety or pain for some
> people, and can lead to worry about failure or unhelpful social
> comparisons.*
>
> (James, 2006, p.39)

Difference is to be supported by the academic, in a process not of the
normalisation of the student by the institution, but the institution
changing to meet the needs of the individual.

Alterations were to be made at a cultural level in the institution, in order
to infiltrate every part of the organisation. "Culture" is not defined but
appears to connect the macro policy management perspective to micro

day to day tasks (Valimaa, 1998); culture as structure, policy and relationships.

> *Do you feel the culture and ethos of your organisation is one*
> *which makes students feel confident in disclosing a disability? An*
> *organisation may have good policies on paper but the real issue*
> *is that they are put to practice.*
>
> (Rose, 2006, p.4)

With references to creating a positive culture for students the boundaries of these interactions were blurred and every action comes under scrutiny.

Another guide recommends universities need to 'develop an institutional ethos of diversity and inclusion, rather than one of selective 'normality' (Woodrow, 1998, p.134).

> *Students require support and an appropriate institutional culture*
> *throughout their engagement with higher education, and not just*
> *from student services when they have a specific problem.*
>
> (UUK, SCOP and ECU, 2005)

The nature of prejudice, as Morley (2006) has usefully considered, is often abstract, occurring in a look or a laugh, not concrete. It is sometimes subconscious and hard to legislate or put a finger on, perhaps residing in the culture of a department or institution. Defining the problem in policy is very hard and so measures to overcome it are even more difficult to implement, the emphasis on culture in the guidance was a blanket reference to these undercover issues.

The university was presented as an interconnected body, with multiple levels of activity linked together and mutual responsibility for the students across all areas.

> *Challenging behaviour cannot be ameliorated by one or two*
> *persons it needs to be a whole organisation response. This*
> *means changes at delivery level but also in organisational policy*
> *and procedural level.*
>
> (LSN, 2007, p.7)

Thus a large responsibility is placed on individual actors to make change
and create positive cultures to underpin the support for learners. Yet by
making equality a cultural issue it becomes everyone's responsibility
whilst nobody's in particular. The logic is that policy can make a
change to organisational cultures and yet the two levels are interactive,
structures can be changed in the right cultural environment and it is
cultures that effect how people think in changing structures (Cockburn,
cited in Farish et al, 1993). By considering the university's own policy
relating to the areas covered by the legislation, below, I highlight how
institutional cultures fragment and translate these imperatives.

## Section Five — Studying university level documents

> 'The university is its documents rather than its buildings'
> (Prior cited in Ahmed, 2007b, p.2).

University level policy documents write the image of the institution into
being, creating it in linguistic reality. By looking at the university's
policy documents one starts to bring the legislation into working reality
by colouring it with the individual institutional cultures and interests.
The different habituses of universities are reflected in how these policy
perspectives have gained a foothold and are reiterated at university level.
Policy takes a complicated route from publication to coal face
performance, and the interpretation of individual organisations can place
a very different spin on how policy is written. Between institutional
policy and action there is again a 'curious gap between hope and

happening' (Kenway et al., 1998, p. 1). In this section I compare the case study institutions' policies that refer to the equality agenda in the organisation.

I consider a number of university documents from each of the case study sites: general equality and diversity policies, the mission statements, access agreements, learning and teaching strategies and staff handbooks – that were available online. The general equality policy documents and access agreements broadly represent an account of the action the university is taking and will carry out to support access for learners at an institutional level. They appear to be written partly for external assessment bodies but also with an aim of informing and inspiring the university employees. The mission statement of each institution outlines the goals of the university as a whole (which may or may not be equality focused) to inform and inspire employees. This document has been included to judge how the student equality agenda has been taken up in these official representations, outside of the purely equality and diversity oriented documents. The learning and teaching strategies and staff handbooks bring the analysis to other working documents in the university that supposedly inform academic practice on the ground, either directly as with the handbook, or through lines of management (as with the learning and teaching strategy). Since it was agreed with the case study participants that every effort would be made to protect their anonymity in the research, I will not quote directly from these documents; instead I have paraphrased them in my discussion below.

The production of these policies has been determined by the growing requirement for performance through the bureaucratic surveillance of institutions. These requirements have become statutory with, for example, the publication of specific duties to produce schemes on disability. Mission statements have become wide spread since the 1980s when management practices began to change to fit business sector models (Miller cited in Davies and Glaister, 1996, p.269). These give a

focus to the organisation's activities and a rationale for how they share out their resources (strategic planning).

Square Mile presented its documents in a clearly defined area of the website that covered all the strands in an eye catching format. Short summaries were provided of the general message to staff and student users and it was presented in a very user friendly layout. Northern Lights also had the information available in one area of the website but not summarising key points for staff and student groups separately or in such an aesthetically pleasing design.

Like Deem and colleagues (2005), I found that the institutions produced very different equality statements both in style and volume. Square Mile had one short document, which did not delineate clearly between each strand of the equality agenda. This was called the equality and diversity policy reflecting the new terminology that has gained currency in the area. They also produced a (legally mandatory) disability equality scheme, but the race equality scheme and gender equality scheme (also mandatory) were not clearly accessible on the university website. Northern Lights had one Equal Opportunities Policy ("old" terminology) and also separate policies for race, disability and gender. Here the disability equality scheme was by far the most detailed, and also most strongly focused on students as compared with the other statements (as Deem et al., 2005 also found).

Square Mile's Equality and Diversity Statement described the need to develop excellence in the area of equality of opportunity for staff and students as fundamental to the organisation's success and image. It briefly commented on the range of its remit not discriminating on the grounds of sexual orientation, race, care responsibility, HIV status, trade union activity, age, ethnic or national origin, disability, marital status, political or religious belief. The goals were brief and broad, presented in bullet points, with most emphasis on the development of policy and procedure through impact assessment and infrastructure. The disability

equality scheme followed a generic structure (also found in Northern
Lights) but an emphasis on disability through the social model supported
its focus, not on statistics and benchmarks, but cultural and social
support and inclusion of disabled individuals. Thus the document took
on a very different form from that of Northern Lights, being shorter and
with statements relating to sweeping cultural representations (hard to
back up in statistical data).

Northern Lights' general equal opportunities statement also covers this
broad range of difference (not HIV), but outlines the responsibilities of
particular management groups and committees. It speaks of punishment
for non-compliance with an ethos of equal treatment for all and
mechanisms for reporting breaches. The emphasis here is far more on
strong management, the stick rather than the carrot.

The gender, disability and race equality schemes each take a similar
format, outlining the university's mission statement (even though this
does not strongly orient the university to a focus on equality) methods of
monitoring the institution, findings (based on quantitative data), and
future action to be taken. The gender equality scheme was nearly totally
focused on staff equality. For the disability equality scheme clear
appendices were included to outline the provision of support for disabled
staff and students. Each document used a phrase describing Northern
Lights as a 'community of communities', reflecting its diversity and
recognition of the different groups within, and focused on creating
respect between these groups.

In my institutional case study sites these Mission Statements have been
crystallised into short snappy paragraphs that are used on promotional
literature such as the student prospectus. The style of this text was both
as promotional for external readers and organisational communication.

Both institutions make some reference to widening participation. In the
Northern Lights statement this is not carried into considerations of

student support but it is represented in the Square Mile document. So
that the link between outreach and changing provision is not made in
Northern Lights, where students appear to be invited to enroll and fit
into the image of (the generalised) 'normal' Northern Lights' student. In
Square Mile however a strong message of student-centered education is
given. This reflects the highly diverse student body in attendance at
Square Mile who relies on the support systems available, in contrast to
the large majority of Northern Lights students who have gone through
the traditional system of education and mostly do not need to work to
support themselves through their studies.

In Square Mile the student focus is at the heart of the mission statement
whereas at Northern Lights it is lower on the agenda, with more frequent
references to the university's world class research. Thus as a marketing
tool they employ quite different strategies in how they present the
institution. For Square Mile the critical success factor (Davies and
Glaister, 1996) is the supportive student environment, for Northern
Lights it lies in research, services to business and industry and top
quality teaching. Square Mile's mission statement was so strong in this
message of student support that it was used to open the universities
Access Agreement document and Learning and Teaching Strategy, a
good example of joined up thinking that will not have gone unmissed by
assessment bodies. The uniform image of the equality conscious
institution was offered, giving a clear representation of commitment that
was not reflected amongst Northern Lights documents. As a long term
agenda for the university, Northern Lights did not make radical changes
to its mission statement after the government's push to extend
participation and focus on the equality agenda. In Square Mile the
mission statement had historically had this focus anyway. Long term
goals speak of permanent transformations and thus any large changes in
orientation would be likely to come under criticisms from those within
the organization (Weiner, 1998). These differences between the case
study sites reflect wider patterns in post-1992 and pre-1992 universities'
progress in equality issues (Weiner, 1998).

CHAPTER FOUR – The Academic in National and Institutional
Policy

The Director of Fair Access requires all publicly funded providers of
higher education in England that charge tuition fees above the standard
level to submit an access agreement. These agreements are made
between the institution and the government's Office for Fair Access.
The aim is to promote and safeguard fair access to higher education for
under-represented groups in light of the introduction of variable tuition
fees in 2006-07. The agreement should set out how universities will
safeguard and promote fair access — in particular for students from low
income groups — through bursary and other financial support and
outreach work.

As Neal (1998) illustrates in her study of equal opportunities policies,
this type of document has tended to take on a standardised form even
between universities with a long history in equality and others fairly new
to it. This was also reflected between the case study institutions, one
which has had a long history of involving marginalised groups and the
other with a focus on its reputation of excellence in research. Yet each
institution produced a document with the same set sections throughout
and very similar responses to these areas – these unreflexive documents
seemingly acted as a non-performative demonstration of the work
(Ahmed, 2007a). These reactive documents recognised bureaucratic
demands more than calls for social justice, making an interpretation of
the policy focused on strategic compliance. Rather than university wide
changes, action was often described as based in specialist units and
particular projects running outside of everyday work. Thus there was
little emphasis on institutional culture change found in these policies.

Notions of power, social justice, oppression and domination were rarely
discussed. These policies tended to refer to representation and non-
discrimination as institutional goals but with no recognition that the
institution might be racist or sexist and so on. Policy here is written
from an anti-normative idealist stance, silencing the causes of the current
situation and separating these from idealist notions that inform future

models for change. An understanding of reality becomes reified as policy makers project these idealist meanings into the world and perceive them as existing in the world, having a reality of their own (Wenger, 1998). Thus these models have little power to deal with the problems faced in day to day situations.

There was a silence around the effectiveness of these policies and little reflexivity over the institutions' difficulties in implementing policy in everyday practices. As documents they did not present any of the disagreements and tensions in work surrounding the area, rather projecting unity and consensus and careful self evaluation of the university as a unit. By not discussing barriers, the reality of practice and the everyday life of academics are excluded and little consideration is given to the tension between prior models of academic practice and the new role of academics. These policies seemed to try to maintain the status quo and yet create a display of the 'right' attitudes.

The mission statement and access audit are reiterated in the learning and teaching strategy that each institution produces yearly. The introduction of these documents marked a general turn in management to mass production of policy. As Gibbs (2001) notes, in 1998 less than half of institutions produced these documents but by 2000 every English university had a learning and teaching strategy — although not many lecturing staff may be aware of its contents or use it in their work (Fanghanel, 2007). These documents can be sampled in audits of the university and are also a component of internal assessment processes.

The style of these strategy documents differed considerably between the case study sites, Northern Lights using a rigid, mechanical bullet point presentation; Square Mile more of an unfolding discussion of developments.

Both were written in very general terms that naturalised the message as inevitable (not to be questioned by staff or by the external agencies who are marking them). Staff were placed as objects of the discourse, not

subjects, policy acting to obfuscate 'mechanisms of power through its
account...to which all parties seem committed, rhetorically at least'
(Gamarnikow and Green, 2003, p. 211).

In Northern Lights, the strategy was focused on a number of income
generating areas, through developing continuing professional
development sessions to market and to extend postgraduate,
undergraduate and overseas student numbers. As objectives these could
then be linked back to financial indicators of achievement and the
rational/mechanical discourse that was used in the other documents of
this institution.

In Square Mile, the focus was on flexibility around students and
developing staff to be able to fulfill this. This emphasizes the student-
centered language of national guidance although (because it is written
for the institutional level) it has no detailed outline for change.

Neither institution entered into much detail on what individual members
of academic staff should do practically to fulfil these requirements but
instead employed rather sweeping statements about curriculum and
pedagogical innovation. They did not seem to be documents for
academics as such, and did not provide a clear framework on how to
follow up the objectives of the mission statements and so on.

The final pieces of institutional policy documentation I studied were the
university staff handbooks, made as a guide to academic members of
staff for their day to day practice. When staff training is mostly attended
by new academics (an issue I return to in Chapter Nine), handbooks help
to update the knowledge of longer standing staff members. These
documents are supposedly working documents that staff can refer to,
available on the internal web and by hard copy.

What I found was that rather than an institution wide policy, each
faculty, and often departments too, had produced a separate guide. It

appeared that, for example, the personal tutoring system differed within
the faculties as well as between them. These handbooks covered the
bureaucratic processes around student provision and other areas of work,
giving guidance on: personal tutoring, course management, attendance,
student support, student withdrawals, marking, extensions, assessment,
procedures regarding gifts from students, additional needs panel,
appointments and terminations. As such the amount of information
included made the document very large and complicated. It did not
promote a university wide approach to good practice with students but
rather one that was further translated through departmental cultures.

In each staff handbook there was little or no reference to the
requirements of the recent legislation around provision for different
learner needs. Thus they did not make an issue of the responsibility now
placed on the institution as a whole and the academics within. There
was a section on disclosure, but again this focused on the bureaucratic
process rather than interpersonal sensitivities. Viewing these handbooks
as working documents, staff would need to go elsewhere in their
institutions to get information on student support issues.

Considering the student-staff relationship as described in the guidelines,
some description was offered for Square Mile employees of the conduct
of the academic in meetings with students (that they should be carried
out in the context of an ongoing interest in the students' development).
Criticism should be given in a spirit of encouragement and staff should
ask students what they would find most useful in a tutorial. There was
an equality and diversity section that laid out the action and actors to be
involved in implementing the outcomes cited in the institutional policy,
in bullet points but with no concrete detail for everyday practice.

In Northern Lights, the guides recognized the role of the academic tutor
to advise students on all matters academic and non-academic and
provide a source of sympathy and support to students. It spoke of the
accessibility of staff for students and the importance of listening to

students. There was some comment on problems that may arise in the
student-staff relationship, with mismatches of personality between the
tutor and student and boundary issues.

These handbooks did not appear to reflect closely the changes that the
legislation called for. In the process of translating policy into the
institution, the message has become weakened. If cultural change is
what the university requires, this has to be made at the coal face of
everyday interaction, rather than sweeping university policies that lack
specific detail.

## Conclusion

The layers of policy production must dull the impact of any one of these
documents; important information has to be hunted out within reams of
rhetoric. The waves of equality legislation produce a catch up culture in
institutions that present the minimum of action required and no more.
Documents are produced with little consultation because of the time
pressures of deadlines. The university moves from one fashionable topic
to the next and the deep seated investment in equality, which must be the
goal, is not produced. Academics are bombarded with new policy that
bears little resemblance to their everyday practice. The agenda gets
fragmented and cultural change is not created.

Bearing in mind the differences between the case study sites in their
stance on the legislation, the impact of legislation becomes hugely
distorted through translation. Most universities have a long history of
commitment to equality and diversity in the rhetoric of their charters
(Heward and Taylor, 1993), though their remains a wide gap between
rhetoric and reality. The agency in policy-decoding is uncontrollable
and unpredictable, people filter their response to the text by experiential,
epistemic (discipline), ideological and pragmatic (institutional) filters
(Flanghanel, 2007), as I found. Practice cannot be preset, as in policy,

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because it necessitates a translation that is social. Policy requires the generation of meaning from a reified form that manifests itself in many ways because of the inventiveness of day to day practice (Wenger, 1998).

In this chapter I have considered representations of the role of the academic made in policy from within and outside of the university case study institutions. By analysing the guidelines on equality for the HE sector and my case study institutions' policy on academic practice I found that the institutions represented their own position to this work in quite different ways. Square Mile presented it as key to their market advantage and business success. Northern Lights depicted it as another aspect of good practice that was an imperative for institutional success. As such I have developed my main research question to consider:

- *How do the comparative cases differ in how staff speak of equality, does their language reflect the universities' approach to equality reflected in their policies and marketing literature?*

The macro and meso-level of policy, structuring the university are becoming increasingly coded, with a strong logic that yields to equality, but at the micro level in everyday interactions these ideals are not being translated into action (Bleiklie and Henkel, 2005). Taking a micro-political approach to my discussion with staff on this area, I next turn to my findings, considering a comparison on reactions to the recent equality drive between the two case study sites.

The concept of identity has been key in the formation of my research questions and features strongly in the way my analysis is organised. Chapters Five, Six and Seven cover the interviewees' references to the institutional, disciplinary and personal characteristics informing their identities; considering how this is interwoven in references to their involvement in the student equality agenda. These accounts are then contrasted with the narratives of the specialist equality and diversity

workers in each institution (Chapters Eight and Nine). Here another perspective on the 'work' of equality is given and also an insight into the relationship between staff groups.

# CHAPTER FIVE — Institutional Uniformity?

The fashion in which academics build a discourse on equality in their universities is a reflection of how they rationalise their own involvement in the work. The institutional identity that they promote by their narratives and actions reflects the logic that informs their understanding of the environment and their position within it. As the next three chapters detail, the institutional is one of multiple identities that an individual may perform at any time. In this chapter I build on my discussion of complex identities from chapter two to consider how the social construction of the institution's identity and individuals' own institutional identity affect responses to the equality agenda.

This chapter starts by considering the personal relevance of institutional identity and image for university workers. I then move on to discuss the academics' own construction of their institution's involvement in equality, contrasting Square Mile and Northern Lights.

Various projects have considered how institutional identity affects the actions of its members. Shaw and colleagues (2007) carried out an HEA funded project into the drivers and benefits of widening participation and diversity in the student body for HEIs. After interviews with stakeholders in eight case study institutions, they comment that the 'ability and willingness' of the institution's members to 'articulate a discourse around social justice and diversity, as being central to HE identity, may be important in its ability to embed a diversity approach throughout the institution' (Shaw et al., 2007, p.67). They argue that once equality work has been made a part of institutional identity within these accounts, it becomes easier to mainstream it into all activities and goals for the institution. Institutional mission statements and learning and teaching strategies fulfil this to some extent but it needs to be present

in each employee's accounts also. Institutional identity, as a social construction, must be said to be influenced by equality considerations for these values to inform aspects of self identity and thus practice.

The identity the institution is associated with and the understandings of the institution informing daily life control the horizon of possibilities and responsibilities for individual actors. This explanation reflects those interpretations of institutional habitus used by Reay (Reay et al., 2001) and Thomas (2002), among others, drawing on Bourdieu (1988; 1989). As I discussed in chapter two, Bourdieu's notion of habitus describes how our history and the context we are positioned in are embodied in our actions and perceptions. In the same way that individuals have a habitus, so too may institutions — informed by their history (Reay et al., 2001). The institutional habitus is discretely visible in practices, in cultural and expressive characteristics (Reay et al., 2001, p.2) and more obviously in the distribution of resources and the goal setting and targets the institution pursues and rewards. The interaction between these institutional and individual habituses influence how people are positioned and experience their working lives. The distinction between identity as a member of the organisation and identity of the organisation here is blurred because they mutually inform and encompass each other. Some of the work on academic identity has reinforced this idea that the institution of which the academic is a member informs their self concept and idea of their professional identity (Becher, 1989; Reay, 2004b), as I discussed in chapter two. There are, however, competing viewpoints such as that taken up by Bleiklie and Henkel (2005). They write about Giddens' concept of identity as formulated within assumptions that the bond between local social institutions or communities and individuals is becoming weaker. 'In the context of such fluidity the capacity of institutions such as universities and the professions to provide their members with dominant or legitimising identities may be less secure' (Bleiklie and Henkel, 2005, p.153). Yet in the course of my own analysis I have found that institutional and disciplinary identities are still

frequently drawn upon by academics as I show in this and the next chapter.

Returning to my discussion in chapter two on the context dependency of discourses that constitute identities, "the institution" is employed in building narratives of the self differently within and between each institution. As Foucault writes (1977, p.49) discourses are 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak... discourses are not about objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention'. So, as the subject moves into different contexts it is socially constructed through discourses in different ways. Institutional identity is reproduced in discourse through the social constructions of organisational members. Although in reified marketing materials and institutional policies the university may be presented by a certain *image* (what external stakeholders should perceive), this is negotiated on an individual level by academics through interaction (Wenger, 1998). Individuals are not passive recipients of identities provided to them by social entities (Kreiner et al., 2006, p.1333), such as universities. As I referred to in chapter two, people experience a field of multiple related discourses and negotiate 'local ways of belonging to broader constellations and of manifesting broader styles and discourses in ... everyday practice' (Wenger, 1998, p.149); informed by their schema of the institution.

Examples of the socially constructed 'identities' of the institution, given by academics are drawn out in the extracts below. Institutional identity is represented in their speech as multiple and contradictory – through references to identity, culture, and image. The institution is often personified in interviewees' accounts, acquiring an agency and practice of its own — instead of goals and actions being attributed to managers, thus blurring the lines of accountability. Within the interviewees' talk there seems to be a continuum between statements that are driven by a perception of the organisation as an individual, and as identified by

members' recognition of their own activity in the institution as part of the organisational identity. By distancing personalised aspects of self from this larger group category, no action is required by the self and no criticism can be levelled at the self. These references to institutional identity appear like discursive defences or devices employed by the individual to accomplish different things. In the case of equality, because the issues are positioned in terms of moral and ethical decisions, negative evaluations could result in seeing themselves as being a "bad person". Thus careful negotiation is made around the realities of institutional life.

The following narratives demonstrate how academics make use of institutional identity and institutional image in reference to issues of widening participation and equality in their HEI. I start with extracts from interviews in Northern Lights, and then follow these with comparisons from Square Mile academics' accounts. These narratives demonstrate the discursive work around responsibility allocation, image control, justification, distancing and rationalising, which is involved in employee's representations of their institution's participation in the equality agenda. In Northern Lights this is frequently achieved through comparisons with other institutions, which maintain interviewees' ability to reflect (comfortably) on the position they take toward the equality agenda.

## Section One — Northern Lights Academics' accounts

In the extract below Alexandria Smith runs through a number of comparisons that categorise her own institution, Northern Lights, with nearby Elite University and New University by certain salient characteristics. This has the effect of justifying her own and her institution's actions and mission. Defining the organisation's identity

position like this 'serves the overall objectives of differentiating the organisation from other comparison organisations and legitimatizing the organisation for stakeholders' (Cornelissen et al., 2007, p.S6). Comparisons (made implicitly or explicitly), categorise institutions by certain salient characteristics. The categorization process makes links between and helps to rationalise organizational members' beliefs and actions (Elsbach and Kramer, 1996).

**ALEXANDRIA SMITH- Northern Lights, Senior Lecturer Geography**

AS    Yeh I mean I think Northern Lights University has a very kind of strong commitment to the region. I think it kind of prides itself as a regional, kind of, university and I think it particular sets itself in contrast to Elite. And I think that Elite is much more, constructs itself and we construct it as much more of a kind of..., an academic bastion kind of thing.

Alexandria refers to Northern Lights as a separate entity with its own goals and actions a number of times. In this way organisational identity has been conceived of as taking a 'form and dynamic of its own' (Cornelissen et al., 2007, p.S6), like a social being. The effect is that the responsibility of widening participation is placed on the university not the self. It is only in comparison with other institutions that the organisational 'we' is used. Mostly she distances herself from her own institution, referring to it in the third person.

In many of the references to equality work this use of the collective ethos of the institution was drawn upon, seemingly blocking the need for self reflexive comments on one's own work.

The account is made complex by the inconsistencies Alexandria refers to. If Northern Lights is truly committed to the region it should be focused on widening participation and student support as part of its

'agenda' as a socially considerate institution. However in comparison to New University, Northern Lights does not succeed in this respect. Although the managerial discourse is that they are committed to equality as an institution, not nearly enough is done to promote equality there and that is why they are failing in this area.

> AS     Whereas I think Northern Lights University yeh it does really try to build on its local image and its regional connections. In a whole variety of different ways, both kind of in its connections with regional authorities but also the contribution of research into the community, kind of the local and regional communities. So I think, yeh, making it kind of a region for the North particularly and for Northern Lights and for Budleigh, is part, is clearly part of what the university's agenda is about and that has to be about students and about widening participation as much as it is about us sending out knowledge into the world. So yeh but I think again esp, I think there is this clear contrast constructed between Northern Lights University and Elite but I think obviously what in the city with Northern Lights and New University thing and New University's much, much better at getting students from...

Above the conflict between the multiple identities or purposes of the university are highlighted and adjusted. Northern Lights is positioned comfortably in between the two extremes of Elite as the 'academic bastion' that secures its position through high selectivity, and New University described as an old polytechnic with an open doors policy (see below).

Below, Alexandria goes on to comment that New University, which is lower on the national league tables, is recognised as more successful at attracting local students (who are not a traditional marker of esteem) and

international students (who are a marker of success). This disruption to the perceived order is noted. As a post-1992 institution, it should not be competing successfully against Northern Lights on the international market.

>
> HB    Yeh it is quite close isn't it?
>
> AS    Yeh it is just over there literally. And you I mean they have a lot more students erhm from kind of the region, from the city and region but they also have a lot more international undergraduates erhm. And yeh I don't know how they get those I am not really sure. But I mean the, from my, this is really just from sort of seeing just walking through their campus...but the vast majority of students who live round me are New University students rather than Northern Lights University students. And so you kind of get a sense of what their students are like so I think, so when Northern Lights University, you know, it is not quite like New University in that sense but it hasn't. I mean, I would have said that the commitment to the region is an incredibly strong part of its mission; so trying to do that in different ways and things like that.

In the end Alexandria focuses on positive organisational identity features, highlighting favourable aspects of identity and inter-organisational comparisons that are not measured by the government benchmarks (see Elsbach and Kramer, 1996) — that is regional commitment. She finishes with the reassertion of loose commitment to these goals and a non-specific (empty) mission.

Cultural self-expressions include any and all references to collective identity (Brewer and Gardner, 1996; Hatch and Schultz, 2002). Where Alexandria Smith talks of the collective ("we", "us"), the cultural

understandings expressed are of the competitive hierarchical nature of the institution in understanding itself and its core activity as knowledge production. So she refers to "we" when considering how Northern Lights employees construct Elite as an academic bastion – which serves to position them in comparison to this other institution. When she refers to "us" it is about the work of academics sending knowledge out into the world, something that the institution is comparatively good at. Here the result of comparison is to crystallise missions, and justify differences from others who have a stronger equality and diversity agenda.

Elizabeth Richards below, as a Pro Vice Chancellor, is implicated in the institution's actions and decisions, when for others generalisation to this wider group can distance responsibility from self. In chapter two I noted how relative membership status interacts with possible identifications with institutional identity, and in this instance Elizabeth Richards performs a careful negotiation of the institutions' identity when the institution appears to be acting less than fairly. As has been recognised elsewhere, the way that widening participation and the equality agenda are championed at the senior level impacts upon how they are perceived and valued within the institution and thus how embedded they are in the minds of staff (Shaw et al., 2007, p.5.).

Elizabeth here is discussing a case brought to the university by their Islamic Society requesting free periods on Fridays for religious observance.

### ELIZABETH RICHARDS – Northern Lights, Pro Vice Chancellor, Teaching and Learning

ER   Erhm, so I don't think people, religion that's, that's more difficult to talk about. I mean one thing that I have been very involved in, took up loads of time and actually as a result of that I have asked uhm erh H.R. that we have a, a sort

of clearer policy on these things. But I had a request from the Islamic Society not to timetable between twelve and two on a Friday and not to have exams at that time. And although we've got, we've got a general sort of diversity policy, actually it didn't have a lot of detail about what that might mean for prayer or observance or, you know, staff being off for religious festivals and all that.

As Elizabeth Richards comments, it is one thing to formulate policies, it is quite another to implement them. The closer you get to concrete situations the less likely they are to conform to the models that have informed policy making (Cohen, 1992, p.95).

ER     So they are coming up with a more practical thing that we can use as a guide on the website. That took a lot of time. People I think are less comfortable really on tha, you know that is a more difficult to talk about because of the high level of politicisation around that area. And I spent weeks on it.

HB     Hmm.

ER     Sorting that out. And the result of it is we are not having any change on policy.

HB     Right so they are not getting their twelve till two break.

ER     No because we are a secular organisation and erhm I mean there, there are no, they made it into a national issue, which is why I was...

Supporting identity groups has been criticised as positive discrimination, showing them favouritism over others. The ethical objective is not to do

this but to enable all groups to have the same as their peers, to guarantee their equality with others. For example, the Muslim society at Northern Lights request for a break from lectures on Fridays taps into a much wider debate on how work has been organised around a Christian model. A debate that seems to have reached an impasse because of the huge change required to create more flexible working conditions.

> HB   I did read about it.

> ER   Yeh. They made it, I had the radio ringing me and stuff. I mean uhm, I spoke to the Head of the Islamic Society, I know him quite well, and he said I had a dream about making us into a test case on it. Yeh hello, don't.

> HB   (laughs).

> ER   You know it is not at all that we are not, and I mean we have got a lot of Islamic presence on our campus, you know, and we are actually, we, we are uhm keen to, as far as possible, cater for the needs of Muslim students. But that is a really complex area.

Elizabeth carefully tries to manage the image of the institution with me, an outsider — here responding with an answer to a criticism that has not been made.

> ER   Loads of Muslim students actually study in the West because they don't, they don't want that to happen. So with what, if we did that, which is pushed very much by the society of Muslims, in one foul swoop we would alienate uhm, uhm people, our Muslim students from Thailand and other groups.

The argument she makes here draws on a de-essentialist discourse about Muslim people. De-essentialism may be used, as here, to argue against culturally sensitive measures (Verkuyten, 2003, p.17), not therefore as a progressive discourse but employed to reinforce the status quo.

> ER   There is a lot of uhm difference in opinion amongst our own UK Muslim students on that issue. You know, I mean to say that that is what Muslim students want in and of itself is highly complex. And I have got uhm generational, uhm a National Chair of Racial Equality commented off the record on that to me. And lots of Muslim universities abroad don't shut down for that time etc, etc.

> HB   Right.

> ER   That is a wrong perception. So the soft liberal view is oh why don't we do that but actually it's much, much more complicated than you imagine. Uhm and practically very, very difficult.

Liberalism has become increasingly troubled by accusations of cultural imperialism (e.g. the sectarian institution) and the coercive imposition of liberal views. Here the question of how to deal with difference takes over from what kind of equality justice requires (Phillips, 1999, p.43). Elizabeth reiterates some of these arguments with reference to intergroup complexities and managing difference in her institution.

The senior managers have a bird's eye view of issues, understanding the different necessities of management in their communities. Here Elizabeth Richards assures me that the issues are complicated from this vantage point, and what might appear a simple choice of equality versus discrimination, is far more complex. The issues become owned by senior managers in this way, because they have more information

available to them. Such claims 'devalue the non-technical understanding of these issues by the rest of the population' (Wenger, 1998, p.201) and justify management's take-up of a less popular position.

> ER    So the same sort of staff would say oh yeh let's, let's do that and they won't teach between five and six or after six, you know. Time tabling is very, very difficult. Uhm and then, and that's generally we don't have exams between that time. But once, but once you have beaten it out, what do you do for the days of religious observance, what do you do during Ramadan, what do you do during Jewish festivals etc, etc. So we, we end up, we ended up getting legal help and we go for the response that was no. But that's not at all because we are not interested in diversity.

> HB    O.K., yes, thank you.

As I close down this part of the interaction she moves to carry on the discussion with her closing point, the crux of the matter — the clean and understandable issue — and this is a comparison; an implicit reference to inherent market forces.

> ER    I mean, and even New University University, that has 55% of students, don't do that...

> HB    Yeh, yeh.

> ER    Actually but I am sure you will look at this around the sector...

As with Alexandria Smith, comparison is central to Elizabeth Richards' justification. After a long narrative about (not) accommodating Muslim students, the underlining point is the comparison with other institutions.

It may be the nature of the pre-1992 institution that hierarchy and market position is stressed in institutional discourses. Arguably it is more important to those at the top of the league table to be competitively positioned.

As in Elizabeth Richards' comments, Reese Gail's remarks, below, give an account which supports the inaction of the institution on diversity matters. Reese starts with the argument that what should be done is to give extra help to non-traditional applicants but then this is countered by the related problems of drop out; drop out is linked to reputation and then the responsibility is shifted away to New University. Again, using comparison and categorisation, the work involved in equality and diversity is distanced away from the institutional identity.

> **REESE GAIL- Northern Lights, Senior Lecturer Planning**
>
> RG    But, you know, if you're going to have people in on something which is worthwhile, which is going to give them some standing in the work place then I think we need to, if you want, lower the ladder or give people some, you want people to come in with the best chance of succeeding. There's no point coming in for them to drop out because they can't hack it. I don't think that is in anybody's interest. And I think that is less likely for an old university to do that because the new universities clearly operate better at doing that.

Whilst recognising widening participation as a socially beneficial activity, an implicit link to lowering standards within the university is also made. That these students cannot "hack it", as Reese says, individuates the students, giving a pseudo-psychological account and locating the problem of dropping out as internal to individuals rather

than as a result of systematic (institutional) discrimination and disadvantage.

The inverse link between quality and equality here is reinforced by the hierarchical ranking of universities through their efforts in widening participation and diversity in contrast to more traditional academic pursuits in the search for knowledge. As such quality or standards are a core aspect of Northern Lights' identity, making New University a better site for promoting widening participation. Again Reese uses a contrast, the image of Northern Lights (a Redbrick University) with that of the New University.

Below Reese offers a weak commitment to change, "a bit" is repeated three times, suggesting it is a slight change that is needed – the institutional "we" is basically fine taking its position as an esteemed institution. It becomes the image of the university they need to change, not the culture or identity (as I return to in Chapters Eight and Nine). Image modification does not require the same kind of involvement of academic staff as cultural transformation.

> RG    Their reputations are not so scary. Cos I think a lot of people locally who are thinking well I want to do this and you can do it at Northern Lights and you can do it at New University. Might well look at us and think, you know, big scary stiff institution I think I'll go there it looks a bit more user friendly. So I think we need to change our image a bit, because a bit more...

Image here is conceived as not simply referential or descriptive but as manipulable by organisational members. The understanding that diversity and equality work is about generating the 'right image' and correcting the wrong one positions other people as holding the wrong perception. The inequality is in the image external stakeholders perceive

rather than in the institution (Ahmed, 2007a). The goal becomes the achievement of change in the perceptions of external stakeholders rather than change within the institution (as I return to in Chapters Eight and Nine). Discursive sleights of hand like this are maintained in institutional discourse because they serve certain interests of dominant cultures in HEIs. The reputation of Northern Lights is after all as a high quality institution, that maintains excellent standards, and this is not something that should be altered.

By drawing a contrast with New University an impasse will always be reached relating to hierarchical standing — to quality of the institution. As such, academics do not appear to place their own actions as central to the work of equality in their organisations, and as the mission for their institution is not focused on these goals, the advancement of equality appears to reach a standstill.

Like Reese Gail, James Bailey's account is focused on image, the external perception of the institution. James, below, tells the story of his own childhood perceptions of the university he now works in. He has previously rejected Northern Lights as a university he could gain access to study in. This conversational use of stories or narratives has been suggested to increase the plausibility of a claim (Edwards and Potter, cited in McKinlay and Dunnett, 1998, p.39). Stories are important because of the link of generalisation to abstraction (Lave and Wenger, 1991) — by personalising the account it becomes applicable to real life and implicit truth claims.

> **JAMES BAILEY- Northern Lights, Lecturer Business Studies**
>
> JB    Erhm I think that erhm well I, I grew up in Brondley and the nearest university to me was Elite. And erh Elite is, is a very strongly university town, if you took all the students out of Elite the population would you know. And erhm and

Elite attracted, I mean Elite has a reputation was always of being where the Oxford rejects, the Oxbridge rejects went kind of thing. So uhm it attracted a very particular kind of student. So I was, I suppose looking back on it, I am very conscious as to the extent to which as somebody growing up ten miles away from the university. We would often go to Elite and go for a walk down by the river or whatever, or go to the Cathedral, that my idea of what Elite University was like and what Elite students were like was not my kind of people at all. And erh Elite was probably, even though I kind of, I can look back now and think well there are lots of other places that I could have gone that would be very Elite like. The thought of going to Elite, it was kind of like, I suppose I knew that the other places were not that different but I knew Elite was like that but I didn't know that they were. So I suspect that there is an element of that with Northern Lights. That it is the image of Northern Lights of being the Elite, you know, the research university, the more prestigious of the two universities in the city.

Northern Lights' negative image is relational to other institutions and only held by certain perceivers. Image is 'what members believe others see as distinctive about the organization' (Dutton and Dukerich, cited in Hatch and Schultz, 2002, p.550). Again it is the image of the institution that is a problem rather than the work done within, the possibility that those who hold this image are not the type of students the institution would enrol follows on from this distinction. The elements cited that serve to inform the image sound positive, but James links them to a negative effect on widening participation. The contrast implicitly draws the evaluation that they would not want to follow an equality focused agenda for their institution. This reflects the message in the Northern Lights respondents' accounts, each having a positive image of the institution but not one based on equality work.

> JB    Erhm the biggest university in the North and that sort of thing, may have a sort of erhm a negative affect on erhm, on how the university is perceived and certainly on how we present ourselves. What our press officers engage with and where we want to get profile, we are always looking nationally and internationally. And I think in many ways for the region that's, that is right you know...You know Harvard erhm is not a local college it is Harvard for goodness sake and so if Northern Lights looks at itself in a very parochial way, they're, they are, you know, you are not necessarily adding value to the region...And erh and so inevitably if you are local and maybe from a school that, you know, maybe doesn't, you know, not that many kids go to university, you are going to get pushed and prodded by the staff probably by your own idea of what they're like towards New University whereas you know Northern Lights University could have a great deal to offer but it just wouldn't occur to you to go there. So ...

The Northern Lights narratives contain complicated debate and complex justifications, as in Alexandria Smith (referring to regional commitment), Elizabeth Richards (on the secular organisation), Reese Gail (on student drop out) and James Bailey (on image). This dissonance may relate to the misalignment of organisational identity as promoted by the institution, as understood by employees and as held by external bodies. Cornelissen and colleagues (2007, p.S7) note the importance of consonance between the organisational image — articulated by managers and experienced by employees — and the corporate image (held by those outside it). There are a number of negative outcomes of non-alignment of these factors, such as employee disengagement and organisational atrophy (Borgerson et al, cited by Cornelissen et al., 2007, p.7). The dissonance surrounding the equality

agenda can be seen in the accounts of academics at Northern Lights. Image was very important in changing the way that Northern Lights was seen to participate in the equality agenda. As such, academics do not appear to place their own actions as central to the work of equality in their organisations, and as the mission for their institution is not focused on these goals the advancement of equality appears to reach a standstill.

## Section Two — Square Mile Academics' Accounts

The Square Mile interviewees' accounts contrasted with those of Northern Lights, not relying on comparison to achieve a positive position. Square Mile academics appear more comfortable with the institution's positive identity in equality and diversity (as part of the institution's mission and image), and its reflection on themselves. Square Mile has a highly diverse student body and academics work with the detailed issues of equality and student support daily and yet the institution still has a high drop out rate. Nevertheless the success of the university is measured internally by its overtly diverse population and because of this visible success there appears to be a blockage in the recognition of work that still needs to be done in this area.

In each of the Square Mile extracts below image and identity are mentioned with little reference to any incongruence. The accounts they give in Square Mile are much cleaner and shorter, with a consistency in alignment between institutional identity and organisational image. Where inconsistency is mentioned in Square Mile, the misalignment of institutional values and actions is attributed to the impediment of external forces, shifting responsibility elsewhere. Again these devices tend to transfer responsibility away from academics.

In the extract below Alan Dean employs reflective language, making the university identity mirror the identity of its students. This is a simple,

short, coherent reference to image, identity and culture. These are accepted to be in line with each other — consistent. The image perceived by external stakeholders is uncritically held by members of the institution.

**ALAN DEAN- Square Mile, Head of Media Studies Department**

AD      Increasingly I mean our students; I mean black students if you want to label students that way, will come here because it is a black university.

HB      Yeh.

AD      Because they feel more at home here.

The university is granted its own identity, as black. There is no work for the academic staff to do to enhance this profile, which in itself supports a diverse student body. As a personal characteristic, being labelled black employs naturalising and essentialist discourses, beyond critical evaluation. This comment closes down the necessity of his own involvement in the work, as a white lecturer — exhibiting the difference between the university image as embodying diversity or diversity as what it *does* (Ahmed, 2006).

Here Alan Dean's clean account is similar to that of Natalie Rains below. Natalie comments that in Square Mile they do what they say they do, with little inconsistency between representation and performance.

**NATALIE RAINS – Square Mile, Senior lecturer psychology**

NR      I think maybe the only other thing to say is that Square Mile has pitched itself to a certain degree as a sort of

> local university for the community. And it has very strong
> links with the community uhm and in addition to sort of
> recruiting locally. I mean we obviously have students from
> sort of all over but we have quite a lot of a strong sort of link
> with local schools and things.

The use of "we" is a reference to organisational culture that the interviewee displays a connection to (Hatch and Schultz, 2002), what Brewer and Gardner define as part of collective identity. Here the use of "we" reflects the work that is done by others as Natalie herself is not involved in these projects. Yet her attachment to the organisation is cemented in this phrase, she accepts this as part of her identity.

> NR    But we also have links with the community that is not
> necessarily aimed at recruiting them onto our courses but it is
> aimed at just building up a better relationship with
> individuals in the community and, maybe that will end up
> with them coming here further down the line.

Natalie gives a very clear account of how university action reinforces university image. The effect of this is to portray that in Square Mile staff are not purely driven by market forces, but are motivated by social justice and have embedded the values of equality and diversity. The image of the university is mirrored in institutional identity, as constructed by its members.

Natalie Rains, above, refers to the marketing exercise of 'pitching' — that Square Mile negotiates the actions and cultural values of the institution that are presented to outsiders. Matthew Lowry, below, also highlights the importance of Square Mile's marketing image as a place that values equality and diversity. The depiction of Square Mile is reminiscent of Blackmore and Sachs' (2003, p.141) concept of the 'performative university', one that focuses itself on measurable and

marketable indices of consumer satisfaction in the competitive marketised HE system.

> **MATTHEW LOWRY – Square mile, Senior Lecturer Planning.**
>
> ML    Well goals and image are two very different things. I think Square Mile has a reputation nationally for being successful in recruiting and erh, erh seeing a diverse body of students be successful. The university's literature is full of a diverse range of students being represented in that literature and erh that is sort of good, I mean Square Mile is known for that.

The term 'diverse' is used as a description, a quality, an achievement and a value. Diversity amongst the student body is a signifier of success, so that the organisation's members can relax and feel that they have achieved their goals. Being good at representing diversity and others holding (and agreeing with) that image can produce a belief that Square Mile is doing well, a judgement based on the document rather than the doing ( Ahmed, 2007a). But Matthew here recognises it instead as a "sort of good": it should not be the main focus of merit.

Matthew goes on to personify the university, describing the multiple and conflicting identities within the institution. This removes his involvement from the identity and actions of the institution.

> ML    In terms of the university's goals, I think the university is a bit schizophrenic. I mean on the one hand I think it genuinely does, as an organisation, value widening participation in higher education. And it values its diverse student body. On the other hand, and this is due to government pressure, the RAE has so distorted the work of the university and the various aspects of the university's

work. And erh I mean widening participation doesn't quite fit, it seems to me, with research excellence, I mean.

Here, as in Northern Lights, the contradiction between work promoting research excellence and equality is commented on, setting these goals against each other rather than seeing them as mutually achievable; creating a continuum between quality and equality in higher education. As Light and Cox (2001) write the 'discourse of excellence' is pervasive in higher education but lacks content, and here is deployed in a similarly vacuous way. The cause of this striving toward excellence is attributed to the uncontrollable external factors of government pressure through the RAE process. This externalises responsibility onto others and reaffirms the practice, image and culture of the institution. Matthew works to reaffirm the universities 'genuine' commitment to equality and social justice, not just as a reaction to government pressure but a real engagement with issues in the culture of the institution.

In both Matthew Lowry and Terry Rowland's accounts (below) the marketing strategy of the university is mentioned, which includes references to its diversity as a brand for the institution.

**TERRY ROWLANDS – Square Mile, English Lecturer.**
TR    (pause) Uhm I think Square Mile has very carefully cultivated a university that might appeal to students from non-traditional backgrounds.

The university is clearly presented as manipulating its image to external stakeholders in order to increase student applicant numbers. The widening participation agenda is linked to the business agenda of the institution.

TR    I think it advertises itself, uhm, perhaps in the very, very publicly, in spaces uhm that, that are going to be highly

> visible. Uhm so I do feel that as, that as the university has branded itself to some extent as a university that can appeal to students from non-traditional backgrounds, yeh. Uhm one always looks at being able to roll off the university's mission statement but I can't, I'm sorry.

When Terry moves from speaking about the university's image to its mission statement for internal members, he highlights an important point. The effort the institution makes to present itself to outsiders in advertising is more affective than that which it makes with its members. The vacuous and uniform content of these internal institutional documents is discussed elsewhere (see Chapter Four): their point often escapes the employees they refer to.

The existence of artefacts (for example mission statements and advertisements) in these extracts is taken as evidence that the institution is committed to equality, making public this commitment (Ahmed, 2007b), yet these documents do not obligate the institution to do anything. The mission statement as a text is a way in which the university performs an example of good practice.

The Square Mile interviewees' simple and straightforward references to the image of the organisation and its culture reflect their agreement with representations of the institution that are implicit in identity claims (Hatch and Schwartz, 2002). Yet the university is depicted less frequently as engaged in the activity of equality but rather as embodying this identity or labouring to produce this *image*.

## Conclusion

In Square Mile the image of the university was built around its involvement in widening participation and the equality agenda.

However this work on the image of the institution appeared to be informed by a business case at institutional level rather than informing individuals' moral sense of the importance of the work. As such, action was distanced to this institutional level rather than reflexively considered as a project for the self.

In Northern Lights, academics' narratives about their institution's involvement in the work were more ambiguous, reflected in complex narratives about their institution's goals. The discussion fell back into arguments for a continuum between quality and equality, which echoes the deficit thinking that surrounds those groups highlighted by the equality agenda. These discourses must be reflexively considered and developed to promote personal and institutional effectiveness in the area.

For academics to make the equality agenda a strong part of their professional identities and practices, it needs to be a central aspect of what their institution stands for. To get academics to build a positive discourse about their institution and equality, it must be championed in the institution as a key goal for everyone within.

Institutional identity is important in informing the actions and aspirations of staff (Becher, 1989; Clark, 1987; Reay, 2004a). But this is not the only social formation to affect professional identity and actions, nor was it the only aspect of professional identity that staff drew upon in their narratives on equality. It is important to take the findings presented in this chapter in conjunction with those of the following chapters on disciplinary and personal identities, to understand the complexities of this explanation for the problems in the equality agenda in these HEIs.

# CHAPTER SIX — Tradition and Change

Disciplinary location is an important aspect of academic life as it provides the inter-institutional community through which the academic is socialised into their professional identity. Different disciplines take different and/or opposing epistemological and ontological views of the world, finding different values and practices important. These mindsets are arguably reflected in interactions with colleagues and students but also in academics' lives outside of the institution.

In this chapter I will look at academics' discourses on their discipline and the equality and diversity agenda, touching on the epistemological and practical debates highlighted by interviewees in connecting or rejecting the equality agenda in their daily working lives. First I recap on my position within the literature on identity and discipline. Then I move on to discuss interviewees' narratives about their discipline as it relates to the equality agenda considering group membership, pragmatic barriers and student habitus.

## Section One — Identity and Discipline

As I have noted in chapter two, there are a number of scholars who have written about the relationship between identity and academic discipline. As discussed previously, Becher (1989; 1994; Becher and Trowler, 2002) among others (Clark, 1987) describes the unique territory that the academic is educated into as they move into full membership of a discipline. Indeed, one of my interviewees, Alan Dean, remarked that discipline is the true professional identity of the academic (as opposed to the administrative/ managerialist role).

**ALAN DEAN — Square Mile.**

So I think that kind of, they are all the amateurs as far as I'm concerned, you know, and I don't know what a professional erh manager of higher education would be. But you are right it is the respect, because people in the end think all these managers are amateurs, then what is your profession, well your profession is you're a historian, you're a sociologist.

More recent research has found that disciplinary cultures connect to political values (Lee, 2007) and social status (Kuh and Whitt, 1988), viewing these cultures as more than just an academically defined epistemological construct (Ladd and Lipsett, 1975). These communities provide the language through which individuals understand themselves and interpret their world (Taylor, 1989). Discipline 'constitutes a living tradition in engagement with which academics determine the values, agendas, self perceptions and sense of self esteem that make up their identities' (Henkel, 2000, p.148). Interestingly, Taylor (1989) discusses this in terms of the moral frameworks which forge identity. 'To know who you are is to be oriented in moral space, a space in which questions arise about what is good or bad...what has meaning and importance to you and what is trivial and secondary' (Taylor, 1989, p.28). Thus it is important that the link between the equality agenda and disciplinary identity receives further investigation (as this chapter attempts to do).

Traditions in practices and perspectives are passed on through interactions between generations in an organisation (Wenger, 1998). As successive generations interact, some of the history of the practice remains embodied in the generational relations that structure the community; 'the past the present and the future live together' (Wenger, 1998, p.90). This strong sense of tradition within HE leads to a 'high degree of conservatism' (Ottewill, 2001, pp. 444-445) within the disciplines.

The long term socialisation of individuals allows them to internalise practices and values, cultures, and judgement positions of an organisation; building a collective consciousness that regularises behaviour (Becker, 1964; Fogarty and Dirsmith, 2001). The discipline offers an alternative to the organisation as a source of normative guidance (Fogarty and Dirsmith, 2001, 25); and I found employees shifted between references to different aspects of social identity. As discussed in chapter two, Lee, (2007) found that institutional cultures had more effect when considering commitment to diversity and student-centredness, but that commitment to students' affective development and teaching was more influenced by disciplinary cultures. No explanation of the possible cause of these differences was given although it would seem to be in line with the division between market-position oriented responses and everyday working experiences involved in an individual's disciplinary stance. When a particular social identity has become salient and the norms and values associated with that identity have been internalised then this not only 'structures the psychology of individuals' beliefs, attitudes and intentions but also works back on the structures and products that are the material building blocks of organisational life' (Cornelissen et al., 2007, p.S5).

Yet some argue that the grip of the disciplines is waning with greater individualism encouraged in HEIs through changes to funding and assessment. 'Traditional academic reward systems reflect the cultivation of an institutionalised individualism within a community of peers' (Henkel and Vabo, 2006, p.130). Individualisation of risk with auditing of employee achievements focuses individual development on narrowly defined, specialised goals — thus not producing a strong community social identity. However, disciplinary membership was often referred to by interviewees in the present study. This may have been because the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences is the centre for research on social questions in universities, covering a number of different disciplinary approaches to issues of inequality and justice. This was the rationale for

my choosing this faculty for study (see Chapter Four) and has proved an interesting place to begin a study on academics' reactions to the equality agenda. However the responses of interviewees could not clearly be delineated purely by disciplinary boundaries: participants' narratives on discipline differed within disciplines. Yet the idea of the effect of discipline still held strength amongst participants.

## Section Two — Equality as part of academic discipline

In the following extracts disciplinary identity is called upon like a defence: depicting an explicit link between research and teaching, and one's own values. As in references to institutional identity (see previous chapter), disciplinary identity entails a depersonalized sense of self, 'a shift towards the perception of self as an interchangeable exemplar of some social category and away from the perception of self as a unique person' (Turner et al., 1987, p.50). Thus in the extracts below we see a depersonalised account of group identity in reference to the discipline.

### ZARA BUTTLEY — Northern Lights Lecturer Museum Studies

ZB      And it is also embedded in the, the subject so it's, you know, if it were history or something there's no particular relationship. It's very strongly related to policy issues in museums and in theoretical issues about cultural representation and erh so it is sort of in the...

HB      Embedded...

ZB      In the ethos of the centre.

According to Zara, equality is embedded in the culture that informs the ethos of the centre. It is part of the shared understanding amongst colleagues in the department (here referred to as the centre); a loosely defined agreement between academics to work within these egalitarian principles.

Below Helen Richards discusses the policies which the university has developed on equality issues, recognising that rather than resulting from a university led, top-down approach, these issues are part of the subject matter that she teaches.

**HELEN RICHARDS — Square Mile, Reader in Media Studies**

HR    Well, have I noticed any policy, well I think dyslexia is probably the one thing that people talk about the most. Erhm. The issue of race and ethnicity is part of our curriculum, it is stressed within the curriculum; and issues around identity in that sense.

Carrying out research on equality in the social science faculties of these institutions often brought up narratives on subject matter and research interests as reflecting personal action. The university policy has been developed with university goals and legal requirements in mind, but the curriculum has not. There is a gap between these academic areas of knowledge and the practices defined by the equality agenda.

Craig Rylie, below, also refers to the understanding of equality as occurring from within the discipline. He speaks very broadly about the social science faculty that he works in, creating a sense of cultural essentialism that does not examine the difference in approach between academic members of staff.

Ascription of social identity is a form of social control; once ascribed that person's motives, actions, beliefs and opinions may always be

interpreted along the lines of this identity category. Essentialist beliefs may be used to rationalise oppressive social arrangements (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Here the references to broad disciplinary group seem to be a form of defence in that the specifics of practice cannot or will not be given.

**CRAIG RYLIE — Northern Lights PVC (Head of Faculty)**

HB    (...) Right and how has the recent legislation affected your approach to equality and diversity work in this institution?

(...)

CR    Well because universities are places where, particularly in a, faculties like this one, you know, where the Social Sciences is in the title and it is a major part of it, really. As to law and for that matter business, really, there is almost no bit of my faculty where people are not acutely aware in their research and other academic work, whether it is modern languages or whatever, of issues of identity particularly, and equality and diversity in erh, it actually affects so many of our subject areas that, that in terms of cultural attitudes and, and mind sets.

Craig makes links between psychological understanding, depicting a schema that people come to the work with, and cultural and personal values. In these terms he describes the persistent patterns of shared values, beliefs and assumptions that are a basis for the outward behaviour of his staff.

It is as if equality is a hegemonic norm produced within the discursive field that constitutes the liberal academic within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, stitching together this variety of people. Craig calls up this imagined community of academics fighting against the evil of

ignorant prejudice in the world; as if the cultural milieu of those outside academia does not equip them to question prejudiced discourses.

> CR    So I don't think that things like legislation have made a big difference there.  You know there aren't, there don't tend to, I mean I, and this is just my perception again, but my perception is in, in this faculty and generally in the university there, there are not entrenched illiberal social attitudes.  On the contrary, you know, it tends to be, we tend to be more on the leading edge of, of erhm changes, I suppose, in social attitudes.

The suggestion that they lead others in this area develops a very positive image of the group not as coming round to new ideas but being the producers of them.  The social science intelligentsia is represented as at the forefront of thinking and egalitarian actions.  A mindset perhaps stemming from a traditional view that enlightenment is a process of development from barbarism through intellectual engagement; academics are thus the natural standard bearers against the battle of irrational prejudices.  Others should accommodate their views with those of the academics, while the academics' own cultural practices become a referential model for everyone else (Cohen, 1992, p.71).

Craig speaks of the cultural attitudes and mind sets of the workers in his discipline that are aligned with considerations of equality and diversity.  This linking of personal values to the discipline is mentioned a number of times elsewhere (see Alexandria Smith below).  It works to reinforce the view of a strong culture that binds both people and their personal values.

Alexandria builds up the image of the disciplinary in-group by contrasting her discipline with others.  Here she refers to action and understanding as informed by the values that are shared between the community of scholars in her discipline.

**ALEXANDRIA SMITH — Northern Lights Geography**

**Senior lecturer**

AS    Cos I think, you know, that you, there would be much greater sympathy to these issues amongst humanities and social science researchers because, you know, they are concepts that I would deal with in my work and, you know, so and they're concepts that I would deal with theoretically and conceptually and this is, this is what we do. And particularly somewhere like geography, sociology, and politics that these kinds of concepts are politically deeply embedded in what we do and what we understand and so yeh.

As Alexandria suggests the repertoire of a community includes words, routines and ways of doing things: those 'concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, which have become part of its practice' (Wenger, 1998, p.83). These perspectives are made rigid and unchallengeable by their transmission through the generations.

The above extracts show the positive positioning that participants used in their accounts of the relevance of issues of equality and diversity to their work but there were also examples of negative positioning (see below). Just as identification with, and recognition of, the available subject creates a positive positioning, distancing, opposition and/or rejection of the available subject perspectives shows a negative positioning in the narrative construction of identity. Each stance opens up a specific view, at the same time as it prevents other ways of experiencing and understanding the world (Davies and Harre, 2001).

Michael Howe first considers the homogeneity of his own group (politics department) and that of the other group (sociology departments),

essentialising each disciplines' characteristics. As Cohen (1985, p.16) writes:

> 'the quintessential referent of community is that its members make, or believe they make, a similar sense of things either generally or with respect to specific and significant interests, and, further, that they think that that sense may differ from one made elsewhere.'

So it is with Michael (below) as he picks out differences through comparisons with others, in this case sociology.

### MICHAEL HOWE — Northern Lights, Professor Politics

> MH    Well, you know, politics is a sort of fairly traditional, it has been populated by people like myself a bit younger but you know, basically middle age, middle class, white men with glasses, you know.

The traditional nature of this group is given as an excuse for why equality and diversity is not a focus for them. Michael explains that they do not do a lot to help or to hinder the equality agenda that in their discipline the work is just a matter of teaching the subject. Thus equality issues are not central to the values and interests of the discipline, or of the individuals who are members of that discipline.

Referring to this membership in a wider group, beyond the boundaries of the department and the institution, makes practice less challengeable. Harking to a cultural identity rather than a more individual one gives claims greater authenticity; disciplines are viewed as historical entities. The historical (stability) aspect of rendering it a part of a disciplinary identity gives it more weight – like an objective truth.

> MH    Erh so uhm you go over to sociology and they are certainly erhm, you know, you notice the cultural difference

there you know that erh they are so. They sort of hop onto any kind of uhm, you know, they love the disabled you know. MH     The, the sort of, it is all disability, it is all, you know, non-traditional, you know, they kind of oh come in come in, you know. Whereas I think erhm age uhm I don't think we do a lot on that, you know the vast majority are of traditional age uhm the older ones kind of muck in. Sexual orientation, I mean I think on the whole we don't do anything explicit on that, you know. I think probably the culture, you know I don't know much about the culture of students but erh my impression would be that it is still not easy to come out at Northern Lights as an undergraduate I would think. But I don't think we do a lot to help, I don't think we do a lot to hinder, you know. But erhm I think a lot of if it is we just teach politics really you know.

Michael refers to the open doors policy in the sociology department, welcoming all sorts of non-traditional students because it is part of their disciplinary culture. The disparaging remarks "they love the disabled" and "they are so..." (left hanging), downgrades those values held in the sociology discipline. This downgrading of the equality agenda in others' work is also evident in Matthew Norton's account. Here Matthew turns away from equality as a cultural issue and makes it an economic and pragmatic one. This repositions the work as a second class activity, not bounded within the values of the discipline and interchangeably the individual. The COOPERATE programme he refers to has been running for five years and involves a number of summer schools in different academic subjects for local people.

### MATTHEW NORTON — Northern Lights, Professor of Geography

Uhm but it does, it, it does give a sort of strange position in widening access, I have already mentioned the racial thing, but it is also a kind of quality thing. Uhm so with that caveat

it won't perhaps sound too pompous if I say there are some schools on the campus, who are much more desperate to fill their allocation of places who will go for COOPERATE as a life line. I mean it is sad that the world is like that and will always be. So we're not desperate, we get, I think it's three Bs now or is it two As and a B. And can get that through the system consistently. Uhm.

From this perspective disengagement with widening participation can be considered a strategy, viewed as a freedom to disengage, a principle of academic autonomy. The quality-equality contradiction again underlines this argument. It becomes common sense that departments will only turn to the COOPERATE programme if they need to fill their spaces due to lack of demand.

This stance is often a reality in selective universities that do not have to work hard to attract students. But even within institutions, there is frequently a difference between how easily departments can attract students, constructing the case for widening participation quite differently between departments, as Malcolm notes. Institutions and departments that have no problem in recruiting target numbers have little financial incentive to widen or diversify the student intake.

I found a difference between the academics from Northern Lights and from Square Mile in these extracts. The only times that equality was equated with negative esteem and value was in Northern Lights, by Malcolm Norton and Michael Howe; other interviewees recognised it as linked to disciplinary knowledge and cultural values. Part of the association of equality and diversity with the disciplines is produced from negative comparisons by interviewees of how other disciplines react. Matthew Norton above compares his school with unnamed others who are more 'desperate' and stoop to underhand measures.

Contrast can function to create a positive image or favourably position the group the speaker is assigned to (Mckinlay and Dunnet, cited in Dickerson, 2000). Being able to take the high ground for your in-group means that through your membership you are 'worthy' and do not need to be reflexive of your own action to support the agenda. Alexandria Smith (below) contrasts those groups of which she has membership with others in the university.

> **ALEXANDRIA SMITH — Northern Lights, Geography Senior Lecturer**
>
> AS     It is language that I'd use, I would never kind of sneer or turn my nose up when those kinds of terms came up in meetings but I am very, very sure that there are people in the university who would do that. Uhm so yeh amongst the people that I work with or on committees, or amongst sort of colleagues, then I think there would always be this positive.

Her peer group is 'worthy' because they do not react in these negative ways and yet their specific responses are left very vague; it is the contrast that reinforces the positive group position. The other here is not named, but she gives a very certain outline of what they would do – a rhetorical device that makes it seem as if this has been experienced but without providing any substantiation.

Paul Matthews, below, again uses a contrast to accentuate the positive image of the disciplinary group he is a member of. Paul presumes a shared understanding with me that there are features of the engineering discipline that necessarily mean they would not be comfortable with equality and diversity issues. Again he draws on his faculty membership as support for his personal values.

**PAUL MATTHEWS — Square Mile, PVC Learning and Teaching**

PM    And so I, and issues about I mean equality and diversity, I am from the Humanities and Social Sciences, so you know whereas, I am not from engineering side. (laughs). So erh you know I am kind of comfortable with that erh and, and why I like diversity as opposed to equality.

Sarah Lewis, below, uses a more negative comparison in order to protect the positive image of her own group, which itself has not done very well (only 50% of staff having been on a compulsory equality and diversity training event), showing far less than full support for the project.

**SARAH LEWIS — Square Mile, Pro Dean Faculty**

SL    You should go and see it because it is everybody, well in our faculty nearly everybody, I think, nearly fifty per cent have seen it. Erh in engineering, erh business school it is eleven per cent among the academics and in the engineering department it is only nine per cent. Right you can say well that is really not good enough. Cos they say oh you know we don't want to, you know, it is not relevant, you know, we don't want to.

The relevance of the subject area is highlighted here as an argument given by those outside of the social sciences against spending time on the equality agenda. Reese Gail below directly makes this same link between her own group being better because the other group is worse. There is no other explanation of how her department is paying attention to widening participation other than because other departments are paying lip service to it and would rather not get involved with it. 'Presence is built on absence, identity on difference' (Sampson cited in Dickerson, 2000, p.382). Her comment may be a slip of the tongue but it still reinforces the message of negative out-group constructions as

creating a positive image of the in-group and the individual's social identity.

> **REESE GAIL — Northern Lights, Senior Lecturer Town Planning**
>
> RG    Uhm we have paid attention to widening participation in that I think there are other schools in the university who are either paying lip service or who really would rather not. Erhm I am a UTLC representative on subject review, so I actually chaired subject review so as well as having the bamboo up the finger nails I have had the pleasure of saying to other people stand by. Uhm and I think it was history so this is entirely in confidence, they say we don't do that sort of thing. Well I rather think you should, you know.

The next two sections (pragmatic barriers and student background) look at the use and usefulness of equality and diversity from the perspective of practical concrete work experience rather than these more loosely defined references to academic social identity discussed above. The first section, pragmatic barriers, attends to issues within the discipline. The second section, habitus of the student, focuses on the deficit model of the student members of the discipline.

## Section Three — Pragmatic barriers

Courses have been developed with a certain image of the normal, acceptable learner, which works back on the student body to shape their subjectivities. The dominant face of higher education is of a white, middle class male who pursues rationality and objectivity (Hey, 1997). As Morley (1999, p.33) writes 'The academy not only defines what knowledge is, but also defines and regulates what a student is'. This occurs in different ways from processes of interaction through to more structural constraints — as are considered here.

Alexandria Smith speaks of the practical barriers in leading a physical geography course with non-traditional students. She considers the possibility that it may be essential to the work for certain types of physically demanding practices to be carried out, thus making the course integrally inaccessible and discriminatory. But this leaves too negative an image of the discipline and in a reparatory move she notes that elsewhere these issues are being considered and worked through. The discipline, as a broader entity than the department, supports equality and diversity agendas.

**ALEXANDRIA SMITH — Northern Lights, Senior Lecturer Geography**

AS    But I suppose at some point, you know, for things like field work and for the physical geographers you know they are doing kind of weekly field work literally kind of in fields or in rivers. And so I think there are some big issues about access and it is the case not just in terms of disability but in terms of other reasons that might restrict students' participation in those kinds of activities and how much of that is kind of a, you know, how much of that is kind of essential to the discipline and therefore makes a discipline inaccessible. And I think quite a lot of, I mean elsewhere and I have not had anything to do with this but I think elsewhere people have been kind of doing stuff on virtual fieldwork and those kinds of processes in order to kind of enable people to do that.

James Bailey, below, also discusses a seemingly immutable aspect of the subject which makes it more difficult for certain students. Here he does not repair his negative comment but instead links the group to the wider membership of social sciences, with the effect that it is not just his discipline but everybody around James who has difficulty in dealing with these issues — thus reducing the negative association to him. His

narrative is focused on international students and there is debate within the academy about the issues created by the dominance of these students on UK courses, paralleling arguments made on the immigrant population.

> **JAMES BAILEY — Northern Lights, Lecturer in Business**
>
> JB    Erhm it sometimes creates difficulties in terms of cultural references. I don't mean I want to tell them about something like Eastenders and I can't, but erhm I teach sort of in the area of organisational behaviour and erh like a lot of social science disciplines the use of metaphor is rife. And you don't realise how much is metaphor until someone says what you mean the organisation is a machine, how is it like a machine, in what way is it like a machine? OK, you know, erhm and they really struggle with that.

The subject matter has developed in this way, it is a historical aspect of the work and thus objective. Nevertheless it is inherently Anglo–centric/Western world centred. The curriculum is perceived as the epitome of white, male, middle class dominion (Martin cited in Quinn, 2000, p.89):

> The prose and poetry, the narratives and theories, the conceptual structures and methodologies of Western Culture that the curriculum was expected to hand down to future generations were authored by the educated white man, for the educated white man, and about the educated white man and his world, or, if about other people and their worlds, from his perspective.

James essentialises the international student body, the differences between them not being important; none of them understand metaphor. The issue is not in the language barrier as such; this is easily taught elsewhere. Rather it is something much deeper and more complex,

something culturally inherent. The status quo is acceptable and justifiable in this essentialist argument (Barker, 1981; Verkuyten, 2003). The shift to essential and incompatible cultural differences as explanations rather than biological inferiority has been the trend in discriminatory practices (Verkuyten, 2003); a subtle move from racism to ethnocentricism. Academics, like James Bailey above and Alexandria Smith below, seem to draw on a kind of Bourdieusian style of interpretation of students' cultural background. But, like criticisms of Bourdieu, this is too static and essentialist, not taking into account historical change and individual variability.

The syllabus is said both to force the individual to master certain literary practices and submit to those practices. Thus the concept of the student is formed, how they should work, how they should think. The normative model of the HE student affects the development and reproduction of certain practices that reinforce this model. The discourse that suggests that students are the problem rests on a 'join the club' model (Layer, 2005, p.79) that puts the onus on the student fitting into the institution rather than institutional change to cater for different needs.

Alexandria Smith and James Bailey both give examples of responsibility transference. By shifting the issue to social context and social structural issues the problem is not theirs to solve.

Alexandria below refers to certain groups who do not find geography interesting and so do not select it in degree choices. Within this narrative she distances the responsibility for these choices away from her subject but is also careful not to place the responsibility overtly on just the students.

### ALEXANDRIA SMITH — Northern Lights, Senior Lecturer Geography

AS    I mean and then this was the same at Birmingham as well I think geography tends to be one of those disciplines

that it doesn't particularly attract mature students or overseas students or necessarily UK students who ehrm are minority ethnic backgrounds. I mean I would yeh, I think there is something about yeh which is weird considering the subject and stuff but. But uhm yeh the kind of the certainly mature students and international students would be a very, very small minority.

This comment appears to reflect a wider discussion between the geographers about recruitment issues (see Matthew Norton below). Matthew Norton more directly places this responsibility (or blame) on the students because of their background. That they have not "found" the countryside and thus do not find geography of interest. He directly moves attention away from geography as a discipline giving the explanation in terms of demographics not subject content. By discussing demography — a comfortable terrain for a geographer — the comment has more power as an informed explanation. It also moves the debate away from possible accusations of racism or cultural imperialism in the discipline.

**MATTHEW NORTON — Northern Lights, Professor of Geography**

HB   Would you say that you have seen any effects of government attempts to widen participation in this subject?

MN   No. I deliberately look round the audience and say please a black face somewhere uhm. But that may be, two things it is the subject. There's a, erhm racial minorities find, have not yet found the countryside yet, if you like, in Britain. It's uhm it is a demographic problem in that sense. And therefore not really perhaps not even have time to spend long hours on the countryside you don't get at least one of the big inspirations to do geography.

Matthew's comments create a strange image of the minorities; after all how can these people not find the countryside? It is also essentialist — ethnic minorities being perceived as somehow urban. Matthew has chosen this as his model of why one would go into geography, as a love for the countryside rather than an interest in human geography. Human geography of course is highly important and central even to studies of physical geography (for example fluvial geography considering dams near built up areas and flood plains etc). Matthew also suggests that these decisions are an aspect of use of leisure time; not everyone may choose to walk in the countryside but this does not have to affect their university choices!

The emphasis shifts in Reese Gail's account below, again discussing essentialist representations of groups but here the responsibility is on the discipline to change the attitudes of the students. People in these groups inevitably absorb and internalise the customary ways of thinking and feelings of the ethnic group in question (Verkuyten, 2003), like a quasi-biological process.

> **REESE GAIL — Northern Lights, Senior Lecturer Town Planning**
>
> RG    And I think for Asian groups I don't think planning quite hits the message the way that accountancy , law...
>
> HB    Medicine...
>
> RG    Yeh the kind of brand professions, so I don't think planning quite has necessarily permeated what might be a respectable and so I think we have got that message to get across.

It is the attitudes of the students that must change and not something within the discipline itself, similarly in chapter five it was the image and

others' perception of the institution that had to change not the actual actions of the institution and its workers.

Above the interviewees have given examples of the disciplinary incompatibility with a diverse student body; below other sides of the argument are given for the involvement of students because of their habitus.

## Section Four — Habitus of the students

The curriculum is a powerful tool embodying cultural reproduction (McCarthy and Dimitriades, 2000) whereby knowledge forms identity. Feminists have taken as one of their founding concerns the challenge to areas of male domination and in doing so have considered the curriculum extensively. The 'malestream' was a phrase that encapsulated just how much mainstream curriculum reflected male dominion and excluded women and their achievements. Feminist work on curriculum recognises its bounded and yet dynamic nature. This work has not been restricted to women: feminists have theorised the effect of giving voice to the powerless, and thus empowering them. From this stance the teacher is able to bring attention to social issues, no longer playing the role of a disinterested mediator but drawing on their own political identity positions in their teaching, to the benefit of students in the class (Ellsworth cited in Quinn, 2000). In this space teachers can recognise that they do not know about all the experiences, oppressions, and understandings of students in the class; changing the relationship of power and knowledge (as discussed further in Chapter Seven).

New models of pedagogy promote active engagement rather than a transmission model of teaching. 'Intellectuals play an important role in establishing and codifying the dominant culture's 'regime of truth' – its method of constituting knowledge or distinguishing truth from falsity,

which in turn is directly linked to its maintenance of power' (Alfox quoted in Anderson, 2001, p.139). A politics of redistributing tutors' power and recognition of multiple identities is supported, producing a non-deficit model of non-traditional students.

To some degree this reflexivity in lecturers' practice is encouraged in recent government legislation. The curriculum comes under the specific requirements of the DED (Disability Equality Duty). As such, Equality Impact Assessments must be undertaken covering at least the three current strands of academic programmes (for example using monitoring statistics to identify under-recruitment of some gender/minority groups among the students and to check whether all groups achieve and progress to a similar degree); but also applying such an assessment to the content of the curriculum and to teaching methods, materials and so on. This may not, however, be taken seriously in actual policy interpretation, as there is the possibility for lecturers to make just token gestures to fulfil requirements (the superficial effect of policy as discussed in Chapter Four); for example referring briefly to non-western viewpoints rather than making this a central tenet of the course. As Ahmed (2008) discusses, these policies do not necessarily encourage reflexivity but rather tick-boxing.

These developments have key implications for academic identities. Bernstein suggests that traditionally academic identities centred round the relationship to knowledge, what he called inwardness and inner dedication (see Beck and Young, 2005). Professional authority being based in expert knowledge; this is contradictory to the position of student informed debate where the lecturer is learner or co-creator of knowledge.

Helen Richards below talks of the possibilities in her discipline of working with the cultural background of the students in a theoretically informed way, rather than teaching them only about how to analyse other people's cultures. There is a recognition that it is possible and preferable

to value the students' backgrounds in the teaching relationship. Students bring different social, cultural and historical capitals to education (Youdell, 2007) making each experience of the classroom very different.

### HELEN RICHARDS — Square Mile, Reader in Media Studies

HR    So I do think there is this big cultural, there is a huge cultural creative activity in our neighbourhood but it is still not sufficiently acknowledged, I think, within our curriculum and it is not, you know, not addressed with the type of theoretical rigour that it actually deserves. So I think that is where we could work a bit harder actually to address, to address the culture of our students in a sense. In a serious manner, rather than once, once you get over that fence then we'll take you to the real culture you know.

At a surface level, many subject disciplines are built on faith in neutrality (Melles, 2008). Yet teachers need to be aware of the mechanisms that subjectify and challenge students. The teacher cannot be outside of the oppressive structures of educational institutions (Quinn, 2003); they are not likely to give up their own stances for those of their students, they will oppress because of their own regime of truth. The question is then, as Morley writes (1998, p.15), whether 'empowerment is a [purely] rhetorical device to disguise systems of domination?'

Davies (2006) draws together research demonstrating that teachers do not like it when their power over constituting students is made visible to them. Rather she writes that what is emphasised in education is generally the autonomy of the learner and teacher to shape them. 'Pedagogy as a key message system, has been perceived as a transformative space by feminist change agents in education' (Morley, 1998, p.15). To ensure equality, academics should be concerned with how to reflexively consider and disconnect themselves from 'the dynamics of cultural reproduction' (Britzman, 1991, p.233).

Alexandria Smith gives an example, below, of how one can include this type of background experience in teaching. Alexandria speaks of the benefit to students of having the issues made real to them from their peers' narratives of experience.

**ALEXANDRIA SMITH — Northern Lights, Senior Lecturer Geography**

AS    And I think just in terms of the diversity of contributions that they can make as well as group discussions and people I think in subjects like geography and also politics and sociology that students that come from diverse backgrounds can feed those kinds of issues. You know just talk about and the example I that at Birmingham I teach quite a lot about deindustrialisation and erhm kind of erhm yeh sort of economic change and the affect it has on livelihoods and lives and stuff like that erhm. And so we had a student at Birmingham whose, whose dad had been a miner and had been actually scabbed during the miners strike but you know for the vast majority of students that was such a, maybe something that they had vaguely heard of that there had been a miners strike in the 1980s and that was something that had happened. But to have a student who could actually talk through what that meant in her family and in her house and in her community it, you know, that sort of thing is really important. So clearly not all widening participation students come from that background but just that diversity of background with different stories to tell and, you know, actually kind of, who can actually kind of make connections to the, make direct connections to some of the stuff that we are talking about is really important.

Simon Harris, below, describes using the students' pronunciation to introduce a core aspect of linguistic analysis — analysing difference.

This engenders trust between the student and himself, it overcomes the hurdles that difference can set up.

> **SIMON HARRIS — Northern Lights, Senior Lecturer Linguistics**
>
> Uhm there are, I mean one of the fun things about the modules that I teach is that since I am interested in spoken language erhm I am interested in, you know, if I am talking about spoken English I don't care whether it is Glaswegian or Mancunian or RP (received pronunciation) or American English or New Zealand English or whatever.

Anderson (2001) and Reay (1997) both write about the importance of language and expression as observed as class differentials. They recall having to suppress their own ways of expressing and adopt middle class standards and practices for expression, which is what Simon Harris tries to challenge in his classroom.

> SH And so one of things that I try to do to make the students more comfortable with it is to indicate that, you know, I, what I am interested in, what I want you to be doing is to think about how you pronounce not how things are meant to be pronounced. So if you've got a glottal stop in pe(-)rul fine. So if you say pe(-)rul then if I ask you to transcribe the word pe(-)rul I want you to write it down with glottal stop. And you know not petrol if that is not what you say. And some of them do actually start to, to tune into the fact that I am looking at the content and I am not worried about their accent or where they are from or any of that stuff. And it actually does get over a couple of hurdles.

Jean Barkley below reflects on personal experience as integral to the subject she teaches. She notes how that, from considering the responses of students, one can move forward classroom discussion into more

complex areas, the intersection between identities in performing gender and ethnicity.

> 'Bridging the chasm between propositional and personal knowledges...it is (considered) erroneous that knowledge is fixed, certain and the property of teachers, rather it is produced in the process of the interaction of classroom engagement.'
>
> (Morley, 1998, p.16)

### JEAN BARKLEY — Square Mile, Senior Lecturer Psychology

JB      It is a good place, I mean what I like about it. I love the multi-cultural student body, I really, it is really amazing that I've got, I think, 70% non-white students here. Uhm, and it makes teaching a completely different experience, you know, what I do teaching social psychology, psychology of gender it is very much about people reflecting on their own lives, a lot of the time, and bringing it back in. And so it is really exciting cos there is a mass of diversity of experience. Uhm so for example, you know just, when I got people to try and do an exercise, where they walk in the body language of the other gender. So women have to try and walk like a man.

The best way in which students can be helped to construct knowledge is through active engagement with the curriculum (Kleiman cited in Taylor, 2005, p.371). Yet they are performing under the academic gaze of their teacher.

HB      Hmmm.

JB      So you can sort of see how people perform gender. And one of them, like before people have walked as a standard white middle class man or woman but of course in

this class people were walking in, you know, kind of as, sort of...

HB     Diverse...

JB     Yeh, black masculinities or Asian masculinities, you know, and all sorts of and also we were really seeing that interaction in gender and culture which I found very exciting.

These extracts above show how interviewees describe making use of students' experience by theorising it. Here difference can be expressed within the space that the academy offers, within this part of the curriculum.

Helen Richards, below, discusses how the students' engagement with each other in class can also be used to support learning outcomes in her subject; yet this becomes a way of containing it.

**HELEN RICHARDS — Square Mile, Reader in Media studies**

HR     And erh I had an incident once, sorry but you keep me talking. When I was first here and I was only in my fourth week and erhm and these two students really, really got into each other's hairs. To the point that they were standing up yelling at each other. And I was only new so I was like (whispers to the others), are they always like that down here? And basically one of them was a mature black student from a Jamaican background and the other one was a, a, quite a, very middle class, very certain, very middle class accent erh, white English female student. So there was the male/female thing but there was also erh the class, erh the class issue and there was a racial issue. And basically the guy had sort of almost decided that like she, you know, that she was going to get a good job at the end of it, her degree and he wasn't and he was

going to get her for whatever he could get. And then she got really annoyed with him every time he started to talk about issues. Like oh there you start with that black thing again what is it with you, you with your chip on your shoulder and he'd come back well you know duh duh duh duh and I was like. And it was like a tennis match you know. It was like oh my god. So erhm how did I resolve that? Well because I was really new and I was just doing my training as well, so I was like I want us to think about this learning outcomes about this particular seminar what can we get out of this, what can we learn from this?

The difficulty of controlling students in the classroom, represented in Helen's narrative, and allowing them to make contributions that are productive, is reported again by Jean Barkley and Natalie Rains (below). Jean notes the practical difficulty in the unpredictability of student contributions, recollecting a student discussing racism yet displaying racist attitudes against others. Natalie comments on the balancing act between student contributions and real teaching. These styles of narratives were mostly found amongst Square Mile academics, who have a diverse range of students in their lecture groups. These academics were forced to be reflexive of how mainstream disciplinary knowledge marginalised their students, whereas the academics in Northern Lights tended not to consider the education they provided in this light. Lecturers can fall into the trap of seeing race as being about non-white people (Ahmed, 2004; 2008) as if their normality was unremarkable (see also the next chapter on equality and diversity viewed as embodied in minority staff only). 'This leads to representations of race and racism that exclude white subjectivities and discourses from the practices of racialisation' (Ahmed, 2008, p.57). Yet the lecturers in both institutions were reticent or unable to reflect on their own subjective position in these lectures, the influence of their own whiteness for example.

Academia thrives on new questions being asked, 'diverse students create diverse conversations and can allow new meanings to be generated' (Parker, 2007, p.791). These can challenge the epistemic threads in the course but to great value; in this case cultural diversity can be seen as a necessity for the future of the social sciences. And yet commonality aids cohesion and cohesion aids expression and understanding, as Helen above noted.

The issues with this interactive model of teaching are recognised. By handing over some power to the students, by giving them voice, the situation is less controllable. Yet if control is maintained it makes empowerment an illusion. The lecturer (Helen above) has to be reactive and consider how to make use of what the students say to make it a learning task. So it becomes partial unless the lecturer engages in this way and gets the students to do so as well.

### JEAN BARKLEY — Square Mile, Senior Lecturer Psychology

JB      And certainly in social psychology the students bring in all this kind of stuff from their cultural experiences and it is quite sometimes quite hard to deal with, to know quite how to. Like I had one, we were talking about prejudice and I had one this Asian student started talking about her experiences and then she started going on about this gypsy who'd once hurled racist abuse. And the student was saying all these things about gypsies, which were actually really offensive as well. And it was kind of like wow how do I deal with this, this is quite complicated erh...yeh so it is sort of being aware of it a lot of the time.

Jean depicts the involvement of students as unpredictable and often emotionally charged, becoming dangerous even. Theorising the students' experience gives the illusion of participation; the fundamental power structures in the institution come into play. Like the post-colonial

exploitation of difference, it looks like the exact opposite — valuing difference — when in fact it still acts to control and manipulate.

Natalie Rains (below) discusses the importance of the quality of contributions and downgrades certain types of contribution. Again she recognises that her subject opens up the opportunity for students to contribute in a way that is beneficial to the learning of all students and thus the aims of the course.

### NATALIE RAINS — Square Mile, Senior lecturer Psychology

HB     Does it benefit your work to have a diverse group of students and in what ways?

NR     But I think in many ways you can use uhm a sort of, a diverse student population in teaching that enriches the experience for the rest of the students so you know, you have to be quite interactive and sort of use the students' experiences so that you can illustrate something you know that, that students in a different situation wouldn't have got. So at the same time you have to sort of try and balance it so that you are not just sort of entering into the realms where all you are getting are sort of anecdotes. You know so you do need to balance it. But I think I, I think it can make for a richer experience for the students; they certainly get a lot more opportunities to see things from a very different perspective and different point of view.

Although some subjects lend themselves to the involvement of students, this requires change and thus more work on the part of the teacher to deal with this new input. Thus lecturing is moved away from performance into a highly demanding interaction, which is hard to maintain in large groups. The difficulty is in what to ignore and what to acknowledge of difference — not treating it flippantly, as if "we can

discuss a bit of your understanding and experience and then move onto the real stuff".

## Conclusion

The disciplinary community was drawn upon as a very real influence on academics' daily working lives. Yet most often comparisons with other disciplinary groups were used to bolster the interviewees' own social identity in their discipline. Thus the extent to which discipline influences values, actions and beliefs amongst academics needs to be understood in light of the nature of group dynamics involved in professional life. The equality agenda needs to be championed and rationalised within these disciplinary groups, building in reflexive perspectives on the individual workers' practice and the general knowledge bases of their disciplinary community.

The equality agenda has not developed alongside or as part of these disciplinary knowledge bases and has received a different reception in each. Despite these disciplines being part of the same faculty of arts and social sciences, there is great diversity between perceptions of members. Yet comparing the two case study sites, academics showed divergence in the experiences they drew upon in their narratives. Those in Square Mile have received a broader range of students into their classrooms and have mostly made some accommodations to practice due to this. Yet in Northern Lights where this diversity was experienced, for example James Bailey speaking on the international students, there was less scope for changes to the curriculum. Furthermore in Northern Lights there were more examples of negative positioning of the equality agenda as a useful focus for their discipline, suggesting a less positive appraisal of the work and its relevance for them. Thus the academics' discourse on equality and identity was directly related to their daily experience influenced by their institution's market position.

# CHAPTER SIX — Tradition and Change

In the next chapter I draw out those references to personal aspects of identity in narratives on equality and professional life. Past experience is key to all of the accounts but how this is explained in terms of personal characteristics in self and others adds further detail to the mindsets displayed by academics.

# CHAPTER SEVEN — Personal Characteristic and the Equality Agenda

The previous two chapters looked at disciplinary and institutional identity as influences on academics' perspectives of their role in the equality agenda. Each interviewee framed themselves in the institution differently, offering personalised explanations for what they believe and practice. In this chapter the connection between the private and publicly acknowledged aspects of identity are exposed — the personal and the professional. Actors both shape and are shaped by their communities. They contribute, resist and conform to the social structures they join, so that their identities, abilities and values, formed outside of the institution, are renegotiated for life within it. These facets are re-interpreted through the lens of the community of practice they enter into within the institution, so that some things take on different meanings and values.

As I discussed in chapter two, both the heterogeneity and homogeneity among academic professionals must be taken into account when studying staff in HEIs, rather than relying on sweeping statements about imagined academic communities. There is huge variety within the academic profession created by these individuals' prior experiences and personal values, and the pursuit of individual interests. By looking at these personal accounts, I critically analyse the dominant 'normative views of academic ideals and communitarian perspectives of universal and idealistic academic myths' (Henkel and Vabo, 2006, p.127) to grasp the personalised accounts of academics on their work.

Nias (cited by Keltchermans, 2007, p.485) comments that for teachers 'self image is more important…than is the case in occupations where the person can easily be separated from the craft'. As such, academics'

personal characteristics are visible in their work performance and in interviews staff often reflected on the involvement of self at this level. The following chapter considers these references to the personal, owned representations of self that impact on the individuals' work in the area of equality and diversity, reflecting on how they describe themselves differently in terms of: physical attributes, skills, and personality characteristics. In this discussion the accounts from Square Mile and Northern Lights academics are contrasted, highlighting the influences of the different contexts in which they are expressed.

I consider these references to self from two angles; first, discussion of physical characteristics brought into play a discourse that essentialised these characteristics as not only reflecting a way to categorise people but also describing some enduring property of that person. Second, references to "skills" in the interviews were to an enduring characteristic once attained, but notably lacking any discussion of promoting its attainment. Academics' reflections on those "skills" held by individuals working with the student equality agenda brought in to discussion the nature of these people's prior experience and learning. Finally, personality characteristics were also considered a predetermined and unchanging attribute that was a benefit or hindrance to student support and other equality work in the institution.

There are particular issues raised by these distinctions between and different valuing of physical attributes, skills and personality characteristics, which have been discussed elsewhere. Soriede (2007) raises this issue in her discussion of policy texts and teachers' reports on identity and personality, rather than skills. She questions how the government can ensure getting the right kind of teachers educated if the teacher's personality is as important as the policy documents presuppose for students' learning? Is it only certain types who can teach or does teacher education itself ensure that teachers produce the right teacher identities? Characteristics such as these traverse the line between skill and personality characteristic. As such it is questionable whether they

are made an explicit requirement of the job or whether they are something which is implicitly expected yet left undefined. When do these abilities change from a basic requirement of the job, to being a skilled aspect of the work?

Interviewees employed these different interpretations of their involvement in equality work for different effect. On the one hand, the responsibility for skill (its centrality and its development) could be considered as resting with the institutions because these skills serve a particular purpose in the organisation. Yet this employs a very formal model of the organisation as managing academics from the top. On the other hand, references to personality characteristics recognise no responsibility for change, in either individual or institution, within a discourse of naturalistic humanity. The emotional labour carried out by the few does not seem to affect the socio-political conditions of the institution (Morley, 1998). It serves a micro-political function of dealing with and containing issues of oppression and difference among the few — leaving the rest of the university untouched.

The work that interviewees reflect on whilst discussing these attributes can be described as inhabiting the fields of emotional labour and interpersonal skills. Thus far there has been little research looking at emotional labour among HE academics (Ogbonna and Harris, 2004; Payne, 2006) outside of feminist writing. With recent calls for the professionalisation of HE teaching, a move has begun for the acknowledgment of this work as skilled labour and for its recognition in the HE sector. Psychometric tests have been included in the interview process of a number of HE institutions and also used to support staff development in some universities (Baty, 2007a; 2007b). These changes reflect the wider world of work, where shifts from manufacturing to service industries have meant more value is placed on emotional labour. Emotional labour emphasises the relational, rather than the task based features of work, as aspects of productive labour. This requires an ongoing micro-management of one's emotions and social skills in the

context of what Arlie Hochschild refers to as the 'commercialisation of feeling' (1983).

Thus from this vantage point it may be a special sign of 'professionalism' to be able to maintain a particular type of emotional display even when felt emotions are very different. Yet these abilities are little touched on in academic training (for example the Professional Certificate in Academic Practice course). As Macfarlane (2001, p.141) comments 'while many new lecturer programmes stress competence in teaching techniques they tend to give restricted attention to many of the ethical dilemmas which confront university teachers in their daily lives'. The resistance to engaging with these issues is apparent within the institution, through the tension between person-centred approaches and traditional visions of academic work. Walkerdine, among others, discusses how university work has developed in a way that celebrates the division between reason and emotion; where 'de-contextualised knowledge rules... the reasonable person is in love with ideas and not bodies' (Walkerdine cited by Paechter, 2005, p.16). Thus the subjective is rejected and the experiential is placed as second class. As Paechter (2005) writes, 'the mastery of reason is thus also about replacing bodily desires with those that are purely mental, about substituting the contextualised fickleness of the flesh with the pure and abstract play of ideas' (Paechter, 2005, p.16). Student support work is clearly secondary in an institution where these discourses dominate — a category of work that it is acceptable not to be good at.

In Northern Lights, interviewees' discussion of personal involvement was tightly bound up with perceived structural constraints of the system. Northern Lights academics more frequently referred to luck and unpredictability, when discussing the student support function of their role — which cannot be accounted for in an organised, routinised system. Square Mile interviewees did not discuss systemic issues even though theirs is arguably a more pressurised teaching environment with less resources and higher student numbers. Instead they referred to more

general good practice in equality drawing on institutional discourses. These dissimilarities reflect the different orientations of the institutions to teaching and to research. When equality and diversity are not culturally promoted concepts, it is possible to attach them to the uncontrollable factors of structure and accept the status quo.

I now turn to the three descriptions of personal involvement in the student equality agenda.

## Section One — Physical characteristic

In the extract below, Craig Rylie considers where the pressure for equality projects and activities originates in his institution. He suggests the motivation of those people that actively support these deeds is based on their background experience and that it is physical characteristics that create these relevant experiences and formation of motivations.

> **CRAIG RYLIE — Northern Lights, Pro Vice Chancellor and Dean of Arts and Social Sciences Faculty**
>
> CR    Uhm with, generally from the people who are most concerned. So you'll find it, that erh, so I wouldn't say it was from any... Well it could be a particular department, I mean, but if you were to say a particular department that would be sociology, probably because that is what they deal with. But I wouldn't see it really like that. I think it is, actually tends to be the people who are themselves affected so who've...

Craig differentiates between personal and professional interest in motivations for taking on work in promoting the equality agenda in his institution.

> HB     Personal experiences that kind of thing...

> CR     Yeh, yeh that's right, exactly. And erh you know, whether that is on a gender basis or whatever it might be that tends to be the case, you know. Uhm so, so that's where I would say, that's where I would actually locate it.

> HB     Yeh that's interesting.

> CR     But just as an expansion on that if you asked people to be on committees, diversity committees and just ask for volunteers it's usually somebody from one, the, you know, so called if, maybe say minorities affected or there's generally it is often not a minority but from the areas that we've already just talked about. That is what you would normally, again it is a bit anecdotal but, you know, that is what I normally find...

The "areas" he refers to are gender, sexuality, race, religion, age, disability, which we had previously been discussing. By positioning motivation in this light, Craig separates those who are likely and unlikely to do the work, those who should and should not do it. Through this process that Craig describes, one's 'expectations for the construct of another turns back upon the self' (Britzman, 1998, p.107). Britzman (1998) reflects on a piece in Bulkin's work where as a lesbian she is 'dyke-baited' by some youths and finds herself being more tough on the black adolescents as "they should know better". As with Craig, her perspective of their identity becomes a demand and a responsibility; they should be more aware of prejudice and discrimination personally.

> HB     To have that voice heard...

> CR     Yeh somebody who actually has got a disability or whatever it might be, will come forward and think and be

interested in this. Erh and I did think of trying to say oh why do we have to do that, you know, couldn't we get someone but you know, I do think it is better to try to ask for volunteers and consider it that way.

Craig essentialises the experiences of people in these groups; he simplifies their decision to carry on this work. The suggestion is that others would need to be forced (involuntarily made) to support the equality agenda in this way, implying that it is not core to the culture of the institution and its goals.

By framing their choice as self-selection for volunteering, the work is given little reward other than personal achievement for a cause. It is problematic that these tasks are divided up amongst those who may be seen as institutionally disadvantaged because this voluntary work takes academic staff away from the primary and rewarded aspects of their roles. Furthermore when *people* become champions of this work, rather than the institution, the values are embodied by individuals — not the university (Ahmed, 2006) and it is made self-reinforcing work for them to do. This is exactly what we see in Craig's interview. To have their identity recognised is to be othered by the institution and to recognise their subordination to institutional practice and constraints.

Those groups who are marginalised or in minorities carry this area of work; subordination is a willed effect the subject brings on itself and as such in taking on a subject, the individual gives itself the site of agency. Butler (1997) develops this concept, considering how subordination is required to exist as oneself but that this subordination embraces a form of power (subordination, prohibition, suppression) that threatens the self in trying to freely exist, denying any dependency.

> 'It is not simply that one requires the recognition of the other and that a form of recognition is conferred through subordination, but rather that one is dependent on power for one's very formation, that that formation is impossible

without dependency, and that the posture of the adult subject consists precisely in denial and re-enactment of this dependency.'

(Butler, 1997, p.14).

Below Charlotte Cavendish also discusses who or what is the driving force behind activities for the equality agenda within her institution. She leads this area in the institution and views herself as personally embodying these issues and knowledge.

### CHARLOTTE CAVENDISH — Square Mile, Head of Equality and Diversity Unit

CC     People pay attention to what they feel most comfortable with. And what I mean by that, is that uhm if you look at diversity across the piece and other institutions, what you'll probably find is that they may be very hot on disability because of the Special Educational Needs Act and less so when it comes to race. And I guess it also depends on whose at the forefront of, who is driving the agenda in the organisation and what is their particular profile.

She contrasts legislative demands with personal values. This creates a human-centred interpretation of motivation rather than a coldly legalistic one. The explanation points to more than a minimum standards approach.

CC     Obviously I'm, being a black female (laughs), you know, I obviously have an immediate awareness of the implications of exclusion and discrimination when it comes to both race and gender.

In racist and sexist societies most women and men of colour cannot help but know that they are embodied subjects. Hegemonic discourses of

gender and race constantly reassert the centrality of the body in different ways.

> CC    And race would speak more loudly to me than gender would but I am equally conscious that it is.  That all of the different dimensions need to be fully, fully responded to.

Charlotte considers how her personal identity links into and informs her work in the equality agenda.  She connects the understanding and experience of leaders to how "comfortable" others feel about responding to these requirements.  Whereas Craig as a Pro Vice Chancellor is happy to give this work to volunteers, Charlotte's job is to manage the cause in her institution.  Thus in Square Mile it is not the volunteers' profile that is discussed (as in Craig Rylie above) but the leader's; it is recognised that this is where the power for real change becomes more manipulable.

Like Craig Rylie, Charlotte considers that those with profiles that reflect the key areas of the equality agenda hold the knowledge that is contained within it.  Personal identity links into and informs this work.  The salience of identity is central to performance on these tasks.  By considering sensitivity or expertise as connected to physical characteristic you serve to diminish other aspects of identity (not on this embodied level) as irrelevant.

The arguments for the importance of physical identity are reiterated by Alex Tothill below.  He again essentialises his own embodied characteristics.  When one aspect of identity is made salient and taken for granted in this way, 'others are marginalised, tokenised or silenced' (Morley, 1998, p.22).  Morley writes that 'experience and analysis of one form of oppression does not necessarily sensitize one to other forms' (Morley, 1998, p.19).  In this way, in the extract below, Alex "brackets" his students within one category with himself, simplifying the issues.  Indeed, as Cohen (1992, p.69) comments, it may be harder for someone who is the object of racism to take a complex view of the issue, 'a

nuanced reading of racism's multiple forms and the matrix of identity', than for those who are distanced.

### ALEX TOTHILL — Square Mile, Lecturer Sociology

HB    So have you ever been in a situation where you have felt unable or untrained to deal with a student's demands?

AT    No, having said that I could understand that there are other lecturers who would be. But because I'm in that bracket any way I think I can identify and they can identify with me. Yeh.

Alex goes on to comment:

(...)

AT    In my experience I have found that we need more black teachers...

By his appearance, this physical display of identity, Alex believed he embodied knowledge to help students; 'the fantasy that bodies say what they mean and mean what they say' (Britzman, 1998, p.63). Thus Alex simplifies how the outward affects the inward, the experiences of day to day life as affected by one salient aspect of identity.

He not only essentialises the issues which students will face in this university but also considers that from his own experience as a black person he will be able to deal with them. Alex has recently been employed as an hourly paid lecturer and thus is a fairly new and peripheral member of the community of practice. These comments on his direct relationship (natural affinity) with the students were not heard from interviewees in more senior positions.

In Square Mile some academics' accounts also contained explicit rejections of the conflation of appearance/identity and knowledge/expertise when considering the staff-student relationship.

For example Gareth Kennedy, below, refers to this anti-essentialist view — that knowledge cannot be linked to physical identity in this instance.

> **GARETH KENNEDY — Square Mile, Professor of Sociology**
>
> HB    Well for example, and this is really only positing something that has been said in a previous interview, is that staff may get approached by students who say, oh you're black I'm black I'm having this issue you've got to support me in it...
>
> GK    I don't think it works in that obvious manner. I am approached all the time by my students. You know I used to be the joint Course Director of the Development Studies and for Refugee Studies we worked together me and my colleague. And erh but even the Development Studies students when they needed an extension when they needed a reference, when, which is a lot of work for me. But it is also very difficult why they do that. Is it because of my colour is it because they find me more approachable, maybe the two are inseparable? Is it because I am the, they think I am easy going, more easy going, or is it because I am more physically available.

Here he talks of both physical and personality characteristics, yet moves on to generalise to psychological/evolutionary factors (below).

> GK    I don't know, I really don't want to speculate. But I think probably as human beings, probably we feel easier, more at easier with speaking to our likes than others but it is really silly I mean. Should we, that should not be a consideration, you know. It is all the level of commitment. I think most of our students don't care about our colour as long as they feel we are committed.

What is important to Gareth is commitment to the job with a focus on helping students, reflecting the requirements of the teaching centred university he is in. The argument should not be left at the level of physical characteristic because this risks returning to essentialist arguments that create a division between individuals — the very perspectives that make it necessary to have the equality agenda in the first place.

> GK But you don't know I am simply guessing am I not, you know. Because I haven't spoken about this but I don't think it is a major issue.

Speaking of commitment makes it a professional issue, a characteristic of the good worker, something that can be controlled by the individual, with an onus on them personally. It is this commitment or description of the good worker which Malcolm Miller (below), of Square Mile, also picks up as the central issue.

Both Gareth Kennedy (above) and Malcolm Miller (below) shift the focus away from difference and overcoming difference to the academics' approach to the work in general. This is audible in national changes in terminology from the language of equal opportunities (and specific causes) to equality and diversity (as discussed in Chapter Four). Malcolm Miller and Gareth Kennedy both articulate that focusing purely on the physical/overt is too simplistic in assessing equality work with students; rather personal commitment is the crux of the matter.

> **MALCOLM MILLER — Square Mile, Dean of Arts and Social Sciences Faculty**
>
> MM Uhm and I think there is a tension about whether it matters that the staff, that the visible diversity of the staff doesn't match the students. For some people it is totemic. And I suspect they wouldn't really be happy until there was a

perfect match. Erh others might say well actually do our students care who teaches them? If the educational experience is good, you know. Erhm I mean I, I've managed staff from ethnic minorities and in some places there have been complaints from students about them. I've never got the impression from students that they think, well this guy is no good but at least he is Asian or he is black, thank god for that. They just want someone who is good, you know they don't care whether they have got three heads or whether they are from Mars, they want someone who is good. Who is a good teacher? That is what they want.

Malcolm provides a very empty description of the "good" lecturer in this narrative. References to "commitment" and being a "good lecturer" leave a lot to individual discretion, whereas references to physical characteristic seem to pinpoint required knowledge on overly narrow and subjective fields. There was a notable lack of reference to physical characteristics amongst Northern Lights academics in comparison to Square Mile, possibly influenced by the homogeneity among the staff and student body in this respect.

## Section Two — Skill

Natalie Rains and James Bailey both consider and unpack this notion of a good teacher in reference to skills held. As with many aspects of identity being a "good lecturer" is a complicated social construction. Natalie and James both speak of skills that can be developed and learnt, moving away from constructions of ability based on physical attribution.

Natalie Rains relates personality characteristics (humility, adaptability) to the skill of good lecturing. For her this is based on the need to support diverse learners appropriately by adapting to their needs. Prior to the

extract below she has been discussing how to involve students in the course employing a student-centred pedagogy.

> **NATALIE RAINS — Square Mile, Senior Lecturer**
> **Psychology**
>
> HB    And do you think that is something that can be taught, this form of communication?
>
> NR    I think it maybe starts with a sort of openness to ideas and different experiences to begin with. Uhm I think it also relates to a bit of humility in terms of, you know, recognising, you know, your own teaching can always be improved.

The lecturer must have the humility to be positioned as learner again, to admit that they are not the only holders of valid knowledge (as discussed previously in Chapter Six). By taking up this learner identity, the lecturer moves from being the holder of all knowledge to accepting critical comments on practice.

> NR    So need to be prepared to always change and adapt things as well. But yeh it probably is, you do need to, like I was saying earlier, so if you put sort of communicating you do need to do it in a way that is tactful but also encouraging and showing that you know you value that contribution that that the student is making. I mean maybe it is a skill that you do develop, how do you develop it? I think probably with practice but you also, I think, need a bit of feedback.

Skill is difficult to define because it is a socially constructed concept with ideological and political dimensions (Payne, 2006). The soft skills Natalie describes lie embodied in the worker adding to problems of using traditional definitions of skill because they are hard to measure or quantify. These soft skills also seem to fall outside of an understanding of skill as valued expertise (Payne, 2006).

Natalie describes an active process of developing and refining this ability. She describes this sensitive form of communication as a skill that can be cultivated. But Natalie also suggests that it cannot be just taught to individuals; instead one must participate in a community of practice, receiving feedback from peers (Wenger, 1998).

The lecturer in Natalie Rains' and James Bailey's accounts (below) is self reflexive about their practice, this ability itself being a skill or personal characteristic. Their perspective of the professionalism of HE teaching described is both pedagogic and based on subject expertise (Biggs, 1999), and has been reinforced by the QAA and teacher training accreditation courses for HE lecturers. This discourse of new professionalism and self-reflexivity of one's teaching practice is in effect an embodiment of those micro-management ideals, discussed previously in this chapter.

James Bailey's account contrasts with Natalie Rains' in his focus on making lectures interesting to students versus supporting them. With the commercialisation of HE, 'edutainment' (Morley, 2003a) is considered a profitable exploit. Higher education teachers are expected to perform emotional labour during teaching (to be enthusiastic and so on) in order to add value to the teaching activity experienced by the student. The university is:

> thus meeting its promise of delivering a hedonistic experience to the customer, while the effective academic as well as being endowed with the appropriate academic qualifications, has to possess other qualities, which are neither evaluated nor rewarded, or indeed are counter to her (sic) academic authenticity.
>
> (Constanti and Gibbs, 2004, p. 247)

Yet James comments that this ability is not actually rewarded in his institution and thus people often do not try to develop these skills.

**JAMES BAILEY — Northern Lights, Lecturer in Business**

JB    There's the PCAP programme but erhm I suspect that some of, some academics are not happy with their teaching performance but not enough, well not enough is probably putting it a bit strong but it's not, their identity is not with the teaching.

James comments that the performance of some academics in teaching does not inform their positive professional self-image, it is optional.

JB    They just don't have the motivation to improve their teaching erhm. The funniest, one of the odd things about it is the sense in which if somebody is making little or no effort. It's sort of, they do the lectures they do, they don't do them very well, they put the slides up they talk through them and it finishes. Somehow the students just give up on them.

Motivation becomes important when considering the case of skill development; it is the choice of the academic. The contrast is stark between the lecturer he describes and that of Natalie Rains' account, above. Natalie tactfully discusses encouraging students' contributions, as compared with James' references to presentation, which draws on a different model of the learner and teacher.

JB    And they don't actually oddly enough complain about them erhm so there is a sense of, there is a choice of thinking OK you can actually have, potentially have, a quiet life by being pretty mediocre but you can put a lot of work into actually thinking how can I do this better what could I do to do this differently whatever and erh. The question you asked earlier on what kind of an academic gets on really erhm it's a

truism that certainly in this country that being good at teaching is not particularly in your interests, the only way in which it is rewarding in one sense is often by getting more interesting teaching. But if you don't care and if you're quite happy to do desperately, desperately dull teaching, to huge numbers of students in exchange for being left alone then, you know uhm it's a fair trade off for you.

James Bailey reflects on this area of work that it is acceptable to be bad at. Poor performance is not institutionally challenged (unless students complain) and thus the individual can choose what skills to pursue and develop. As Ball writes (1987, p.137) the definition of acceptable behaviour often reflects 'not so much the inherent qualities of the behaviour in question, but more the assessment by those in power of the desirability of the demands being made'.

In academic circles, knowledge is viewed as a form of personal power and not knowing is largely construed as personal deficit (Wenger, 1998, p.152). Yet here the lack of knowledge in this field is passable, presenting its peripheral importance.

Both James Bailey and Natalie Rains, below, discuss the range of academic abilities that are accepted by the institution, supporting the status quo. Where James rejects this diversity, Natalie accepts difference. In her university (Square Mile) a system has been set up to overcome this variety among academics, not by homogenising them through training but promoting their different skills. From this perspective everyone has abilities in different areas, taking on the logic of the diversity agenda. Thus those without interpersonal skills have abilities elsewhere. People are placed appropriately on defining their aptitudes and the organisational mill keeps grinding, but this process does not encourage the development of these 'soft' skills.

In this next extract Natalie Rains discusses the academic's role in student support. In Square Mile a financial crisis has meant that the university counselling service had to be closed and so academics were increasingly being approached by distressed students. But in Natalie Rains' department these students were then passed on to another academic member of staff who showed a skill for this work.

> **NATALIE RAINS — Square Mile, Senior Lecturer Psychology**
>
> And also our support system reflects people's skills a lot more. For example our senior tutor whose responsibility is for either students who have behavioural problems that are so disruptive in classes or for students who are having emotional problems and struggling to cope. They are all seen by one person who is very approachable, very friendly well trained experienced lecturer. Who is by far the best person in the department for those sorts of things to be dealt with by.

The title of 'senior tutor' gives the person a specialist role, like a professional title but with no additional benefits. In a discussion of developments to the community of practice theory, Tusting (2005) suggests that one of the ways of knowing if a community has reified a particular element of practice is if it has been given a name by that community. The process of naming is one of the significant ways that something becomes reified. Thus the title of 'senior tutor' positions this work as central despite it not being rewarded. Membership categories, like this, are loci for the 'legitimate imputation of motives, expectations and rights associated with that category and its members' (Watson and Weinberg cited in Widdicombe, 1998, p.53) and Natalie (above) unpacks this in her description of the senior tutor (as "friendly", "approachable" and "well-trained").

As Natalie works in a psychology department there is a more obvious connection to professional expertise in counselling, not seen in other

subject disciplines. Thus being well trained could be a reference to professional standing, which would be less well recognised in other departments. Indeed it is clear here that Natalie Rains views it as a particular or specialist skill. As a particular specialist skill it becomes acceptable for just a few to have it, making the performance of ability just this one person's responsibility. Wenger (1998) suggests people define what they do know and do not know and do not try to know as a result of belonging to a social category (and negotiated in the course of doing the job and interacting with others) not simply personal choice. That there are specialists places others outside of this category and work; removing responsibility. The specialist here is given the title of senior tutor, reifying their position, separating this from other identities; notably with no additional pay or recognition of the work (as I was told).

Natalie Rains constructs skill in terms of key personality traits. Considering it as a skill some people have and others do not, gives value to it. Yet it is not questioned that this should be regulated, as in Craig Rylie below.

### CRAIG RYLIE — Northern Lights, Pro Vice Chancellor and Dean of Arts and Social Sciences Faculty

CR    I don't think that the personal tutor system actually ever worked. I, I just don't think it did because not every person who is appointed to a university has got the personal as you say characteristics, the skills and ability, to be able to deal with the very difficult problems that sometimes come up, you know with students. And the assumption was always even, you know, that they had the advantage of having maybe eight or ten personal tutees rather than forty five, fifty, sixty or seventy, which is clearly just a nonsense.

Sumsion (2000) notes that when faced with dilemmas we can resolve simply to live with the conflict or to reconcile the seemingly competing

values underpinning the dilemma. In Northern Lights there has not been an attempt to work through these issues, in contrast to Square Mile.

> CR    Ehrm especially when you have far less time now, than we used to have. But the assumption even then as, as we all know, I don't know what it is like now as a student but certainly when I was a student, was that people didn't relate necessarily to their personal tutor unless it was just lucky. I mean you know and they tended to gravitate towards the staff they got on with. And they would be the ones who helped them, help you when you have problems or you know write your reference, and so on and so forth.

Universities have historically developed through internal regulation (Henkel, 2000). The academics' tutoring role creates a systemic issue that has not traditionally been regulated in Northern Lights; Square Mile, too, has unevenly controlled this function across the institution (see discussion of Natalie Rains above).

In the extract above, Craig comments on skill as something that is inherent and unchangeable. It is something that is uncontrollable or not controllable by the institution; the institution cannot predict the adequacy of the relationship between the academic and student at this interface. Craig's approach emphasises that informality is best for these situations, which leaves the work unrecognised and underdeveloped.

## Section Three — Personality characteristic

Avril Coates (below), like those above, refers to the broad variation of ability amongst academics to properly support students but shifts her discussion from a consideration of skill to 'natural disposition'. The term natural disposition, again, suggests an unchanging, un-trainable essence in the individual.

**AVRIL COATES — Northern Lights, Lecturer Language Centre**

HB    What do you believe are the main barriers that staff experience to supporting students?

AC    I think one is, possibly in the schools, is possibly time. Uhm there may be a lack of training in some areas probably uhm I think the main obstacle actually in many cases is you know not having a natural disposition of doing that kind of work (laughs).

Avril considers some practices to be skill based but the main crux of the matter is academics' natural ability.

HB    Uh huh (laughs).

AC    (laughs) You know not having an inclination and, you know, an academic that has come to through the normal academic route, has other priorities and teaching is incidental. And so the role of teaching, and some people are brilliant at it, but for many it is not why they chose to work in the university and I, I think probably quite a lot, quite a lot of staff see it as a burden really and that can be quite an obstacle (laughs).

Avril describes the "obstacle" of getting academics to develop skills in teaching when they see this part of their job as a burden. As discussed later in Chapter Nine, because training is generally non-compulsory in HEIs this negative perception of the work makes it unlikely that staff will give up valuable time to try and change their practice, especially if change is seen as unlikely to affect this natural disposition, which you either have or do not.

If it is a skill it can be taught (high level skill requires more training), if it is a personality characteristic it generally cannot be taught or changed by definition (as Simon Howe below comments). Responsibility in the former is the institutions' or individuals'. The latter recognises little or no responsibility within a naturalistic discourse that accepts the status quo. Interviewees in the following extracts also discuss an element of luck — all of the narratives are from Northern Lights academics (Craig Rylie above - luck, Derek White below- wild variation, Simon Howe – below natural variability). In Northern Lights these abilities are not core to academia but a bonus and are not controlled for by the institution. In Square Mile teaching is more central to academic work — taking up far more of the lecturers' time, yet recognition and reward are still not forthcoming.

Answering a question about developing positive student-staff relationships, Simon places the responsibility on teachers. Yet this perspective is still framed within an understanding of abilities as a natural characteristic and (as he says) not a lot is going to change that.

> **SIMON HOWE — Northern Lights, Senior Lecturer Linguist**
>
> HB     Uhm do you think students can be encouraged to relate differently to staff to encourage better working relationships?
>
> SH     I think it depends entirely on the student and the staff member I mean, I think, I think some of us are fairly good at winning the student confidence, I think some of us are very bad at it.

Stressing in-group differences can be used to challenge homogenous and negative majority group representations and behaviour.

> SH    Uhm and I don't think that's, so much of it hinges on personality. Uhm I don't think there's a lot that is going to change that. Some people, some people if they are made aware of it may be able to change their behaviour, maybe be able to act differently, some people I just don't think will.

Self reflexivity is a key to change for some, for others it is a rhetorical technique which allows them to frame the problem in terms of personality, when the problem is framed in terms of personality it becomes less manipulable by the individual.

> SH    You know with the fellow who lectured to the blackboard, that I mentioned, uhm he was a real interesting guy but he has a very aggressive manner. Uhm if you ask a question, even if it's brilliant, even if he thinks it's brilliant (PHONE RINGS) just a second…

Simon referred to this person earlier in the interview, a man who could not change his practice even when he was made aware that he had a deaf student who needed to lip-read in his lectures.

> SH    Uhm he's just so off putting to students. And for a lot of them they never got around that. They never realised that you could actually approach him, it was just his manner. And the ones who did understand that and the ones who were able to, able to take him for what he was to, you know, did brilliantly they really did.

He describes this unfair barrier that students are required to overcome, why should they have to deal with this lecturer's abrupt manner to succeed?

> SH    Uhm but he put an awful lot of people off just, just with his brusque manner. His brusque manner and his very,

very loud American voice, it is not a very happy combination (laughs).

Simon accepts the status quo — some teachers are good, some bad. He does not seem to question that this lecturer should have been allowed to carry on in this style, that there was not a procedure in the university to correct it. Derek (below) further unpacks this in his discussion, referring to this as a wider systemic issue, which is allowed to continue due to the secondary nature of this type of work in the institution.

For Derek, the equality and diversity agenda in student support can be seen as maintained by a personality characteristic (not a learnt skill or knowledge); yet the university historically favours this latter form of knowledge over bodily instinct/desire/belief, which is "secondary".

> **DEREK WHITE — Northern Lights, Professor of Politics**
> DW    Hmm I mean yeh, I am not sure that pastoral work is acknowledged at all in terms of promotion or anything like that, so erhm it is very secondary. Yeh so maybe you do need a dedicated pastoral worker tutor person.

Derek seems to suggest it is best if this individual is not an academic, splitting this kind of work from the 'real' activities of the professional academic.

> DW    A lot would depend on the personality of that individual erh cos I personally think that personal tutors vary wildly. Their success, shall we say, so erh it is sort of pot luck for the students. But erh but I mean that would be another barrier in a sense if you don't.

Obviously lack of pastoral care from an academic would be a bad thing and he makes some kind of repair or justification for this comment. As he says, it is not that you ignore particular student's problems but that

generally the academic cannot spend time getting to know students. It comes down not just to the personality of the academic but the time they have available.

> DW  You don't particularly think oh I don't have time to deal with this tutee because I have got my research to do, you know, but perhaps you would become more aware of their lives and what is going on in them and deal with problems as they arise because you have got more time.

This reflection on the university's values was a common response from Northern Lights academics, an institution that prides itself on its research reputation and has a far less outwardly diverse student body in comparison to Square Mile.

Another white, male, middle class lecturer from Northern Lights, Michael Howe, gave a similar account below.

> **MICHAEL HOWE — Northern Lights, Professor Politics**
> MH  You know, I don't think erh, although, you know, the university will have its things about being proactive and all the rest of it. In reality, you know, it wants us to, you know, publish research and bring in research grants and you know to expand our numbers of research students, postgraduate students, undergraduates, you know, have to be sort of processed. You know, processed in a way that doesn't lead to too many complaints hopefully not too many drop out, you know. But erhm often I think the priorities certainly, the implicit prior agenda is that. Erhm and uhm so, you know, not many people would be erh promoted because they spend a lot of time with their personal tutees, you know.

Here students are described as not fitting in with institutional goals (!) — the speed-processing of the student as a commodity.

> MH    But I think it is more about your relationship with the students because they are not going to open up to you however much time you're available if they don't feel comfortable with you.

Trust between the tutor and student is not a measurable, predictable element in interaction but then this is similar to the nature of much of academic work.  For example, the length of time it takes to write a journal article cannot be easily predicted.

> MH    And that could be because you are just a rubbish, unsympathetic person or you just don't gel whatever it is, you know.

His comments sidestep blame because the problem is hard to pinpoint, being between the service provider and the consumer (an argument modelled also by Craig Rylie and James Bailey above).

> MH    You could be, in this department, because you are talking about very different backgrounds between the tutor and the student, whether it be ethnic or gender or whatever.

Michael refers to physical attributes and experience — the mismatch of identities between a tutor and student that create difficulties for work relationships.  As I note in chapter four, Northern Lights institutional policy also referred to the problems that may arise in student-staff relationships.  Like those arguments given by Alex Tothill and Charlotte Cavendish (pp.182-184) this essentialises identities and their effects. The above extracts from Michael, Simon and Derek give evidence to support the unconscious reproduction of traditional academic habitus that maintains traditional forms of HE and the conditions of their own production (a Bourdieusian perspective, as discussed in Chapter Two) reinforcing their behaviours.

The next few extracts are taken from an interview with Jean Barkley, from Square Mile, who describes herself as one of these "sympathetic" (Michael Howe, above) people. She is a senior tutor and lecturer at Square Mile.

Jean considers the personal differences between academics that become apparent at work, categorising those who are good at student support and those who are not, and thus those that carry out this work and those who pass it on. Again she accepts that this is not something that should be more equally distributed because it relies so heavily on unchangeable personality characteristics.

> **JEAN BARKLEY — Square Mile, Senior Lecturer in Psychology**
>
> HB    Are you aware of any particular guidelines that the university has put in place to guide your relationship?
>
> JB    In terms of equality?
>
> HB In terms of the tutor relationship generally, the personal tutoring role.
>
> JB    Yeh we don't quite have a personal tutor system here. So it is like we have uhm this is the senior tutor system, so there's just me and Paula who students will come to, generally the first port of call if it is a personal issue, if it is academic issue they tend to go to the person who is teaching that not.

Jean splits the emotional from the academic problem, viewing these as divisible parts of the person and not as intimately linked.

By referring to the 'senior tutor system', as she does, it becomes a legitimate and official division of work, even though as noted before, it is unfairly divided. Here the 'system' was different to that in the rest of the Square Mile departments I visited; they were working outside the traditions of the university's personal tutor provision.

> JB    So they don't have the same tutor all the way through. So we have really made up our own system and that is the way it works. And I think it is quite good cos in the past... In fact one of the things that came out when I was doing my PhD research was the personal tutors were so diverse. Some people would have a lovely tutor who would sit them down with a cup of tea and some people had some really harsh somebody who had no time for them. And in a way our system kind of gets round that cos it picks the people who want to do that kind of work and gives them that role.

The system sorts out those who have an internal motivation rather than experience an external expectation (i.e. from the university). These personal values or personality characteristics are not something that can be trained and accounted for.

> HB    Yeh it does seem to work.

> JB    Yeh. It is swings and round-abouts cos you can see it is quite nice for someone to have one person to be their port of call all the way through but unfortunately that does rely on everybody being a really good personal tutor which not everyone is going to be.

Jean Barkley (below) describes the effect she personally feels from this disparity in the reward and value system in her university (Square Mile).

**JEAN BARKLEY — Square Mile, Senior Lecturer in Psychology**

HB    I think that is something I am finding that some lecturers sort of do it informally and have their door open kind of...

JB    Yeh exactly and that comes back to the respect though. It would be nice to be recognised that yes the reason that I don't have any more publications than I do is because my door is always open or the reason I am not doing a massive administrative role is cos I am but it is just not recognised.

Jean Barkley describes her work as a tutor as central. She is a core worker in the department; other academics recognise her abilities and pass on students to her and a colleague. And yet her activities are not core to the department in a way that is recognised with esteem or monetary value. It is as if this work is on the periphery of the institutional agenda still. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 37) write 'the ambiguity inherent in peripheral participation must then be connected to issues of legitimacy, of the social organisation of and control over resources, if it is to gain its full analytical potential.' Thus considering peripherality by these identifiers, Jean Barkley is certainly peripheral. Even long standing members can be kept in marginal positions to the point where forms of participation actually become entrenched in the landscape of practice (Wenger, 1998). This can lead to an identificatory moment (James, 2005) where 'a person is accommodating in participation and yet is experiencing an exclusion from any "normative" or unproblematic identification with practice' (Hodges, 1998, p. 273). Thus Jean Barkley's position is justified, legitimated and self-reinforced; yet in terms of academic identity her role is peripheral. It is not legitimated in terms of what is rewarded in the institution and the sector

by not conforming to the vision of full participation promoted by the dominant discourse.

Paechter (2005, p. 9) considers how women are 'co-opted away from 'the main focus of activity', such as a strong focus on research, to take on other community-centred activities such as quality assurance audits or student support. Like the 'academic housework' that contract researchers are underpaid to perform (Oakley, 1995), this is essential work to the institution but not given equal value to other roles; 'selflessness is what the university simultaneously asks for and undervalues' (Paechter, 2005, p.32).

Although people had been promoted for teaching in Square Mile this was not the case for other areas of student support; the nature of the assessment of promotions makes giving recognised and valued evidence of support role very hard (Young and Menon, 2007).

Paul Matthews is Pro Vice Chancellor of Learning and Teaching in Square Mile and he comments (below) on the difficulty in gaining promotion for teaching effectiveness.

### PAUL MATTHEWS — Square Mile PVC Learning and Teaching

PM    They think that if I'm a good effective classroom technician operator, you know, I do well with my class I give good feedback well that's it, isn't it?  Well it is not, it needs to be embellished with recognition through national networks, you know, writing up things and so on, so it is quite rigorous in that regard.  So I think although the strategic thrust of the university is right because we are a teaching led university with an emphasis on applied research, we aren't research, we're not like Cardiff.  Uhm but I think it's, there has been a painful transition for many academics here.  Because a lot of people who have given their life to the

university now find that they are kind of sealed off from making that jump you see. But then again you know. Erhm they need to get out and about a bit more. It is a pretty insular university sometimes.

Paul suggests that lecturers who have devoted their career to the teaching-centred vision of his university find it hard to adapt to the RAE process to gain recognition. Across the sector this trend has taken hold with teaching-only posts less well rewarded and lucrative research-only professorships used to attract high flying academics in the lead up to the RAE. As James Bailey noted (pp.166-167), bad teaching goes unpunished, and good teaching is hard to reward.

Promotion for student-centred teaching in Square Mile is very hard to achieve, and pursuing it may cut off chances of a career in universities with a research focus. It is a risky business for these academics, creating a gulf between selflessness and self-interest, between one's duty to others and one's duty to self (Sumsion, 2000), as Matthew Lowry comments below.

### MATTHEW LOWRY — Square Mile, Senior Lecturer Planning.

HB    Based on your experiences erhm what kind of an academic does well in your department or the university more widely?

ML    The only academics that do well, when I say only I mean 99%, are very selfish, very self-centred who focus on research. That's 90% I would say of people who advance themselves in a career way, and everybody notices that and everybody erh understands that that is going on. In my experience I don't know of ever a colleague that has been promoted up to say Professor or Head of Department who

> hasn't had those characteristics of self-centredness and extreme ambition...

The concept of one's career is the height of pursuit of individual values. Individualist goals and motivation for development in equality work are not supported by institutional structures that would make ability in student support centrally important. As education relies on competition and ambition, the caring academic would be positioned as other as they work outside of the individualistic processes that the academic body has been constructed with in mind (Reay, 2004).

> ML    So erh and in a way it is a bit of a shame because Square Mile is really a teaching institution, as much as it likes to think of itself as a centre of research excellence, and there is some research excellence it is effectively a teaching institution.

Henkel and Vabo (2006, p.152) discuss the effect of the RAE describing it as 'revitalising a myth of profound personal and political importance' that academic identities are grounded in research. The RAE set up huge competition for funds between universities, so that previously teaching only institutions now competed for this money and questioned their own values toward research (Henkel and Vabo, 2006). Here in Square Mile Matthew recognises the tension between the teaching focus and research ambitions of the university, placing the issue within a wider systemic model.

> ML    But because of the RAE and things like that it has found it very difficult not to be drawn onto the research treadmill, so, so I don't blame my colleagues for being selfish and driven and ambitious and I don't blame them because the institution itself sets things up to reward people who have those characteristics.

Jean takes this work seriously as part of an officially (locally) recognised role (senior tutor). Paechter (2005) cites Francis' work on school children noting that boys and girls allocated responsible tasks would approach them differently, boys slipping out of their duties to play football and girls taking them more seriously. Francis thus introduces an explanation for the development of gendered differences in approach to community upkeep tasks as originating at very young stages of development, again making these motivations untouchable (Paechter, 2005). As Paechter (2005, p.30), among others, asserts the institution positions women as 'emotion workers' with more students to see making them less able to follow the flight of their ideas (and work on the core tasks of academia); creating the 'cooption of gendered patterns of caring into the educational workplace' (Morley, 1998, p.24). These gendered differences among academics' accounts were evident from comparing their narratives, yet staff more strongly implicated other personal attributes (skill, personality characteristics or physical attributes) within the structure or stricture of their institution, than to concepts of gender difference that employ different essentialist notions of identity.

Jean Barkley struggles with her peripherality but the reward of personal fulfilment, playing to her strengths, is enough to keep her invested in this work (see below). She is an autonomous actor and yet to satisfy both her personal values and the demands of her job she has to forgo the promotion possibilities created by conforming to other work roles. Jean describes how she reinforces her position choosing to act in this role.

> **JEAN BARKLEY — Square Mile, Senior Lecturer in Psychology**
>
> JB  Yeh, it's nice to talk to someone about it and think yeh I do love it. And the personal tutor bit, I mean that, you know the, when I get to sit down with a student once in a while and talk about you know where their career is going or if they have got a personal issue. You know, I know that's the thing, I always get like positive evaluations on is that I am

really approachable. And that that, you know not all staff want to do that side of it. It's not, it's not every ones...

HB     Thing...

JB     Yeh but that's what I love doing and I have to remind myself sometimes that that is going to take time, that I may not be able to be just as prestigious as some other staff members in terms of publications or be able to do quite the rigorous research that they are doing or whatever. But that's because I am doing other things which are my strengths. You know it is very easy to feel like you should do XY and Z that you should be great at all things. And I think it could be quite a, quite a skill to recognise that actually these are the bits I am actually really good at and maybe I should try and focus on those rather than try and do everything.

Implicit in these extracts 'is the influence of cultural norms on selecting the appropriate person to perform different jobs' (Steinberg and Figart, 1999, p. 17). Whether this is by gender or other varieties of personal attributes it becomes self selection on perceived personal strengths or characteristics and the exploitation of this by others in the institution.

The inherent tensions in professional identity may lead to non-participation in which there exists 'a split between a persons' activities and their relations with participation, a rupture between what he/she is actually doing and how he/she finds themselves located in the "community"' (Hodges, 1998, p. 273). Thus Jean is a senior tutor, one of two in the department, a key figure yet she does not feel that this is reflected in respect among colleagues and others in the institution.

Nuria Lawson of Northern Lights gives a narrative (below) that contrasts sharply with Jean Barkley's, (above) of Square Mile. Being in different institutional contexts frames each academic's perspectives and

discussion to different effect, but also contributing to this difference, Nuria has achieved a professorship. She is an internationally recognised scholar and, as she said herself, can pick and choose her work and do what interests her. She considers student support work as a personal and emotional endeavour.

> **NURIA LAWSON — Northern Lights, Professor of Geography**
>
> HB    Do you recognise a sort of duty of care for your students?
>
> NL    Yeh I feel dreadful, I feel. I think I have this thing now which you go through of getting jaded.

The link between emotion work and burnout has been investigated in-depth by Zapf (2002). Such burnout is linked to emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation (no longer being able to express emotion properly and permanently unable to feel normal feelings) and reduced personal accomplishment. If institutional research is rewarded over student support, this use of time and energy may leave the academic with a feeling of deficit rather than fulfilment because it is not reinforced institutionally. As Sumsion (2000, p.167) has written reflecting on the tensions in her own practice, 'how to enact my commitment to professional practice grounded in an ethos of caring for my students, without being drawn into the abyss of endless and ultimately disempowering emotional labour that caring can entail'.

> NL    And I, you know, I have this, everybody gets one chance with me, you know. And that erhm, you know, and to say "rahs" and whatever I know it is prejudiced and uhm I am trying to fight that and I am trying to give everybody, no matter that they might sit in there tutorials, erh my tutorials and take their shoes and socks off and I have to tell them not to, or swing on my chairs.

Nuria tries not to discriminate against the dominant group, yet she calls them the "rahs". It contrasts to Jean Barkley's account; the narrative of care is punctuated with negative comments about the students. 'A concern for ethics is the defining characteristic of professional identity' lecturers must use their power 'in a wise and just manner' and treat their students equitably (Macfarlane, 2001, p.142). Nuria suggests she is unable to hide her prejudice against certain groups of students. As such it would seem that this facet of teacher identity is not something that Nuria has considered as central to her personal effectiveness in this area.

> NL    Everybody gets a chance and I always try to be like very enthusiastic, and incredibly enthusiastic about what I do and get people to come and talk to me. Uhm and I think the times when I haven't done that I know I have needed a break. But I feel terribly responsible towards my students. I mean I can particularly when tutor groups when I get to know them, I can worry about them a lot and I, I have a huge, I mean I don't have kids and I am now at the age.

Her interaction with students involves a personal and emotional aspect of her work. She is talking about herself as a pseudo/surrogate mother for her students. Nuria personalises her relationship with the students, taking pride in their development (see below).

> NL    You know before when I started off it was like I would be mistaken as a student, and I was like suit yourself but, you know, that never happens any more. And I have gone through oh she is a batty Latin American poncho wearer and that is how, and now I am old enough to be their mother and. But all through that time even when I was twenty one I had a, or twenty seven sorry, they were twenty one. A major sense of responsibility towards them, I can, I kept. So like when they leave like my tutor group last year, I felt...

> HB    Sad?

> NL    Yeh and I was really proud actually and I couldn't be here for the graduation, which is very unusual for me. Uhm erh but yeh if there's a problem I can feel very worried for them. Like there was even a student last year who was a rah, he was a lazy bugger and he was fine in himself but he went into uhm Sandhurst and you know personally I don't particularly agree with, with that in my own politics but obviously I would never say that to him. And I had to do references for him and I couldn't write glowing academic references for him because, you know, he was bone idle and he wasn't terribly bright and uhm. But I worried for him when he went into that and I have subsequently worried about him, even though you know he was not a student that I particularly liked.

Here Nuria's discussion reflects the 'patriarchal ideal of motherhood as the fantasy of over-accommodation' (Morley, 1998, p.23 citing work from Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann) – suggesting that however unsupported and under-resourced teachers may be, they need to be constantly available to meet others' needs. Yet, as Nuria describes, this is within a paradigm of dislike of students, who disrespect her room and authority.

> NL    So I think that, the, that sense of care erh that vocation to care. So I did it when I taught in smaller rooms I think its erh yeh.

Nuria's comments on her "sense of care" for her students, which implies a special gift she has, a calling for the job, her vocation to care. Nuria demonstrates how she goes further than the outlined responsibilities of

her job, the requirements in her contract, in her emotional involvement with her students.

These accounts about personality characteristics and the student equality agenda support the notion of this area's peripherality to the main work of the institution. This was evident in both Northern Lights and Square Mile academics' accounts.

## Conclusion

From these extracts it is clear that the personal is not easily captured within a system that has been overrun by measurement, because it is difficult to quantify. There is an element of uncertainty, or luck involved in this field. Often any gaps in provision are distanced by academics to larger structural issues rather than being positioned as the responsibility of the individual actor.

By defining ability in this regard according to physical characteristic, personality, or skill, the work of the equality agenda (in student support) is placed within different value systems and structures of responsibility. What one can reasonably be asked to do in one's profession, what can reasonably be considered requirements of the job, comes into question.

The unchangeable and enduring element of these individual performances creates an impenetrable barrier to change, which could underlie many of the problems in this area of work. Yet because they are clearly intimately linked to institutional contexts, there should be some element of managers asserting control. By referring to an ability or interest in emotional labour as part of the identity of the academic worker, the responsibility of the institution and the power of specialists in promoting it are negligible. These accounts seem to marginalise the work as secondary, implicitly reinforcing traditional forms of higher education.

These previous three chapters have developed a representation of how support for the equality and diversity agenda is performed by academics. The analysis of these narratives has shown a number of linguistic actions academics use to justify their (dis)engagement with equality and diversity. The next two chapters build on this by considering the relationship between the specialists, the institution and academics. First in chapter eight I engage with the particular professional issues created by this difficult union.

# CHAPTER EIGHT — Unity, Visibility and Recognition

The following two chapters are based on an analysis of interviews with four specialist staff with a remit for equality and diversity (two in each institution). These four specialists held various job titles and their work covered a range of remits for supporting the equality agenda in their institutions. As I discuss in this chapter, the disparity between their roles is endemic to the nature of the project in HEIs currently.

Working within HEIs, in a relatively new area, specialists have found it hard to carve out a space for themselves within the institution – to be recognised as members of the university on a par with others within that community of practice (HEEON and ECU, 2007). Adding to these difficulties are the internal debates between equality and diversity practitioners, for example in constant contestations of meaning and terminology, and a lack of a core integral direction to the work that makes it hard to communicate the goals to others.

The work that these specialists carry out is described differently across the sector and varies between the case study institutions in how it is integrated into the machinery of the university, so that it is hard to compare services across the sector (HEEON and ECU, 2007). Such diversity makes for a loose, disparate community of practice for equality and diversity specialists working across public and private spheres. It also prevents a routinised approach to the work, each specialist adapting to the culture in their institution. In comparing Square Mile and Northern Lights specialists I found their viewpoints were influenced by actors various positions in the university and so it is hard to draw firm comparisons between the two groups. Whereas the academics have been more obviously controlled by the objectives of their institutions, the specialists appeared to occupy a position peripheral to these goals.

In this chapter I bring together the issues around identity, brought out in the previous three chapters. At points throughout I reflect on how specialists reinforce and resist the academics' discourses in their own approach to the field. For example, where academics refer to surface level involvement in the work and hark back to institutional successes in image construction, rather than their own active involvement (Chapter Five), specialists also maintain the importance of image construction based on conforming to institutional targets and measurable outputs of success, moving away from a focus on everyday practice. As highlighted in chapter five, the problem of dissonance between images held by academics, managers and external stakeholders (Cornelissen et al, 2007) was implicit in the academics' accounts. These differences also created practical issues for specialists in a number of ways, as I will examine. Yet specialists seemed not to challenge these inhibiting regimes but organised their work to fit within them. The value of their work is reported as integral to the institution in numerous policy documents (Chapter Four) yet in reality their work was little supported with resources and was frequently subordinated to other more core activities.

In order to inform my understanding of the issues faced by equality and diversity specialists in HEIs and aid my data collection, I attended a number of national professional conferences for equality and diversity specialists (ECU, 2006; HEEON and ECU, 2007). These conferences served to update specialists' knowledge and share good practice but also to have their concerns raised and compared. This latter point was most central at the Wolverhampton conference where a joint ECU and HEEON report was launched compiling results from a national audit of equality and diversity specialists in HEIs. Many of the concerns raised were also reflected in the interviews with staff in my own research: in a lack of recognition and reward manifest in small budgets and few staff, and isolation of specialist workers in the institution. The sharing of these difficulties in promoting the agenda in institutions reportedly led to

a polarisation of staff groups within the university, but a unity through this common identity amongst specialists from different universities.

In this chapter I turn first to these specialists' narratives on some of the issues within the subject area itself (equality and diversity) and in their interaction with "externals" (other workers in the institution) caused by a lack of unity among the specialist staff themselves and lack of a unified approach. Second I explore comments on the visibility of the work. These problems of disparity have meant that it is hard to organise the work around core purposes and goals for the institution causing difficulty in making their achievements visible to others. Finally, due to the lack of unity and visibility of the work, specialists often referred to inevitable problems in gaining recognition of their objectives and support from managers and academics alike in their institutions.

## Section One — Unity

Below Kirsty highlights integral problems to the equality and diversity agenda drawn from the lack of core agreement on seemingly simple issues.

**KIRSTY ANDREWS — Northern Lights, Manager of Academic and Student Support Service**

HB     Uhm one of the things I am interested in is how different universities approach these activities differently. Uhm I know you have been in this institution quite a long time but can you compare it to elsewhere?

KA     It does seem to be very varied and uh it does seem to be very difficult sometimes to pinpoint what others are doing because of the terminology we use. Not everybody calls it welfare and I agree entirely with, with that because I think

welfare is a terrible name. We are trying to find something a bit more sort of user friendly if you like.

Image construction can be viewed as a primary task in equality (to attract and pacify external stakeholders and auditors). Academics also described image presentation as core to the work around equality, missing the point of this agenda (Chapter Five); focusing on changing how external stakeholders perceived their institution rather than actually changing the university's culture. This approach bypasses any critical analysis of the deep-seated institutional changes that are required for long lasting transformation. Kirsty (below) seems to portray a self hate or despising of this work because of the seemingly facile attention to surface issues.

HB      What kind of things have you thought about?

KA      Uhm well we have talked about all sorts of things but because we operate in a sort of very P.C. environment in our area of work (laughs) there have been objections to everything. I think the thing that we have come down to in the end is wellbeing which is much more positive than welfare which has connotations of the welfare state and so on and so on.

This area has a long and varied history of success and failure, with a number of negative connotations attached to phrases (Neal, 1998), complicating work within the bounds of this historical identity.

KA      So uhm though one of our teams is called counselling and wellbeing, so that's we are going to have to rename that first before we do it.

HB      Hmmm. It will take a bit of time.

> KA    It is a bit of a nightmare.  But the amount of time we have expended on that because we, what we don't want is to have a name which doesn't reflect what we do, because otherwise students won't come, yeh.

The very nature of the equality agenda, which places so much emphasis on identity, ensures that the labelling of the work is very important because of the implications for identity it provokes.

> KA    So, so that makes it difficult to compare with other universities as well because if you look for people doing a search on the website you will find them under all sorts of things and they'll be put together in slightly different ways. And I suppose there are in all services but you might find the counselling team somewhere else entirely, maybe with occupational health even.  Or you might find the disability team is not in, is not part of welfare but is something else entirely so it is hard to compare...

> HB    Yeh.

> KA    Uhm, although the type of provision that is available is often the same it is erhm yeh it is put together slightly differently.

This lack of common terminology and common placement of specialists in the institution made it hard to consider the sector as unified and uniform (Wenger, 1998).  Yet each specialist referred to unity as important for the development of the work.  This issue is also reflected in wider changes to the structure of the equality campaign nationally, with the reorganisation of the three equality bodies (CRE, DRC, and EOC) into the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) in 2007 and the internal problems created (Matthews, 2007).

Kirsty Andrews comments on the importance of the distinctiveness of her team, in the extract below. A unified image, not fractured and disparate, is considered important for clear direction in the work and recognition both internally and externally. Like the discipline, the community of equality specialists spans across institutions and yet it needs to be firmly embedded in the institution as a core entity, for the specialist to be able to contribute to institutional life (Wenger, 1998).

**KIRSTY ANDREWS — Northern Lights, Manager of Academic and Student Support Service**

HB    What are your big successes then do you think since you came in, can you reflect on any successes?

KA    Getting the erh service into three distinct teams. Before that there were certain groups of individuals that didn't belong anywhere they just sort of muddled along. And didn't have a sort of a team leader...

HB    Right, direction.

KA    Didn't have a clear direction, yeh, that's right. And I think that having, well getting a new website as well that has been introduced that was not my work but uhm I have sort of driven it forward if you like uhm and that has also meant that it is much easier too for people to, for externals to understand what we do.

In Kirsty's narrative, visibility and unity develop together.

HB    What is going on here.

KA    Yeh what our structure is and how to access the services, whereas previously it was a little bit splintered, I think, and certain individuals felt a little bit secluded and lost

because they weren't quite sure where and how things were put together; and weren't getting or getting limited direction as well. So I think bringing it together in a more robust way has probably been the erh biggest achievement.

This concept of 'unity' was also problematised on different levels, for example in Penny Griffiths' narrative below. Unity can provide a clear identity for the specialists but threatens the goal of embedding the aspirations of their work in that of other members of staff by hoarding it within just their remit.

### PENNY GRIFFITHS — Northern Lights, Equality and Diversity Officer

HB    So you appreciate the way that is organised here, that you have some sort of overlap here between students and staff or did you think New University had it better?

PG    Uhm I'm torn, I did feel that New University had a, a better chance of embedding it into the managers' responsibilities and academics' responsibilities because there wasn't a specialist and when there was a specialist I suppose because we did have an equality and diversity adviser, for a while, it was, it was, it was seen as something else, somebody else's responsibility. And although this, I think this job has been brought in to develop the function a bit more than it would have been before.

The key role of the equality and diversity specialist is to hand over responsibility for this area to academics and other staff and mainstream it into their work (Burrett, 2002). By aiming for a unified and recognised entity to lead the equality agenda, responsibility for the work can be removed to those practitioners alone; the specialists being viewed as acting as interpreters for the rest of the institution (Gumport, 2005). Furthermore the specialists must ensure that the institution is keeping

abreast of this rapidly developing subject, and yet they are caught up in making sure that institutional members are aware of the basics of good practice.

The distinctiveness that Kirsty Andrews (above) describes can be hard to maintain when the unit is embedded in other departments. Penny Griffiths, below, comments that their purpose can get lost when the workers are entrenched in other divisions.

> **PENNY GRIFFITHS — Northern Lights, Equality and Diversity Officer**
>
> HB     Uhm what is it like to work here in this department?
>
> PG     What is it like to work here…Uhm we're in the HR section but we've also got a student remit uhm and at a times that does seem to be a bit odd. In that our line managers they are very much focused on staff and policy development and don't really take a role automatically in their jobs to deal with student issues as, as such. Although they are interested in developing staff, because staff development is within HR, develop the teaching staff to teach the students.

Penny describes the difficulty in translating her work in order to embed it in the remit of her colleagues. Her practice does not always fit into the goals of the department she works within.

Changes to the 'team' in Northern Lights in order to create a unified service (as Kirsty Andrews comments above) had most obviously been made on an abstract level (being named as under the academic and student service umbrella), arguably taking the cheapest route to ameliorating the issues. Below, Kirsty comments on the concrete division between members of the team caused by geographical location, which is harder to change.

**KIRSTY ANDREWS — Northern Lights, Manager of Academic and Student Support Service**

HB    So did that involve an actual geographical move were you all sort of brought into this building?

KA    No and that, that's reminded me I suppose of another tension in that student welfare as a fairly new as, as a unit uhm so we consist of the counselling team, the disability team, and the financial support team. Each of which is on a completely different site.

HB    Argh right a different...

KA    Yeh site geographically, so that does make it quite hard to work as a team because, in fact we are on five sites, which, which isn't good when you are dealing with a student in distress because you are having to deal with. And it does mean that you can't just popped next door to speak to colleagues and to

HB    To update...

KA    Or just to sort of keep contact and to maintain a link, if you like, a bond, if you like. So erhm that makes it difficult as well.

Terminology is important but geographical location reinforced group relationships in concrete ways. The physical constraints served to impede the integration of the teams.

Not only was placement of the work problematised by staff but its integral unity too was commented on. Penny Griffiths (below) explained that it is hard to define a remit for the work when the subject is so fluid.

**PENNY GRIFFITHS — Northern Lights, Equality and Diversity Officer**

HB      Uhm do you think part of your job is sort of culture change in the institution?

PG      Culture change yes, it is the remit for, for HR generally, it is in the corporate plan to make the culture fit what we need to do in the future that will make but not make the culture, you can't make a culture. Uhm but the, in reading that question last week was our registrar Pat Heldon uhm it is really difficult to know what the culture is.

The meaninglessness of corporate speak in the institutional plan was highlighted after attempts to interpret cultural change for actual work tasks, taking the macro-level policy through to its micro-level implications. Elsewhere writers consider that culture change initiatives are nothing more than exercises in ideological transmission (Strangleman cited by Bishop et al., 2006) — not really engaging the actors involved. Rather that these projects attempt to force a set perspective of institutional life that academics do not share. In this case the idea of cultural change promotes a fashionable management perspective, framed in this vacuous management speak, rather than having a direct effect on improving practice. 'Culture change', as I have discussed in chapter four, has become a popular phrase, perhaps because it has such a tenuous impact.

PG      And erh because he is interested in conveying the culture to new staff, that's the induction programme for new staff, so we went to him, what do you think the culture is?

'Participation is never simply the realisation of a description or a prescription' (Wenger, 1998, p.68) — the interpretation of this phrase, "culture change", by different members of the institution will vary but

strong leadership from the front is important, not in empty words but practice that reinforces policy. Reification is not merely an articulation of something that already exists (Wenger, 1998); it creates the conditions for new meanings.

> PG    And he didn't really know. But, so it is one of those things that is a bit like jelly it depends on your perspective what your culture is and it varies throughout the university, depending on where you work, what your profession is. Uhm and trying to look at the signs and symbols of a culture or the way we behave the words that we use. It's, it is one of those difficult things.

Written policy can rarely capture the complexity of culture and so this aspect of institutional life is made inexplicit and loosely defined. Change may be mentioned in passing but not rigorously worked through in policy. This "cultural change" cannot be measured and predicted and thus even though it has gained credence, it does not fit within new managerialist forms of governance. It can remain in a hypothetical state.

The unity between these practitioners is also complicated by the dynamism of the equality and diversity sector. Andrea Burton discusses the difficulties in keeping up to date with rapid changes. Here the issue is in the progressively developing nature of the work and how it can be communicated through the networks of the university.

> **ANDREA BURTON — Square Mile, PGCHE Staff Trainer**
>
> AB    So you know getting people aware of what is there, and that is part of my job, it is only a small part, part of the course is to, you know, making people aware of diversity policies and erh strategies and regulations and uhm procedures and so forth. But sometimes I get caught out myself cos someone will say to me I don't think we do that

> any more and I will say oh don't we and they'll say no I think
> it changed last year. And I'll say well I missed that.

The policy output in the institution changes frequently, erasing and degrading knowledge. The power of the specialists as controllers of this knowledge and its transfer is lost in this process and they are no longer the experts. Frequent policy change is embedded in institution wide transformations — the HE sector having evolved massively over the last ten years and with further volatility expected most obviously due to ongoing changes in funding mechanisms (for example with the end of the RAE).

The problem Andrea describes here also highlights her peripheral position in the institution, not being at a management level where these policies are written nor at an academic level where they are intended to take effect.

Below interviewees link these issues of unity to a lack of visibility of the work and, in the final section, a lack of recognition.

## Section Two — Visibility

A preoccupation with making things visible is necessary to support a general new managerialist focus on performance indicators, positioning the institution as audited/auditor (Strathern, 2000a). Yet this task did not marry well with the remit of equality and diversity specialists, whose job in mainstreaming and promoting good practice appeared to be counter to this ideal. This brought criticism of their work from other institutional members. As Malcolm Miller (a Dean), below, commented "what effect do the specialists have, what do they achieve?"

**MALCOLM MILLER — Square Mile, Dean of Faculty.**

MM  Uhm, I think that, erhm, there are also, there are also perhaps tensions about what difference any of this makes. So we have got an equality and diversity unit in the centre, we've got equality and diversity policies, so if you actually said to people who were actually running these things and responsible for these things, OK write me a five hundred word piece of the difference you have made this year, what would be in it?  What would be in it?

He asks for examples of measurable differences made by the work employing a concept of accountability and transparency (and mistrust) endemic to the audit culture in HEIs (Strathern, 2000b).   Yet this demand for visibility contrasts with views of the work as embedding good practice.

The specialists too described the issue of how their work can be made visible.  From the stance of administrative logic it is hard to flag up clear inputs and outputs so that achievements can be made transparent to others.

Kirsty Andrews considers the misfit between the aims of measurement and her work.

**KIRSTY ANDREWS — Northern Lights, Manager of Academic and Student Support Service**

HB     Yeh, yeh.  Erhm what do you have any targets for projects that you are running at the moment or training schemes you are running at the moment?

KA     Uhm.

HB     That you can remember.

KA    We uhm we don't yet have, I haven't yet developed key performance indicators or anything like that in terms that. It is quite hard in our area to have targets in that it's difficult to judge what is a good thing or not, what proportion of staff we have accessing counselling or students, or do we want to reduce the numbers.

There is a tension between the aims of her unit to raise awareness, which would be measured by access to the service, but also to reduce the number of problems in the institution, which would be measured by a reduction of access to the service.

HB    (laughs).

KA    So erhm we are looking at developing some meaningful indicators. Cos numbers aren't always the, the way to do it in our area. So erh. Do we have targets uhm I should of thought about this before I am sure we have. I can't remember but, but we are looking at ways in which can measure ourselves and erh uhm we have evaluation schemes and so on. Yeh.

When working in the university it is important to be able to fit into this pattern of objective, observable measurement in order to display your productivity but also to justify your existence as institutional players. The defensive tone in Kirsty's narrative is clear with comments like "I should have thought about this before" and "we don't yet have".

Penny Griffiths too describes this quantification of the work as oversimplifying the issues.

**PENNY GRIFFITHS — Northern Lights, Equality and Diversity Officer**

PG     It is hard to know, for example when I was talking to the head of QUILT, who is our Quality in Teaching and Learning section, uhm I think they do address the issues of equality and treating students fairly and providing a good uhm academic experience and social experience for students from all over. And, and wherever they've originated from but whether they, they didn't have any targets or objectives related specifically to say race, equality etc. But then I thought well maybe they don't need to. And if they did would it skew what they were doing because they would be focusing on a group rather than developing things for everybody.

Targets can skew the work to focus on particular groups rather than considering everyone. A concentration on targets appears more concerned with the developing requirement for policy and monitoring by auditing bodies, than solving concerns. Such measures also promote short-termism, which stifles innovation and decreases stability.

PG     And there is always a danger if you look at monitoring, because we're expected to monitor by strands, that you're focusing on difference, difference on race, or difference because of gender; whereas everybody has got multiple identities. So you could be black from Birmingham and a woman or be white and from South Africa. It is one of those things that there's a debate in, I suppose in the field about should you forget about the strands and just concentrate on just equality generally and diversity generally...And it is hard to balance, you know, why do we have to concentrate on reporting every year how many people we've got and once we've got, reached the target of the number of staff that, you know, reflects the local community what do we do then?

> You know, you don't stop just because you have reached a target. And if we went above that target it didn't mean, it doesn't mean that we'd be wrong so it is hard to get that balance between targets and targets.

Penny describes the legislation as a baseline; her aim for the institution is to take a spirit of the law, not letter of the law, approach.

Charlotte Cavendish further develops this thinking, whereby measurement is viewed as too restrictive and quantitative in an area where qualitative changes are required (Strathern, 2000a). Change in the equality field is not simply a causal outcome of action (not correlating simply with the specialists' work).

> **CHARLOTTE CAVENDISH — Square Mile, Head of Equality and Diversity Unit**
>
> HB    Uhm what targets do you have in your projects currently?
>
> CC    Uhm we don't talk in terms of targets we talk in terms of outcomes and outputs.

Charlotte is an academic in the business school and is aware of the changes in rhetoric reflecting wider discussions in both public and private sector organisations on how to achieve and audit efficiency (for example Simmons, 2007).

> CC    Uhm so we would like to, we are working towards a change in terms of the overall knowledge and understanding of our uhm, of both academics you know, both academics and support staff of equality and diversity. Another outcome is to ensure that this agenda is effectively integrated into our processes and structures and policies ... Now once you begin to make those things happen in terms of equipping your staff,

minority staff in terms of looking at your policies and practice. The expectation is that we will begin to see changes in terms of leadership and individuals in senior management positions.

As may be implied from Charlotte Cavendish's comment (above) on expectations for change, target setting can create unintended outcomes. There is not a clear input-output model for institutional change. For instance, focusing on visibility leads to a distracted concentration on things that are obvious or external, at the unintended detriment of others (see Kirsty's comments below).

**KIRSTY ANDREWS — Northern Lights, Manager of Academic and Student Support Service**

HB    Right.    Uhm do you notice what are the more comfortable areas of the equality strands, so what areas are talked about more often, what areas gain support more easily

KA    (pause)Well I suppose there is more prominence given to disability simply because that is probably the, the oldest but the, the uhm issue that has been around for the longest.    Uhm obviously the, uhm our team has a very prominent team which is well known throughout the institution.  So I guess that probably has...

HB    A prominence.

KA    That is not to say that the other areas are uhm regarded as less important.    And I don't think there is a pecking order that is certainly not the impression that I get.  I think that they are all equally valid.

Of course the strands have to be similarly valued for the work to be considered part of an equality project, yet Kirsty goes on to comment

that there is a difference between them based on resource allocation. Resource allocation is of course an implicit measure of priority in the institution (Burrett, 2002).

HB    Hmm.

KA    No I don't think there is a sort of...

HB    I guess with disability it is more visible?

KA    And also there's, it is obvious how money can be spent as well. It is obvious how funds can make a difference.

There needs to be obvious benefits of the work for it to be invested in, using an input-output model; thus privileging visible disabilities, particularly physical issues that are observable and physically manipulable (rather than for example psychological problems).

HB    Yeh.

KA    In that area. I might be wrong but it might be less obvious how you or what you could put in place or what you could spend money on to uhm ensure parity for uhm well religious groups well perhaps you could as well but perhaps with uhm different sexual orientations. How you would do that? I am not quite sure so perhaps that, it is a bit woollier.

These other aspects of identity (religion, sexual orientation) have remedies that are less straight forward and objective; less visible and so more frequently sidelined.

As I have argued above, a focus on visibility leads to a concentration on the action of measurement. Below, Penny Griffiths comments on the recently published corporate plan, where her unit received very little

coverage at the end of the document — under "z". Referring to this document, Penny Griffiths suggests that apparently the point of equality and diversity as viewed by her institution is the act of measuring itself.

> **PENNY GRIFFITHS — Northern Lights, Equality and Diversity Officer**
>
> PG  So I suppose it was a bit disappointing that that was all that was reported under diversity uhm nothing more qualitative than, it is, is very quantitative in its approach. Measuring targets and I am worried that that is all people see it as. We're just there to check what you're doing not here to inform what you're doing.

Translating her equality unit's work into the language and logic of management rationales, it becomes reduced to only that which can be seen objectively. This bypasses the subjective, which is arguably at the core of the equality agenda, where identity and rights are central.

The lack of unity and visibility of the work described in these extracts seems linked to the specialists' descriptions of their own inchoate and incoherent self image. Wenger comments on this awkward position of brokers in their institutions (1998, p.110):

> Because communities of practice focus on their own enterprise, boundaries can lack the kind of negotiated understanding found at the core of practices about what constitutes competence. That makes it difficult to recognise or assess the value of brokering. As a consequence brokers sometimes interpret the uprootedness involved in brokering in personal terms.

As the equality and diversity agenda encompasses such a broad remit, the specialist practitioner must have expertise in both general and specific knowledge.

**PENNY GRIFFITHS — Northern Lights, Equality and Diversity Officer**

HB     Erh do you view yourself as an expert?

PG     Oh yeh that question came up yesterday yes and no. Uhm I suppose I feel I have got some expertise in how equality and diversity works, translating the legislation into practice but I know yesterday when I was talking to some estates managers about how you decide what sort of adjustments and accessibility decisions to make, I had to confess that I wasn't an expert in building design and how, and how, you know, you, your access for different types of disabilities is supposed to be and I would have to find out quite a lot more if I was going to apply to them. So I suppose that the expertise is a bit more facilitation of helping them to work out what they need to do rather than...

Part of the problem in defining their identity by their practice is that the subject is interwoven with all areas. It is hard to be described as an expert in this area because it is part of many different subjects rather than a subject of its own.

Across both institutions this doubt in the independent integrity of the area was discussed by the specialists.

**CHARLOTTE CAVENDISH — Square Mile, Head of Equality and Diversity Unit**

HB     Do you view yourself as an expert and if so in what area?

CC     I don't, I am reflecting, to think that some people would think that I am an expert. I am certainly you know, I think I am certainly an expert in organisational change and organisational development.

Charlotte, like other academics, questions whether this area of knowledge in equality and diversity could be defined as expert or specialist. She defends herself as an expert through her identity as an academic (mentioning her expertise in organisational change – she is a principal lecturer in strategic management with a career working with both public and private sectors) not as an equality specialist. She aligns herself with that group, not equality and diversity specialists.

> CC    I would say that I am pretty sound on issues that relate to race, gender, increasingly around religion. And you know growing in my understanding and knowledge around disability uhm sexual orientation and some of the other dimensions of difference. But you know I don't know that I mean the word expert in diversity I think is a bit, I mean I think it is a bit questionable. It it's about continuous learning and I think you know for me I am always uncovering things that I didn't know before.

Specialists have to invest a lot of their time to keep up to date with a continually developing body of knowledge.

> CC    You know to that extent it is very much the analogy of the journey and I think that I, I certainly know more now than I did three years ago.

This conflict in identity has also been represented in Andrea Burton's narrative below — where she refers to her past education and PhD studies in History. Above, Charlotte relies on a totally different activity for her professional identity, her work in equality is not where she invests her sense of self. She and Andrea (below) try to distance themselves from the identity of equality practitioner and reattach themselves to these other communities of practice.

These issues may be a result of the devaluation of practices that are seen to be women's work (Paechter, 2005). The four specialists interviewed were all women in a nationally female dominated profession (HEEON and ECU, 2007).

**ANDREA BURTON — Square Mile, PGCHE Staff Trainer**

HB    Do you see yourself as an expert and if so in what areas?

AB    Uhm no, I don't know, maybe it is a woman thing. But I don't particularly think of myself as an expert but obviously people tend to put that label on you. Uhm you know I have been an expert in quite a few things from other people's points of view. Kind of put me in. (laughs) Uhm I mean I studied history, for uhm, despite not completing my PhD, I studied history for a number of years, and I taught history for some time, so I have some expertise in that area. Uhm then I moved into access work and study skills and was regarded as to have some expertise in that area and now I suppose people think I know about learning and teaching. Uhm but I'm always aware, as anybody is, the more that you do the more you realise you're not an expert. Because when you start off on something you think oh I know a lot about this. And then you find all the other stuff. And I think a lot of the problem with uhm educational development these days is that uhm there is just so much material coming out all the time and uhm so many people involved in it now, compared with 20 years ago, that erh you can't keep up with it. And the internet I think is has sort of made it.

These issues reinforce a problematic relationship with the work, a lack of confidence in their goals (as Penny comments below).

**PENNY GRIFFITHS — Northern Lights, Equality and Diversity Officer**

HB    Yeh and do you feel that you are viewed by others then as an expert?

PG    Uhm I suppose again they see that we have some expertise but it's a balance between is there a real subject called diversity or is that something everybody needs to know about and we just need to have a little bit more focus on. It, it is hard to know. I am talking myself out of a job here.

Penny seems to accept those discourses that subordinate her work. This stance reflects those comments made by Malcolm Miller (p.197). It links into the devaluation of the work, which sees it portioned out to volunteers with little reward and left to chance rather than led forward by managers.

## Section Three — Recognition

The visibility of the work must be combined with recognition to take effect, involving a two way process between promoting the cause and its reception by others (as discussed in Chapter Two). All of those issues of unity and visibility discussed previously influence how the service is perceived within the institution.

Craig Rylie implicitly degrades the work that these practitioners achieve by distancing them to a unit that is not integral to his own faculty's work. He does not remember the unit's name, even though his wife is a senior manager in it. A lot of time has been invested in thinking of different names for the unit to distance it from connections to welfarism and positive discrimination, as Kirsty recounts (p.189), yet this is still the aspect that is recalled by academics.

**CRAIG RYLIE — Northern Lights, Pro Vice Chancellor and Dean of Arts and Social Sciences Faculty**

HB    Do you have any resources that are allocated to that within the faculty, sort of diversity officers or particular specialist?

CR    No that one is a central service without anybody specifically seconded to the erhm faculty team. And, and the reason for that is that it is not, that it is basically erh student based, you know, we would normally, from a normally from a faculty level would have people seconded when we were dealing with the staff cos H.R. and finance and so forth uhm. I mean you could argue about it that there should be somebody but what there is, is a speciality person in the welfare. In the welfare erhm unit, I can't remember what it is called. My wife works there so I ought to know exactly what it is called. But I can't remember it has got a new title. It is something to do with welfare.

Thomas and colleagues (UUK, 2005) note the difference between centralised and dispersed equality specialist support, the former producing a concentrated push for the cause where responsibility is not taken up by others in different areas of the university, the latter integrating the objectives into academic faculties but creating a piecemeal and varied approach across the institution. Craig (a PVC) accepts a hands-off centralised approach but does not assess the possible disadvantages that this produces.

The issues this centralised structure creates in Northern Lights are commented on by both Penny Griffiths and Kirsty Andrews (below) who refer to the need to raise the profile of the work and increase recognition of it across the university.

In Northern Lights although there are no faculty based practitioners, a PVC leads the agenda under the title of PVC for Learning and Teaching. Yet Penny Griffiths finds fault in this arrangement, considering that recognition (and the power that goes with that) is not just dependent on the message but on the messenger.

> **PENNY GRIFFITHS — Northern Lights, Equality and Diversity Officer**
>
> HB      OK and finally if you could do anything to make your work easier in this institution what would you do?
>
> PG      This is going to sound dreadful but, no disrespect to Elizabeth Richards but I, I am torn between having her I mean her…

Elizabeth Richards embodies the work as a woman in a man's world. Obviously Penny's comments are counter to the equality agenda, discriminating against individuals because of their identity. Should specialists work within these binds to make change or try to resist and challenge them? As Ball writes (1994, p. 21) 'discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when and where and with what authority'; thus it is important that this work is led by someone who has that power within the institution and in HEIs — still arguably most likely a man.

> PG      There is a logic to having her as our Diversity Chair. But I wonder if it is seen as, you know, it's a woman's job. And that perhaps we should have one of the other Pro Vice Chancellors…

These practitioners have to work within an institution that is prejudiced and discriminating. As I touched on in chapter two those who are heard are reckoned worthy of attention. It is hard for specialists to start from a position of subordination when trying to resist those prejudiced

discourses in promoting equality for certain groups — who are in the same position as the specialists in this respect. This links back to those essentialist arguments given by Charlotte Cavendish and Alex Tothill (in Chapter Seven) referring to their physical embodiment of the equality agenda. It pigeonholes these individuals into the work, combining their actions for the work as part of this category of identity. But this serves to marginalise the issues, as Penny comments, these people in fact having a damaging effect on the very thing they try to promote.

> PG    Or change or rotate or something to give a, a different kind of message. It is a back to front kind of feeling I know that well if it is a man, typical it is a man. But I know that other places have their Vice Chancellor as Chair of the Diversity Committee uhm which takes it right to the top.

> HB    Yeh the strength behind that then.

> PG    But then as you know committees are, committees are committees. Sometimes you're, you're in isolation and nobody really takes a lot of attention to what you do. So we've got a big publicity thing to do I think, that's one of our tasks is, is marketing diversity.

Recognition from others requires a marketing of the work to members of the organisation (see Kirsty Andrews comments below). This is difficult when the work itself is dynamic and complex and hard to measure, and takes time away from the 'real' tasks.

> **KIRSTY ANDREWS — Northern Lights, Manager of Academic and Student Support Service**
> KA    And I think my, my only fear is that perhaps uhm there are certain parts of the university where people still don't really understand what we do and that is why the training is so important as well. And I mean we spend a lot

of time, if you like, marketing our services. Because only when the staff are really fully aware of what we can do to support them can they access us.

In Northern Lights the lack of recognition was an issue at many levels. Below Penny Griffiths describes the lack of prominence of the work among academics and even senior managers, being a "sideline" to more important pursuits.

### PENNY GRIFFITHS — Northern Lights, Equality and Diversity Officer

HB     Erhm what are the main barriers to your work?

PG     Uhm it is other people having, not having enough time to give to the questions. They'll always say oh we've got lots of other things to do and this is just a side line...

HB     Not core...

PG     Not a core activity. That's one of the difficulties and it is seen as a, possibly just, by some people, as a token gesture.

HB     So would you say that it has been mainstreamed, this equality and diversity?

PG     I haven't really noticed. The thing is some places, bits of the university would be better than others.

HB     Which areas are better?

PG     When I have approached uhm two of our central service sections with some suggestions about doing some, some training uhm and to train a group of trainers to deliver

in-house for themselves. So trying to embed it in something that they could do as a routine for all their new staff and just uhm not use external consultants. And the question from the managers was well yes that's all very well but what about the managers and we haven't had training either and uhm then before you give us some training can you tell us what the message is.

Before managers spend time in the training, they want to know what the 'message' of it will be. They would like to assess the importance of this work before they commit themselves, and their staff. Penny is aghast that it has received so little support from the senior management of the institution.

She also presents the managers as using a very static and externalised understanding of the work of equality and diversity, which contrasts with the specialists' emphasis on the importance of embedding this developing area.

PG     What is it that we should be doing with equality and diversity how important is it, what, what focus should we be giving to it. And that, I suppose that surprised me that they didn't know by now.

HB     Yeh.

PG     So it's the training strategy is trying to address that...

HB     Knocking your head against a wall...

PG     How can you not know yet, it's 2006.

It would seem that the effort which has been invested over the last seven years has fallen on stony ground. The response of these managers does

not seem to support or encourage expansive learning for their staff on these issues.

As Penny comments below, these people have to understand "the message" before they can lead it in the rest of the institution.

### PENNY GRIFFITHS — Northern Lights, Equality and Diversity Officer

HB      Do you actually work with academic staff themselves, involving them in the training, or is it more the managers?

PG      I haven't been so far. One of the uhm, the areas that I have really been trying to work on is a central services and support services network of staff. Uhm and sort of broader remit than...

HB      So is that the sort of people in Queens Lane?

PG      Yeh the focus is Queens Lane, the Chief Executive and all the others and then there's all the central services like academic and student services. Estates, finance, accommodation and all of this. So that was the first year was really to, to, was to get me familiar with what the training needs were uhm and so I think I have got quite a good feel of what managers need to know. And that could be Heads of School and Pro Vice Chancellors needs. But academic staff in general I haven't really had time to focus on yet.

The lack of recognition in Northern Lights reflects how specialists describe and carry out the task. Whereas in Square Mile, Charlotte Cavendish considered there to be more of a thrusting and forceful approach to the project, in Northern Lights it is described as weak and devious.

**PENNY GRIFFITHS — Northern Lights, Equality and Diversity Officer**

PG    Uhm so we're similar to other places, rather a slow process.

HB    Yeh.

PG    And it will be never ending so. We want to sort of creep in get it going and let it run. Rather than making a big fuss.

This approach is necessary apparently because of the negativity surrounding the area.

**PENNY GRIFFITHS — Northern Lights, Equality and Diversity Officer**

HB    Uhm what do you think some of your biggest successes have been?

PG    ...Uhm I can't think, oh surviving...

Kirsty too emphasises the slow and gentle approach taken, in contrast to Square Mile.

**KIRSTY ANDREWS — Northern Lights, Manager of Academic and Student Support Service**

KA    So I would like to eventually have sort of an annual cycle of what we do when. So a particular category, so we sort of advertise when we do these uhm sessions and various groups have come forward and saying they would like it. So it is not ad hoc as such but we are sort of dealing with groups as they come forward to say they would like the help. As I say security has just said they would like us to do something for them.

When instances of inequality arise the specialists react to it, rather than leading the work forwards themselves. This approach has meant that certain staff groups take up the cause but seemingly not the general academic body; again it is not core to the institutions' (academic) work. This may also be the case in Square Mile but because in that institution they have a far more diverse student population (historically) more instances have been dealt with in the past and thus prepared for in the present.

The description that Charlotte Cavendish gives of the influence of her work in the institution is wide spread and assured, it is not fearful like Penny Griffiths.

### CHARLOTTE CAVENDISH — Square Mile, Head of Equality and Diversity Unit

HB     How far is timing important to your project?

CC     No, I mean, I think we've, we've adopted a fairly multi-pronged, confident, unashamed approach to this. These very, you know, I've kind of thought long and hard about the extent to which you pander to the cynics. You know you uh drip feed them and make things palatable for them.

She refers to academics as if they were invalids, with her image of the drip feed, using a deficit model of ability not of building on the expertise and experience that they have.

CC     And we haven't done that, and so where we've had to pull data together to tell a particular negative story we've pulled that data together and we have told that story.

Charlotte as a senior manager can access and control this data.

> CC    We have had the discussions you know around ethnic minorities in higher education is there a future. We've, you know, we've, we've, we're not afraid to have those discussions in the main. We're not saying that it is not difficult to have, but in terms of trying to have a kind of phased approach to this, well in planning terms obviously you do have to have that uhm because you don't have all of the resources at the same time. And so you know the first year of doing this it was about scoping and understanding the lie of the land and, you know, unleashing the voice of our staff and trying to understand what their experiences were. But in terms of doing, you know working for Square Mile rather, but we also spoke to any and everybody, you know, what is it like to work here but you know that was just to get, just to take a kind of culture temperature really.

Here she describes the bottom–up approach that puts management in touch with the thoughts of academics.

> CC    Uhm and having understood that you were then in a position to develop an infrastructure. So in planning terms yes and but that's not been dictated by, you know, is the organisation ready for? I mean we are in, we do diversity every day whether we like it or not. Every time we interact with an individual in any shape manner or form we are actually doing it. You know so we might be doing it very badly but the reality is you know we are already in that game we are already in that particular business uhm and so it is about acknowledging and recognising that.

Charlotte's approach tries to link equality to good practice, making it relevant to everyday life. As it is a part of the academic's day to day working life, equality and diversity mindedness must be forced into the limelight. Yet from my analysis of Square Mile academics' discussions,

these workers seem to have accepted the *image* of equality promoted by the institution (Chapter Five), and recognisable from visible cues of diverse student body, and are not reflexive of their own involvement in promoting it. For instance Alan Dean (p.121) considered the "black" identity of his institution, closing down the necessity for reflexivity of his own actions to promote the equality agenda.

The equality and diversity agenda has been recognised in policy as part of institutional goals in both sites, but in Square Mile the external recognition they gain from that is important to the market branding of the institution as an inclusive organisation. Charlotte Cavendish speaks of how the institution has developed a number of areas of national recognition for good practice in equality and diversity.

**CHARLOTTE CAVENDISH — Square Mile, Head of Equality and Diversity Unit**

HB   So what would you say have been your most successful policies so far?

CC   Most successful. I think one of the most successful ones would have to be, argh it is a difficult one, one of the most successful ones would have to be about erhm developing new. We have got a diversity task force and that is about thirty people drawn from, in all the corners of the institution uhm, from you know a couple of people in marketing, support staff in marketing and admissions, to Pro Vice Chancellors, to Pro Dean, to Head of Learning and Teaching, to Head of you know HR uhm and everything in between from.

By bringing a wide variety of people into the project it helps to decentralise the work. As these people are organisational leaders it gives further credence to the project.

CC      And they are all representative of the different dimensions. So you would kind of fix if we used Logan's Dimensions the kind of 6 key ones. Erhm and you know this group has kind of they were the kind of missing link. We have an Equality and Diversity Committee that reports into the board of governors. They are very much focused on policy and they are meant to monitor and scrutinise plans of action and they seem to get involved in the nitty gritty. But there wasn't anything in the middle that kind of brought the organisation together and discussed and addressed and challenged issues of diversity in a holistic way. And this is what this group does uhm and it really is a living case study, a live example of diversity in practice. So it is, I think an eclectic bunch but who are there to bring about and sort of make a difference and are working very well. And that has been highlighted by the Equality Challenge Unit.

Yet where Charlotte, who leads the diversity agenda in the institution, depicts a very strong and integrated approach, Andrea Burton in the same institution describes this positive action as not translated into how academics inside the institution perceive of the work (even if external auditors, customers and managers appreciate it).

**ANDREA BURTON — Square Mile, PGCHE Staff Trainer**

AB      And although we thought, and as I said, we think we have actually got quite a good programme together we're having to sort of rethink it again. And you think oh well maybe it isn't as good as we thought. So erhm but it is good you know it is nice to be challenged. But uhm it is disappointing when you feel like you have offered something that should be very useful to people. And certainly people you know people looking at it from the outside. We had an external examiner for example, of the higher education

academy, when they revalidated us they said oh this looks really good. And when the people come and do it they say oh I don't like this (laughs).

This contrast between accounts within Square Mile seems to reflect the difference between Andrea Burton's training programme in the education department and Charlotte Cavendish's Equality and Diversity Unit in the Vice Chancellor's Office. Andrea is at the coal face of practice, interacting with academic staff daily; Charlotte performs a management task of organising the various projects that support the equality agenda in her institution. From these different vantage points within the institution it is possible to hold quite different perspectives of the work. Furthermore they each have a different investment in how they represent the work to me. Charlotte was a senior manager and thus a key representative for the work, who nevertheless had to constantly defend the importance of her own job, which was a 0.5 short term contract; Andrea had been in position for many years in a stable department and with a stable contract.

## Conclusion

Comparing the case study sites, the difference between Square Mile and Northern Lights specialists' perspectives seem largely influenced by their different position in the universities, although common themes did emerge around unity, visibility and recognition.

In this chapter I have made clear that the fundamental problems, which create the necessity for the equality and diversity agenda, are also integral barriers to the work and the workers. The efforts made to create unity within organisational groups and to support the recognition of groups is integral to all strands of the equality agenda. The equality agenda aims to look beyond surface level explanations for problems, and

change more deep seated beliefs that cause many different obstructions. Yet the inaccessibility of these deeper issues, because of surface level image concerns, hijacks the focus of work for specialists. In all of this the marginality of the groups for which the equality agenda promotes fair treatment also affects the recognition of specialists as workers attached to this area and the peripheral nature of the work itself. All of these issues come back again to resources allocated in the institution in a continual reproduction of a subordinate position for the workers.

In chapter nine I develop my analysis of these issues of identity and recognition by considering the contrast and division created when working with academics in the university.

# CHAPTER NINE — The Specialist/Academic Interface

In the previous chapter I considered the complications in specialists' work in my two case study institutions. Their narratives came back to issues of identity through fractured unions and group memberships, conflicts in the core goals of making visible and yet embedding and mainstreaming the work, and a concomitant denial of recognition by others. In the present chapter I linger further on the awkward position of the specialists in the institution and the division they described between their own professional group and that of the academics they try to reach.

My research has been framed by the question of how academics reconfigure the recent focus on equality and diversity and legislative requirements in describing their work(ing) identities. This has necessitated an exploration of how they perceive those specialists who promote the cause in their institutions and how specialists in turn experience that relationship. Perception and recognition work together to create the basis of our interaction with others; one perceives another forming a basic concept of who they are. Then there occurs a break between perception and recognition informed by other understandings of self and other, framing how the individual positions subjects in a past, present and future. So the problems of recognition and of visibility, discussed in the previous chapter, are entwined but not the same. In this chapter, specialists describe the actions of academics that create this division and misrecognition but also how these micropolitical processes are reinforced and sustained through the structural and cultural context of the institution.

Turning to consider the comparison of the case study sites, most comments used here are from interviews with specialists in Square Mile. The Northern Lights specialists did not describe the issues in their work

in such detail; this may be partly because their focus had been mostly on other staff in the non-academic directorates and the institution's managers. Square Mile, as an institution, had worked for much longer on equality issues and had a more developed and mainstreamed equality agenda, so staff there had a broader base to comment on. In particular Andrea Burton had years of personal experience of working face to face with academics trying to promote the cause.

Wenger's (1998) definition of brokers has been a useful template for understanding the professional identity of specialists in their universities. Brokers make connections across communities and coordinate between them. This involves translation, coordination and alignment of the different communities' perspectives. In universities, equality and diversity specialists work across human resources, the executive team, academics and student bodies but have differing remits over them in each organisation. The role of broker requires enough legitimacy to influence the development of a practice across these groups, mobilising attention and addressing conflicting interests among them. Equality and diversity specialists in universities are there to suggest and inform adjustments to practice in these other communities. They are positioned with managers and human resource workers as non-academics, and yet they take part in addressing the practice of the academic community. As a number of writers have testified (Ahmed, 2006; Burrett, 2002; HEEON and ECU, 2007; Kandola et al., 1991), it can be uncomfortable belonging to both practices and to neither. Practitioners are often pigeonholed into identities that create negative connections, or disconnect them from others, as I will explore below.

The process of embedding equality and diversity into the work of academics in curriculum, teaching and pastoral practice effects the value of knowledge, both in what is taught and how, but also in what lecturers are required to know and be good at. Thus it attempts to redefine the whole ethos of the institution and its relation to knowledge. The focus on practice, in equality and diversity, traverses the traditional gulf

separating theory and practice to accredit and reward this practical knowledge. This departure from conventional higher education thinking and practice was, and is, a controversial one in the sector (Evans et al., 2006); the university becomes a hostile environment for specialists to work within. To illustrate this I refer to the work of Jocey Quinn (2000). She found that interventions focused on gender equality seem far more welcome to universities when they are theoretical and academic than when they are internal and aimed to produce concrete change. Focusing on the theoretical creates an impasse in policy production, whereby achieving change seems opposite to acceptable cultural action. Further adding to these fundamental concerns for specialists is that universities are not consensual organisations: debate and disagreement are integral to the material building blocks of institutional life (Macfarlane, 2001). Within this culture of critical discourse (discussed in Chapter Two) specialists must carve out a space for their subject and gain a respect that allows them to influence the practice of others.

As in chapter eight I draw on discussions with academics analysed in chapters five to seven to further elaborate the barriers to promoting the role of equality in HEIs. It is the keen sense of division between the specialists and academics I reflect on. In chapters five to seven, I examined how academics often distanced the work to the institutional level, creating loose yet positive associations for them. The effect of this on specialists is twofold; they spoke of the difficulty in persuading staff to become actively involved in training. Specialists were also positioned by academics as representing a part of the organisational bureaucracy, distanced to this separate institutional level, affecting their power to broker between groups and implement change. In chapters five to seven academics described equality and diversity as poorly regulated, voluntary and peripheral to themselves, reinforcing subservience in those who took up the work. This creates a culture where academics are opposed to relinquishing their time for training and making changes to their practice, on the one hand, and yet on the other hand institutions are unwilling to make training compulsory. Finally academics appeared to

consider the agenda as static; once 'the message' had been received the knowledge was attained for life — thus not encouraging development of skills, or recognising the dynamism of this area. These points are all reflected in specialists' narratives and in this chapter I work through a number of extracts drawn from my interviews with specialist staff that highlight the different mechanisms that they perceive act to create a divide between their work, themselves and academics. The chapter moves from a discussion of structural, institutional features to the embodiment of these issues in apathetic and resistant responses from academics, and then to how the specialists manipulate the message of practice in their work to progress within these binds. Finally I consider how specialists reinforce these divisions in their own approach to the work.

## Section One — Structural and institutional features of division

I asked the specialists in both institutions to comment on any perceived division between academic and support staff working in their university. As discussed in chapter two, academics have a strong sense of professional identity and this is often reinforced by distancing their group from other professionals in their institution (Nixon et al., 2001). Commenting as academics, Nixon and colleagues (2001) have written about the absurd situation whereby non-academics are given the responsibility of developing academic professionalism, asserting instead that trainers need to have specific disciplinary knowledge. He suggests that this situation results in academics not viewing these activities as professional self development, and not treating them with due diligence. This works to preserve their sense of academic professionalism — of academic professionals as a separate group.

Andrea Burton, below, comments on the respect academics conferred to people who were seen as like themselves in their credentials. For Andrea these issues are partly remedied by operating from within the same (recognised) institutional structures of the academic department, conforming to the customs of these departments. This added worth to her teaching, working with academics in their own value system.

### ANDREA BURTON — Square Mile, PGCHE Staff Trainer

HB    So it was beneficial for you to be attached to an academic department like that rather than being one of the add-on, external departments?

AB    I think it is a benefit, I have talked with lots of colleagues in other places and those who are not in a, in an academic departments often say ooh I wish we were in an academic department.    And I think there's two or three reasons I guess thinking about it.    One is that, I think, other academics in the department take people more seriously if they perceive them as an academic.

By being placed at the same structural level as the academic departments she worked with, Andrea felt recognised as a part of the academic institution. Yet she still experienced disrespect from academic members of staff who assumed that she and the other equality specialists had a certain non-academic background, stereotyping them (see below). Academics required that there be a history of academic participation to form a context for correct interpretation of issues, which the specialists are presumed not to have (not sharing the concepts and words of the academics).    As I discussed in chapter two, specialists suffered misrecognition.    It was not necessarily that they did not have the appropriate capital, in this case linguistic and academic competencies, to take part in the field but that they were blocked from doing so by this misrecognition from academics.

These negative reactions from staff are to be expected — work on equality is only necessary in institutions where there are issues of inequality and discrimination. Specialists must work within the conditions of these prejudices and inequalities to affect them but in turn are also affected by them. Policy 'is not exterior to inequalities although it may change them; it is also affected, inflected and deflected by them' (Ball, 1994, p.7). The new knowledge they gain on equality does not neutralise prior understandings which must be 'unlearnt' (Britzman, 1998, p. 88).

> AB    Because there is this tremendous stigma attached to people in support roles. I was very aware of it when I was doing study skills support. That academic staff would speak of you as if, you know, who's she, you know, she knows about study skills. But no one, well not no one but they didn't bother to say to me well what is your academic background. You know they just sort of assumed that I'd come from an FE college where I'd been teaching English or something, English, English GCSE. That was the kind of background people; somebody actually said that to me once, so I know that is the kind of thing people assume. They just have these stereotypes of what kind of people do skills support. And while there is absolutely nothing wrong with people like that at all, because there are a lot of people like that doing skills support and doing it very well. It is just this kind of whole, especially when you are moving into something working with staff, it's the whole sort of stigma of, of, you know, how seriously people will take you if they're already feeling negative about the service you are providing.

Andrea refers to experiencing a double bind in having to give academics a message they already do not want to hear, from a less respected position. Thus she starts from a defensive standpoint.

> AB    And I think you have to face it when training lecturers, as I have been for the last few years, uhm there is a, you know, there is some resentment in some areas. So if you have a more academic background that helps so that is one thing. The other thing, main thing, is that if you are running a course that has uhm academic credentials, and you know our unit is supposed to be a Masters level unit etc, it does need to be within a quality assurance system that is, you know, is going to be rigorous and actually seeing that we're doing what we said we're doing.

For training to be valued by academics it has to adhere to the rules of the community, to be consistent with existing and accepted reward structures.

> AB    And that is all set up if you're in an academic department. If you're in a support department of some kind you haven't got all that system set up. And it can be much more problematic, then I think... We have talked about this and I think we feel it is more of a kind of, it is like it is real stuff you know.

Andrea Burton above describes that the "real stuff" of equality training is bolstered by the adherence to academic rules and norms of that community. The implicit contradictions in practice are hard to overcome. Specialists must be respected as part of the academic community and yet their subject is not an acceptable academic endeavour.

Penny Griffiths in Northern Lights also commented on the structural differences that were a cause of division between support and management services and academic departments. Below her narrative describes the mismatch between structure and management styles in

academic and non-academic departments, in Northern Lights. Unlike Andrea Burton (above), she has been placed on the non-academic side of the divide due to the structural formation of her institution.

### PENNY GRIFFITHS — Northern Lights, Equality and Diversity Officer

HB    I mean do you feel that there is a divide between academic staff and support staff say when you are conversing with managers and schools and things like that?

PG    Uhm yes I think so because uhm the central services and all the support networks within the faculties. I think with most types of jobs the managers and administrators and we have got very, very organised structure so the way the job works is, you know, organisation charts and tiers and everything seems to have a more rigid organisation to it. Whereas in the schools the academic staff, the structures are more fluid, the matrix, you know, there, there's a lot more interdependence and autonomy...

HB    And sometimes that causes tensions?

PG    Yeh it does. Yeh that's occasionally what I see. And the Heads of School who stand rotating so they only have three to five years in position and then they might step down and someone else takes over. So that, that in terms of managing performance is a lot less effective sometimes.

It is as though the institution is split into two teams that work with different rules in the same game. The habitus between individuals in these groups differs, influencing the expectations and subjectivity of these players.

Penny judges the academics by her own management values, basing her justification on some kind of administrative rationality that is not central to the identity specific practices of academic schools. These kinds of discourses exclude the academics from decision making, subordinating them, and so eliciting the academics' resistance (Ball, 1987, p.267).

> PG   With the, the central dimension and all the admin in the faculties there's quite, I suppose more the feeling that we're managers and would accept responsibility for failing staff or improving performance and, and, you know, assessing how people are doing but within the academic structure it is not as strict and uhm. So getting people to change their behaviour or be quite firm about what rules are, it seems to be erh...

Penny suggests that because of this structural arrangement in the way those schools are set up, which creates a matrix of power; managers cannot force workers to do certain things. She rejects the ideal of academic freedom in these instances — a core aspect of academic professional identity.

> HB   It is quite a tenuous lead having a Head that changes a lot.

> PG   And it is, I mean I am not saying that all Heads of School would be, would be negligent or poor in their, their desire to get things working. But it's uhm I think the autonomy and the respect that's given to the professors and the senior lecturers to get on with their research and just get on with their teaching is good to some extent but, you know, when things go wrong or when you have got harassment or bullying complaints you think this hasn't been really anybody there to get the message about what, what's acceptable and what's appropriate.

> HB    So they don't have sort of key academic members of
> staff who take on say specific roles of responsibilities in areas
> like disability?
>
> PG    Not in an organised way, I suppose I am not really
> very sure.

Penny sets up a division between herself and academics, with opposing values and processes connected to their work. Here there are no diversity officers embedded in academic schools that broker between her work and theirs.    This perspective seems to prevent the involvement of academic members of staff directly in her work. There is a lack of communication between her department and the academic schools, breaking up the integration of the institutional system.    As this is both a structural and cultural issue the enormity of any move to change prohibits the enquiry, and the status quo is implicitly accepted in defining the problem.

## Section Two — Sources of apathy

In the extract below Andrea Burton explains how the division manifests itself in interactions with academics in training on equality issues.

> **ANDREA BURTON — Square Mile, PGCHE Staff**
> **Trainer.**
> AB    And it is interesting because by this time of year when
> we are coming to the end of the taught units, some of these
> people who in September were sort of sitting there glaring
> and chuntering are now actually quite enthusiastic and
> amongst our more, you know our more able uhm participants.
> But erh it takes along while, it can take a long while to win
> some of them over.    And you get a lot of erh I don't see why

I've got to do this and I don't understand the purpose of this and I don't see why we're doing this and you can be thinking you know wake up we told you why you're doing it. You are supposed to be intelligent lecturers surely you can work it out for yourself but it is, it is a sort of I suppose the down side of people being students, I think some of them like being students, but the down side for some of them is like uhm they become themselves like there were as 15 year old students. You tell me why it is important, you tell me why I've got to do it, I'm not going to do this it's too much writing and it is too much, you know.

HB    Really?

AB    Oh yeh I did quite a funny paper a few years ago when we had a department seminar series on lecturers as students. And of course a lot of the people who came to it were people who had been one of my students and you know some of them were sitting there looking quite angry. But by the end of it they were all laughing because they recognised it themselves you know. All of these excuses about why they can't get their work in on time...When I have talked with people elsewhere, they have said exactly the same. You know that it, there is something about putting people in a room, with a teacher in front of them they automatically, you know, there are some who always sit at the back and don't join in and there are some who never stop talking. There are some who never stop challenging you, some of them don't stop finding faults and pointing out spelling mistakes in your overheads.

Academics do not appear to see their apparent skill deficit as real, rather this training is viewed as a government imperative — not one generated from their own experience — causing their disaffection in the training.

Specialists in Square Mile described the apathy of academics as rooted in a view that equality and diversity training is a 'nice' thing to do rather than an imperative. Specialists described how this led to academics being generally positive toward the work but unwilling to give up their time to take part in training.

Charlotte Cavendish, below, explains how this generally positive reaction does not carry enough momentum to actually get staff to train further in the area.

> **CHARLOTTE CAVENDISH — Square Mile, Head of Equality and Diversity Unit**
>
> CC    And again they, they tend to unfortunately still see diversity as a nice thing to do and it is about taking the moral high ground, they haven't yet got to a point where they can look at diversity as key to uhm their success, as key to their kind of competitive advantage, key to the growth and the development of their particular areas of responsibility. But that is a change that we are trying to bring about.

As Matthew Norton described in chapter six, some academics believe that supporting the equality and diversity agenda is the antithesis of success; that, for example, having to recruit students through equality and diversity outreach programs reflects a lack of prestige in the academic department. This creates a deficit model for the equality agenda and a lack of positive recognition for the work and workers.

Kirsty Andrews comments also reflect her experience of the weak, and yet positive, reaction from staff.

**KIRSTY ANDREWS — Northern Lights, Manager of Academic and Student Support Service**

KA Erh generally speaking you work with people who are uhm aware of equality and diversity issues and willing to be pleasant in the, in the main. So erhm it is generally a friendly environment to work in, I would have thought.

Using phrases like "in the main" and "I would have thought" makes for a weak assertion about academics who are only "willing to be pleasant" about the work rather that they are enthused and motivated to make deep seated changes to their practice.

Once on training programmes, Andrea Burton, below, described staff complaints over equality and diversity overload. This negativity overrules their need to learn.

**ANDREA BURTON — Square Mile, PGCHE Staff Trainer**

AB Uhm but this year has been funny in the sense that there's always an undercurrent of some people who get fed up with that but we've been sort of, a couple of clear messages have come through to me this year. One is that a lot of people feel we, we're doing too much of it, and they say oh not more on diversity, which we find a bit odd. Because you know it doesn't matter what course you're teaching, you are going to have a diverse group of students...You've got all that stuff even if they look very similar on the surface but double that with the mixture of students that we have got and the very varied backgrounds they come from, I think people need all the help and ideas they can get really on dealing with them. I think a lot of people try and close it off and, you know, maybe they don't want to face it maybe it seems too difficult, therefore they make it in their own minds simple, something like that, it is

not really a problem. Erhm so that's one kind of reaction that we get to it. The other one is rather odd in the sense that somebody, not somebody, two or three people in evaluations, in the first unit and the second unit, have said things like. Well one person I remember saying I don't know why we have to have a third session on diversity. And I was thinking a third session on diversity? What were the three sessions we had on diversity, because it wasn't as if we ever had diversity one, diversity two, diversity three, or saying the students, international students, dyslexic students or something. I really ought to get back to her and ask her what she thought these three sessions where uhm. So I thought well she totally missed the message cos she obviously thought there were three specific sessions where we were doing diversity and she thought two was enough.

By entwining the information into other topics it becomes mainstreamed into all areas, yet through this it may also suffer a lack of recognition, or be viewed as overloading academics with the same messages again and again.

AB    And then as I say you've got the others who say why is it diversity all of the time we don't need it, we understand. So that that is a bit worrying that people are not getting the message in the right way.

Andrea describes academics' lack of recognition of equality as a dynamic and developing area.

As discussed in chapters five to seven, academics' claims of understanding the issues, and unwillingness to critically analyse their performance and beliefs in this area, were interlinked with self-identity beliefs. Andrea Burton describes a member of staff below who strongly aligned his personal identity with his knowledge of the equality agenda.

**ANDREA BURTON — Square Mile, PGCHE Staff Trainer**

AB    Again another portfolio in that pile over there that I was reading the other day erhm written by a guy that uhm is Scottish and erhm he was complaining about this concentration on diversity and saying erhm, you know, I grew up in Glasgow and erh, you know, as a child I was warned you didn't talk about football, God and well anyway, football, religion and politics or whatever and I have always stuck to that. You know (laughs) and I don't have any problems with the students I am working with. And I said oh god you know, it is just a mindset where you think you know because I am, because I grew up in a working class neighbourhood, in Glasgow, I know all about inequality. Or because I come from Nigeria I know all about equality, or because I am a lesbian I know all about, you know whatever it is people think that...so I say because I am a woman I know all about discrimination, because I am overweight I know about sizeism, you have got to break through that and I think it is quite hard to.

Their knowledge of equality is a facet of these academics' personal identity, making it very hard to get the message through to view themselves and their interaction with others differently. As I have shown in chapters five to seven, academic identity is a complex matrix of personal, disciplinary and institutional elements. The work of specialists is to cross over these public and private spheres in attempting to alter these self conceptions and preconceptions of others. It is impossible to make these fundamental changes without the support of the academics themselves. Identity and learning here are intricately linked (Wenger, 1998); learning requires a new perspective on one's identity.

By connecting the arguments to political or moral *beliefs*, as does the academic described in this extract above, these issues become reduced from their complexity and removed from a debate that actually analyses between the lines of the formation of these value models (Cohen, 1992). Private beliefs are not in the realm of management by public institutions. As was hotly debated during the time of my research with the suspension of the Leeds lecturer Frank Ellis on grounds of racism (Taylor, 2006)[11] or the apparent threat of extremism on campuses (DIUS, 2007)[12], universities must appreciate the personal beliefs of individuals as a private concern of the individual, respecting their constitutional rights.

The resistance from academics is magnified by the necessity to keep training and updating knowledge in this rapidly developing area. Academics believe that once they have 'attained' this knowledge then, like a physical characteristic, they have it for life, so that academics are not motivated to update their understanding.

**ANDREA BURTON — Square Mile, PGCHE Staff Trainer**

HB    What do you think are the main problems facing the university in trying to push ahead training in equality and diversity?

AB    Erhm I think it is complacency as I have said before. A lot of people think I mean I don't need to do this I'm ok, I'm alright I don't need this support. It was quite interesting actually the other day I was talking about erhm a class of people and somebody came to see me who did the course a while ago who is mainly an administrator but does teaching, and she came in to talk about something...And I said to her

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[11] Ellis stated black people were less intelligent than white in a lecture.

[12] In particular, Muslim extremists were believed to be using universities as recruitment grounds for terrorist activity.

did you go, have you been to the making a difference training yet, and she said oh no, no I haven't. And I said well are you signed up? And she said no, and I suppose why I was mentioning it to you, and then I said so well so why aren't you going to go? And she said well now you tell me about it maybe I will go but I didn't bother I thought well I don't need to go to that she said because we did something on that in the course didn't we. And this is a black woman you know, erhm who thinks because we did a bit of, because it was seven years ago that she did the course, so she hasn't done the stuff that we did over the last couple of years.

Andrea essentialises the woman's characteristics, the academic is black and so a "target" of the work, therefore of course she will be interested in this training. Yet there should be no one who is excused from involvement and no aspect of identity that makes them more or less targeted. Yet the concept of knowledge presented by Andrea here is questionable, information should not be treated as 'an antidote for ignorance' (Britzman, 1998, p.88). As Britzman writes (1998, p.88):

> 'The reasoning goes something like this: If people had the real facts, they might rationally decide to act better towards the "victims" of ignorance or view their own ignorance as self-victimisation. This view safely positioned the "knower" within the normative, as a sort of volunteer who "collects" knowledge not because one's social identity is at stake, or even only made possible through the subjection of others, but rather because such information might protect one from the unintelligibility of others.'

As Britzman describes this is a discourse of knowledge that reinforces the binary of 'us and them' by normalising this approach to information gathering. The woman in the extract is viewed from a deficit model perspective and her experience and knowledge devalued.

## Section Three — Working across the divide.

Specialists as brokers in the institution had to embed their work across the institutional divisions described above. The specialists portrayed various ways that they repackaged the work to infiltrate the academics' boundaries.

The apathy of academics toward the work on equality was identified as a key barrier to be overcome, to the point where equality and diversity specialists tried to hide the purpose of the work from participants (see Andrea's comments below).

> **ANDREA BURTON — Square Mile, PCAP Staff Trainer**
>
> HB    How is that [equality and diversity] dealt with on the course [academic training]?
>
> AB    Well interesting, we think we do it rather well. But this year particularly we have had a lot of hostility and it is interesting because I can remember when I was first teaching on this course, the erhm the woman who was running it then erhm who used to call the session, *the* session, we had *a* session, and it was equality and diversity. And she decided that it was a bad idea to call it equality and diversity because no one wanted to come on it when they saw equality and diversity they thought oh I don't want to come to that. So she used to go round in circles trying to think of other things to call it so they wouldn't realise what it was till they got there.

As I argued in chapter five with Reese Gail's description of the need to change the university's image and in chapter eight with Kirsty Andrew's efforts to alter the name of her team in order to appeal to students — a focus on image and perceptions on a surface level, can override the main focus of the work. This approach to the equality and diversity agenda

does not encourage deeper transformations to structure and ethos but works within these binds. It adds to the specialists' problems by building up further layers of image construction and identity manipulation — removing the issues further from the core of the problem.

These experiences were reflected in both institutions. Penny Griffiths (below) describes trying to contain the message in other training to make it more palatable for academics; 'an important part of [this work] revolves around attempts to define issues in terms favourable to the interests of particular participants' (Ball, 1987, p.257).

> **PENNY GRIFFITHS — Northern Lights, Equality and Diversity Officer**
>
> PG    So trying to find ways of introducing the concept when we have an opportunity. So we have got a few services that have had issues raised perhaps about dignity at work and harassment or bullying and we are going to try and put training programmes in. I mean it's, I suppose it's the back to front in terms of we're waiting for incidents but there is just a coincidence that there have been some things...

She describes having to hide the message behind, or wrap it up in, other things to make it acceptable and palatable.

> HB    That have come up...

> PG    Have come up and it has given a sort of focus to managers. And the managers are asking for it so we feel like it's half way there. They see the need for some kind of development. So we're trying to find the best way of delivering a training programme about, you know, preventing harassment and bullying and promoting dignity and work.

But in, in that course I think we're going to try and give them more of a background of what diversity is all about as well.

The equality agenda is demoted to a weak reactive position rather than leading the institutional agenda. This work is again reliant on luck, it is unpredictable (as with the tutoring system described in Chapter Seven), not allowing a planned and self confident approach to the work.

The margins and particular specifics of the work can be carefully interwoven in other topics but the more wide-ranging area, which is less easily generalised to specific instances, may be left out. This reinforces academics' complaints about the non-applicability of the specialist agenda.

Below Charlotte Cavendish links the equality and diversity area to the business plan and future of Square Mile — part of the branding of the institution. This position contrasts with that of Northern Lights specialists, who do not describe the area as contributing to elemental success in this way. These attitudes also reflect the institutional identities described by academics in their respective institutions, with Square Mile academics repeating the university's mission statements and prospectus details in proof of their involvement in the work and Northern Lights academics complex narratives that distanced responsibility from them and set up a binary between quality and equality (Chapter Five).

**CHARLOTTE CAVENDISH — Square Mile, Head of Equality and Diversity Unit**

HB    Yeh uhm do you think there is a sense of sort of legislative fatigue amongst yourselves or the managers, or amongst the academic staff who have received all of these different policies?

> CC    Well yeh I mean I guess you know we're in an information knowledge world now and I think academics are fatigued as a result of many different things. Uhm unfortunately they are not the kind of animal that kind of thinks strategically and in an integrative way.

Charlotte talks in great generalisations, she negatively describes academics as distracted with academic work and unaware of more grounded legislative and business requirements.

> CC    And they are very into their subject disciplines and I mean I think that you know with regards to all of the different pieces of legislation that are emerging all be, all be I am really one to ensure that you, you retain your focus on the different strands of diversity. But at the same time I mean I don't think that they're you know this isn't Einstein, you know this is what people should be doing anyway.

Here Caroline touches on a paradox in the work of the equality specialist, that it is not or should not be specialist knowledge. It is not a skill that only some can attain and yet the future of the specialists' own positions are based on such a premise.

> CC    So I am not inclined, I don't support the view that oh it's, oh it's all information overload it is really just requiring them to do you know what they should have been doing for a long time. Uhm so I'm not inclined to agree with that.

The complacency and reluctance of staff to become proactively involved in further training has led in both institutions to the questioning of whether it should be made compulsory. I should note that the debate around compulsion falls outside of Wenger's communities of practice theorising, which has been criticised for not fully working out an approach to power dynamics in institutions (Tusting, 2005). The theory

of communities of practice appears to work from horizontal relationships within institutions where incentives and coercion are not necessary to the same degree.

In Square Mile this problem was circumvented by introducing codes of conduct that coerce staff into acceptable forms of behaviour from a distance, employing a management administrative logic with yet more policy. These policy texts supposedly begin to manipulate the choices of staff in an ambiguous manner by the power to create the norm.

> **CHARLOTTE CAVENDISH — Square Mile, Head of Equality and Diversity Unit**
>
> CC     And also another great thing is that we have just redeveloped and reiterated our values and come up with a staff code of conduct and a student charter and it focuses very much on reciprocal, a reciprocal relationship between our students and, and staff. And it is also identified, you know, all the associated behaviours that are aligned with our five core values. So those are some of the things that I would have to say, things we have done. You know, I think we have done them very well.

These five values greatly simplify the task, not forming elaborate rules and regulations constraining faculty behaviour but rather by focusing on the values that must govern academic professional conduct (Atkinson, 2004). This kind of policy approach does not adequately clarify the knowledge that these values are built upon. If everything is reified but with little opportunity for shared experience and interactive negotiation, then there may not be enough overlap in actual participation, compared to the reified representations in policy, to recover coordinated or relevant meaning (Wenger, 1998). Furthermore this policy approach falls into the trap of what Cohen calls the 'totalisation rule' (Cohen, 1992, p. 94) — 'that people view a theoretical or political initiative as supposed to

tackle [prejudice] as a whole, all at once and once and for all'; rather than employing an ongoing interactive methodology.

Andrea Burton goes on to explain (below) that where she has seen training made compulsory elsewhere, problems arose in the working relationship between specialists and academic staff. As Clegg writes (cited in Ball, 1994, p.21):

> 'Control or dominance can never be totally secured in part because of agency. It will be open to erosion and undercutting by the action, embodied agency of the people who are its object.'

### ANDREA BURTON — Square Mile, PGCHE Staff Trainer

AB     Uhm but erhm I think the problem with compulsion is that then you get these unwilling conscripts who have erhm a kind have an adverse affect on the group. I think always a, there's always a sort of number which you can cope with. If you have got thirty in your group and you have three or four who are disgruntled and there will always be three or four disgruntled whatever, even if they have come voluntarily, then you can cope with that because they are not a big enough number to cause any problems. But if you have got thirty on the group and ten or twelve don't want to be there, then they are big enough, especially if they are mouthy, they are big enough to kind of swing the group into a negative state of affairs. And I think that has happened a bit this year for some reason. Erhm I think it is sorted out now but there was a time when I felt, you know, sort of palpably feel the kind of hostility in the room towards you. You know, sort of oh we don't want to do this uhm, which I found very uncomfortable... But erh so it is hard, yes on one level yes definitely I think it should be compulsory and as a lot of

> people do say to me it should be something that everybody has to do it not just new people.

A statement of values is a reification of practice 'that can be appropriated in misleading ways' (Wenger, 1998, p.61). As such the specialists cannot control how the text is interpreted (Ball, 1994). Academic readers may view it with cynicism because it takes the focus away from real practice 'an ironic substitute for what it was intended to reflect' (Wenger, 1998, p.61). Furthermore because it is developed from a managerialist rationale it employs the language of these groups and reinforces the boundaries that it is meant to overcome between these two communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). The backlash of negativity toward these policies may get pinned to the cause rather than the process.

### ANDREA BURTON — Square Mile, PGCHE Staff Trainer

AB    But people will have said to me sometimes why should I subscribe to this set of values that you are giving me?  Fair enough if you don't subscribe to them explain to me why you don't.

Andrea comments on the resistance of academics to hegemonic messages from management. These conflicts are not always destructive (Ball, 1994) but can revitalise a stagnant debate between specialists and academics, giving the academics space to review their own thoughts and the specialists a time to respond to this. After all it is a catch 22 situation that these policies will only work in universities if they are voluntarily agreed upon, which can only be achieved within a framework of democratic discussion (Cohen, 1992, p.97). Change in practice must be internally motivated and yet to ensure that academics become involved it must be enforced. The discussion Andrea describes (above) shows an active involvement of academics in defining the message, not blasé agreement, which means little in practice. Academics need to unlearn

old understandings in order to learn and practice new perspectives (Britzman, 1998, p.88).

> AB    On the other hand I think as a lecturer the value of understanding student learning is probably fairly key to what you're doing but if you don't believe in some of the stuff we're suggesting that you should be believing in well that's alright you can tell us you don't and explain why and that's uhm. I think that's valued really. But it is hard when the university keeps presenting things to us, it's not surprising really that people say well I, that's not the way I think that's not the way I work. And I think you've got to accept that all these things are open to interpretation and discussion and, and deal with that.

Andrea in this narrative recognises the complexity of the issues, that there is not one right answer in the equality agenda. Here she employs a pedagogic style that recognises to some extent the prior knowledge, beliefs and power of the academic learner and tries to frame a collaborative and proactive learning environment.

## Section Four — Reinforcing division

These divisions are also reinforced by the specialists in their approach to the work, which, as I have described, often starts from a deficit model of academics' knowledge and ability rather than making use of academics' particular interests and abilities. These issues return to the importance of keeping professional identity distinct, and the power that goes with the furnishings of professional identity. Specialists fundamentally approach training from an acquisitionist rather than participationist model, not making use of the knowledge bases of the academics they work with — even when in a faculty of social sciences where research is often based around issues of social justice. For instance academics commented on

this contradiction during interviews in the psychology department of Square Mile. Here academics had specialist knowledge of the cause and remedy for particular behavioural and emotional impairments that could have been useful to other staff but this knowledge was not harnessed by specialists, reinforcing the boundaries between the professional groups. This emphasised a model of the work as carried out by a specialist few rather than a mass model of equality minded practitioners. Returning to Wenger's concept of the broker, in order for the specialists to be efficient they need to recognise and harness the strengths and weaknesses of all parties involved and not create more division.

In the following extract Kirsty Andrews recognises her staff's experiences of division, although she did not feel this herself.

### KIRSTY ANDREWS — Northern Lights, Manager in Academic and Student Support Services

HB    Do you feel that there is a divide between academic staff and other staff, non-academic staff?

KA    I think that there probably is that, uhm, that divide. And I have heard other colleagues say that they feel it more keenly than I do. Uhm I don't know whether that is to do with. I don't know whether that is to do with a personal confidence thing. Or whether that is a genuine divide, I think there must be a genuine divide, I guess there must be but uhm as many people do comment on it. But personally, I guess, I don't know if I just accept that there is a difference but I don't find it difficult.

Kirsty recognises the discourse of division but seems to reject these claims as concrete or implicit issues of the work — rather she views these problems as a reflection on the specialists' personal self image. As Kirsty says, she accepts the difference between herself and others, and works from that basis. She does not appear to have experienced the

rejection that other staff had (see Andrea Burton below)[13]. Her remarks appear to attempt to present a very positive image of the work in her institution, despite her colleagues' opinions. Such beliefs among managers serves to accept the division felt by others preventing a focus on change.

The specialists described a core aspect of their work as writing institutional policy around the equality legislation. Yet the lack of power attached to these documents, as Andrea Burton comments below, begs the question of their purpose. If they do not bring change they are just non-performative texts (Ahmed, 2007b), as I discussed in chapter four, the performance being in their production rather than their effect, again placing importance on image construction rather than real change.

### ANDREA BURTON — Square Mile, PGCHE Staff Trainer

HB    Do you feel that these things are enforced between policies and so on?

AB    Some things are. Uhm I mean the idea with those two charters is that they aren't enforceable things.

These documents create an idealist image of the good worker but with no system for reinforcing the change. They are not enforceable; those who are not performing in this way will not be obligated to work in the validated manner.

KA    They are just kind of guidelines that we should be working to, and basically at the end of the day a lot of these things are common sense. That people who are doing a good job would be working to anyway.

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[13] Kirsty occupied a very different position in the university, being married to a PVC at Northern Lights but also having worked in the private sector previously.

Andrea Burton comments on the lack of parity in targeting newcomers and old timers in her institution, a practice common to both case study sites. Training was often only directed to newcomers, on entering the institution, as a gateway to becoming legitimate members of the academic community; dividing the attention of specialists and focusing on these soft targets, the newcomers. It reinforces the inverse link between quality and equality — that when academics have climbed up the promotions ladder there is less attention paid to this topic.

### ANDREA BURTON — Square Mile, PGCHE Staff Trainer

AB      Cos they look round and see their colleagues who have been here twenty years, thirty years sometimes erhm people then think are a bit rusty. Do they realise they don't need, don't know a lot of the stuff that they learn. They say oh I mentioned in our meeting, such and such and they looked at me like I was stupid and I said but I was right wasn't I. And I said yeh it has been so for years and they didn't realise that so a lot of rusty people out there who could do with not necessarily the whole course but could do with doing more staff development than they do.

Disparity between treatment of 'new' academics and 'old' creates a qualitative divide between staff who are more core members and those in the periphery. Wenger (1998) writes that older generations are living testimonies to what is possible, expected, and describable in the institution. But in this training the 'old' staff (those who have been working at the institution for longer) do not take part, the specialists seemingly not recognising that these academics have more power to control change in the institution (passing on the traditions of the discipline to newer members, as discussed in Chapter Two) and thus causing new academics to question this knowledge as peripheral. Furthermore the academics act out an approach to the agenda that views

it as a static message that need only be internalised once to be valid throughout their career.

## Conclusion

Through this chapter's discussion of the specialists' comments on their institutional equality agenda I have drawn out a number of practices that demonstrate the divide between the goals of the specialists and those of academics. These are both created and reinforced through institutional cultures that unconsciously affect academic and specialist staffs' practice and beliefs about the work. Again the discussion comes back to the importance of identity claims professionals make about themselves and their group and how this linked to the promotion of the equality agenda. By bringing into the mix the comments from academics, analysed in chapters five to seven, two sides of the predicament in student related equality and diversity work have been provided. From these last two chapters it appears impossible for people within the institution to work outside of the paradigm of equality and the influence of those core prejudices that it seeks to overcome.

The institutions have moved forward slowly due to weak reward for, but also weak enforcement of, the changes the specialists envisage. The internal motivation for academics to become involved must be part of the institutional habitus, which controls the horizons of its workers; yet this habitus is slow to change.

In my final chapter I return to the founding questions that guided my research (outlined in Chapter One) and consider how far my study has come to answering them, taking into account the themes of this and preceding chapters.

# CHAPTER TEN — Esse Quam Videri

## To be and not to seem to be

In this final chapter I consider the threat, hope and possibilities demonstrated in my research. I return to the main question driving this study and consider how far my analysis and discussion have come round to answering my initial enquiry. Through the course of this study a number of related investigations have developed that unpack the leading question, which I will consider in this first section. I then take the chance to step back from the research project and consider how I may have carried out the study differently with the benefit of hindsight, reflecting on the possible new avenues for research that this work has constructed.

I set out to answer the question: **how do academics reconfigure the recent focus on equality and diversity in legislative requirements when describing their work(ing) identities?** This speaks first to how they position themselves and the work of equality in the institution and wider academic community; and second to question the discourses academics employ in describing their identity in action. Through my investigation I have highlighted how academics described their involvement in this work, which led me to an understanding of the multiple positions they took up in order to accept, reject and loosely connect themselves to the equality agenda. The use of two different case study sites drew attention to the influence of numerous institutional and disciplinary variables that shaped how these academics framed their accounts. The following seven questions, developed through the study, have helped me to unpack some of the multidimensionality of these academics narratives that act to configure their working identities.

## Section One — My findings

### 1 — How do academics perceive the implementation of successive equality and diversity policies and what impact have these changing policies had on their working lives?

Through the course of my interviews I was surprised that academics were generally unaware of the recent equality legislation and could not comment on their own institution's policies, making it hard for them to be reflexive of what effect they had on their working environment. Yet from their narratives it was clear that elements of the rationale behind the legislation were present in their thinking at those points where it linked into wider neo-liberalist and new managerialist approaches to HE.

The economic rationales were made more obvious and synchronised with the equality and diversity agenda of Square Mile, which has branded itself to some extent as an institution that welcomes all. Here academics drew on the long history of the institution in shaping their work environment rather than recent legislation. Yet still it was recognised in Square Mile, as in Northern Lights, that the principles of student-centred provision in equality and diversity did not correspond with the implicit institutional values of speed processing a mass of students — because it is too labour intensive. These conflicting discourses must be worked through at all levels for the equality and diversity agenda to be effective.

Therefore rather than the equality legislation, it was the influence on working lives of changes to the HE sector that were drawn upon in interviews. The increase in student numbers and reduction in funding (which has seen lecture groups increase in size rapidly), were more frequently commented on as impacting work contexts for academics. This point has been taken up elsewhere in Kogan's work on transformations in higher education; transformations are often the

product of 'evolutionary changes in social structures' (Kogan and Bauer, 2000, p. 37) rather than informed by policy and legislation that calls for radical change. What I found was that the legislation was translated by individual actors and institutions in terms of their assimilation with these contextual (arguably market led) factors.

## 2 — How do the two case study sites differ in how academics speak of equality, and does their language reflect their universities' approach to equality contained in their policies and marketing literature?

Square Mile employees' narratives more clearly mirrored institutional discourse as produced in policy and marketing material. This was because of the unity between the image held by different stakeholders both within and outside of the institution. In Northern Lights the complexity of narratives from academics, and the fractured institutional image around internal and external stakeholders' perceptions of institutional identity, led to few linguistic references to the discourses of institutional policy in academics' accounts.

It might be common sense to suggest that Square Mile as a post-1992 institution employs academics who are more committed to the equality agenda as here the work on equality is a source of pride. Yet these academics displayed similar identity representations to those academics in Northern Lights, distancing themselves from specific aspects of the work. In Square Mile the effect of the institutional market position appeared to support an image construction that aided (smooth) narratives of (pseudo) participation. In contrast, a strong sense of the mismatch between quality and equality in Northern Lights, brought to the fore the conflicts between their national reputation and the practices of equality and diversity, leading to an implicit institutionally ratified discourse of non-participation.

**3 — How have the principles of equality and diversity been taken up at institutional, departmental and individual levels, and what changes have been made as a consequence of this to academic roles, relationships and identities?**

In terms of academic roles, work relationships and identities, little change has been made as a direct result of policy. I did not find that there was an effective link between the levels of the (macro) institutional, (meso) discipline and departmental and (micro) individual worker in promoting a new approach to equality. Rather the fractured achievements across the institution were despite, rather than a product of, institutional leads.

From my analysis of policy documents, each institution had a clear structure to their equality agenda around most of the six strands included in national legislation (i.e. age, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation and disability). These were pitted with references to institutional culture and the supportive environment that the university strived to achieve. Yet these institutions seemed comfortable with securing the government's approval through reams of policy creation, without clear reflection on the impact that was actually produced. Policy does have some influence but it cannot control for the shifting terrain it meets, affected by the integration of field, capital and habitus in any one situation; so that the results of policy are not causal or predictable (Fanghanel, 2007). In fact the legislation seemed to have the unintended consequence of encouraging a focus on performance and image rather than embedding new attitudes and beliefs around equality (Ahmed, 2007a).

At departmental level, there were no individuals charged with leading the agenda amongst their academic colleagues as such, although in Square Mile there was a figure in the faculty who led the agenda. This meant that rather than being a group led activity it was left to individual agents to volunteer and self select to do the work with little recognition

or reward for their efforts. These institutions rely on policy and staff training to usher in discrete standards rather than developing a community of practice around the equality and diversity agenda. My findings support the need to develop an ongoing discussion that aids professionals in tailoring their provision to changing circumstances.

At the individual level, academics tended to take for granted their compliance with the principles of equality and diversity – as basic ethical and moral behaviours and an integral part of their work. The performativity encouraged by recent legislation was reflected in academics' own identity construction in interviews. These legislative requirements can be fulfilled by a bureaucratic response rather than deep seated change, mirrored in academics' narratives which distanced responsibility and active participation, whilst maintaining the appearance of compliance. Thus the explicit intended change described in recent legislation to traditional academic roles, relationships and identities (the shift toward recognition of individuals' needs and the interpersonal relationship between academic and student, discussed in Chapter Four) has not been made. For real change a model of the equality minded professional should be normalised into expectations across the university, embedding it in tradition and connecting it to market rationales to ensure success for the equality agenda.

## 4 — What are the tensions arising between individual employee's beliefs and institutional values and how are these reconciled?

My thesis does not give a normative perspective of ideal university values but rather how stated principles are worked out in context. I conceive of policy not using a top down model, as spoken into being by managers, but with an understanding of the need to problematise institutional values and their communication.

The institutional values that are declared in policy must be separated from that which is implicitly communicated to staff through the actions that the university managers perform and support; the subterranean field of values. In each institution there was evidence of a promotion of positive image construction around equality that was not deeply rooted in the practice of the majority at any level. There was a certain amount of tokenism of equality and diversity rhetoric and "ventriloquising" (Morley, 2006) of the agenda at all levels in the institution; the alteration of language but not attitudes. Equality and diversity still appeared to be viewed as a diversion when there are limited resources and time.

The clearest underlying institutional values were founded on audit, market rationale, micro management, efficiency and speed processing of students. The implicit mismatch between these and the student-centred equality legislation was not worked through at either management or departmental levels and so too academics and specialists linked barriers to the agenda with uncontrollable factors of structure; accepting the status quo. What was clearly communicated to staff was that work in the area was not recognised in promotion reward systems: it is peripheral and those who take part in and support it are made peripheral players in the institution. They have to be selfless, possibly relinquishing promotion, if they want to focus on these activities at the expense of other more core pursuits.

The university context shapes the academics' path by providing a structure to their options and goals, and academics decide their trajectories within these horizons. Personal beliefs differed widely in how they were expressed in terms of their professional working lives; yet were framed in reference to their position within perceived institutional and disciplinary values. Some academics did try to maintain active ethical and moral positions in resistance to the market rationale of the institution. These personal narratives placed the academic outside of the norms of the institution even though they were promoting supposedly institutionally supported objectives. The

references to self highlighted the selflessness that is demanded by this work in relinquishing the identity of the successful academic.

So to return to Bourdieu (1990, p. 87):

> 'Habitus is a kind of transforming machine that leads us to 'reproduce' the social conditions of our own production, but in a relatively unpredictable way, in such a way that one cannot move simply and mechanically from knowledge of the conditions of production to knowledge of the products.'

The reconciliation of academics' beliefs with institutional values reinforced old ways of working and behaving and a resistance to change. Even when resistant or non-conforming behaviours are performed, these are subordinated by the rules of the game and the actions devalued.

From this work I have come to understand that it takes more than policy to affect institutional culture; change must be directed to institutional habitus, to the subterranean values informing decisions at all times. It is important that policy aims are reflected by, or rather are a reflection of, managers' actions so that conflicting demands are not made of academics and to construct a uniform concept of the goals of the institution, which in turn fit into the demonstrated reward structures of the university.

## 5 — How are specialist equality and diversity staff perceived by academics and vice versa?

There were some quite negative perceptions of the 'other' group given by both academics and specialists. The work of specialists was described as not a part of the academic professional's remit and they were distanced to units outside of the faculties. This also reflected back on faculty members who had a role in the agenda, making their work scarcely rewarded and often voluntary. There was little direct contact made between academics and specialists and among some academics there was a sense that their training in this area should not be performed

by these non-academic specialists. Specialists would reinforce these divisions by considering academics from a deficit model and not making use of the skills and knowledge that they had already developed.

The specialists' narratives frequently referred to identity issues around unity, visibility, recognition, and division as a product of their difficult relationship with academics. They worked in institutions that were sometimes discriminatory and prejudiced towards those they viewed as "other", trying to support the position of the "other" yet themselves being placed in that position. Caught up in this was debate around who should lead the agenda in the institution. For example, if this person were a man they would contribute a different image of the work from a woman, yet to manipulate the appointment in this way reinforces these discriminatory perspectives. It is hard to decide whether one must work within the binds of prejudiced discourse to bring about change, or whether this should be achieved by working from the subordinated position of those who are caught up in less privileged positions by this discourse.

## 6 — What performance of identity do academics display in discussing their work in the equality and diversity area?

The research was carried out in the faculty of arts and social sciences and so most of the departments within had some academic tradition in the broadly defined area of equality. Yet sometimes these traditions appeared to be unhelpful because academics viewed themselves as knowledgeable of the issues based on some theoretical understanding of various aspects of the matter. This reinforced the acceptance of the status quo in the faculty's approach to educating its workers and carrying out its functions, rather than an energetic approach to radical change.

As chapters five, six and seven of my analysis and discussion section delineate, academics clearly referred to their professional identity as institutional and disciplinary members but also the salient personal

characteristics, as informing their beliefs and behaviour toward the equality agenda. Identity is a fractured and shifting phenomenon and academics clearly demonstrated this in narratives of their role in the equality agenda, achieved through a number of defensive linguistic acts that linked them to these various aspects of identity.

These references often appeared to achieve a distancing of the individual from actual personal participation. It absolved them of responsibility or included them in a general homogenous social group that implicitly rejected any further analysis of the part they should play in promoting the cause.

My findings placed a different understanding on the large body of literature that defends the centrality of disciplinary identity (Becher and Trowler, 2002; Kogan, 2000). Subject groups are believed to support different epistemological perspectives that colour how academics view the world and problems within it. Yet I did not find a clear contrast between disciplines in this respect but more that these references were used in a linguistic action to depersonalise accounts by referring to disciplinary issues. It was more that the particular discipline was not of importance but rather the concept of a disciplinary group.

Personal characteristics were referred to as refracted through the lens of the institution academics were members of; this habitus made some things more salient and rewarded different values, working to position academics' characteristics as peripheral or more central. Academics spoke of themselves in terms of their skills, facets of their personality and their physically embodied characteristics. These references were frequently essentialising, drawing on naturalistic discourses that served to reinforce the status quo of hierarchical identity positions from indisputable rationales. The unpredictability of the occurrence of these abilities was incorporated into an acceptance of the situation, the separation of rational, objective university work from this emotional labour.

## 7 — How do academics reconfigure the recent focus on equality and diversity and legislative requirements in describing their work(ing) identities?

After the discussion of those questions above I return to the main enquiry of my thesis. As my findings have illustrated, respondents described a fragmentary position in relation to the equality agenda based on the complex matrix of institutional, departmental and personal facets of identity. The influence of national legislation is further complicated by its opaque translation into institutional policy rhetoric that holds a tenuous link to institutional cultures and practice. The market position of each institution controlled the goals for the organisation, which had more influence than the policy itself on which activities were mainstreamed and taken up throughout the institution. These values framed the rules of the game for academics, supporting the university habitus by which members positioned themselves, their actions and each other. By conforming to these conventions, subordinating themselves and being subordinated by the imperatives the conventions served, academics reinforced the status quo, reproducing traditional sites of inequality.

My interviewees negotiated the meanings of equality for themselves, attaching it to many memberships to justify accepting or rejecting it as part of their identity and practice. However it was the institutions' approach to its market position and future goals that bound these identities. Prior research that biases towards any one of these (for example Becher, 1994, on disciplinary identity) seems to unnecessarily fix the confines of identity.

## Section Two — Problems, improvements and future directions

I now consider my journey through this research, the issues I have faced and the decisions I have made. Throughout this thesis I have done little to recognise my own subjectification in the research process, taking up a position of detachment from the actors involved and hiding behind a distanced sociological perspective of their narratives. I am now conscious that as a female researching this area, I too reinforced in some way the gender dynamic of the work. There were definitely moments in the interviews where my age and gender influenced the interaction (as discussed in Chapter Four). In this way my approach supported the mind/body split in academia, which I have sought to uncover in the devaluing of the work of equality in HEIs. To draw out these moments another reading of the data could be made but with the space I had here I decided to focus on the institutional actors I met rather than myself.

From a consideration of how I have positioned myself I turn to how I positioned the academics in this research. My work is not an attempt to reinforce a generalist assumption that academics, as workers in a divisive system, are branded as unjust in some way. I have tried not to frame my writing with images of the illiberal academic profession whose roots in tradition keep academics locked into the reproduction of societal inequalities. Throughout the research I recognised the difficult job that academics do; the problems of embedding the equality agenda into this highly pressurised environment; of carrying out the work in a sector whose aims are to grade and rank and so on. Yet my conclusions draw me back to the effect of structure, that people make their own choices but not in conditions of their own choosing.

So too in writing this thesis I have worked to position the data to argue a specific case. Analysis deconstructs but is also meant to stay true to the

data — yet it must be written to be legible so that it can be read without interruption. In so doing it misses the implicit partiality in responses, that more than one thing is said at a time. Like Derrida's (1981) shifting and uncontrollable voice, all voices and so all narratives are incomplete. There is always more than one meaning to what is said and this could only be captured to a limited extent in my work. The representation of identity I give is made coherent by pulling out a linear analysis of references to self and equality from a large amount of data. Doing justice to voice I have given in to it, rather than listening to those silences in the data; my biased hearing filtering what was said to pull out those parts that spoke to my questions. A necessary bind in research is that it must have boundaries.

My thesis is soaked in the subjective accounts and evaluations of university staff; whether it would be replicable by other researchers is questionable. However I have striven to reinforce my reading of the data with theoretical literature, where it existed. The issues interviewees drew out were reflected in accounts given in others' research and also in media representations of the situation.

I am tentative to suggest the specific implications for the sector from this research: since I have documented the shifting accounts of a very diverse group of individuals who hold in common only their membership of English universities. This is no basis for generalisations to the sector and my research does not claim any such capacity. It seeks rather to highlight some of the practices that occur in academic accounts of their involvement and how this reflects and influences broader structural and cultural characteristics of their institutions. To take this work further, future research could assess institutional examples of good practice that work to overcome these binds, in order to build up a case study portfolio to disseminate good practice more widely. Institutions could be selected that have developed a niche in providing for particular strands of the agenda, such as disability, and consider how the academics, specialists and managers frame the work and reward it differently.

With hindsight I could have improved on this research by employing a mixed method approach to data collection (although I am aware that this is sometimes taken as a tokenistic gesture to a research fad). Through triangulation a more complete picture of the institution could be gained. Thus it would be interesting to extend this work with an ethnographic study of the gap between practical and theoretical effects of positioning and how this is navigated by academics in their daily practice. I found that any links between language and action are tenuous because of the positive representations made in narratives which served to conceal real action. By observing lecturers' practice in teaching and tutorials and even in training, I might be able to make firmer links between narrative and action. By using focus groups I could attend to the affects of group interaction in discussing these issues. Of course these extensions may just further muddy the water by accessing an even more nuanced perspective of the innumerable positions that academic agents take up in the equality agenda.

Turning to the outcomes of my research, I am of course responsible for social justice too; and this means engaging with the practical implications for injustice that I have found in these sites. Critique from above is untenable but, as I discussed in chapter four, it was necessary to take a neutral approach in interviews, not challenging inconsistencies and prejudice in responses. Therefore my input must come from my findings. Yet it is impossible, from my analysis, to inform specific guidance on how to end the reproduction of oppressive norms in universities and hard even to give practical guidance to specialists on how to tackle the issues that I have raised because of the shifting nature of the problems. If researchers do not offer alternatives then we promote the view that reproduction is inevitable. In my analysis there appeared to be no set formula but a number of set patterns that need further development, below I draw out some of the insights I have come to thus far.

Much has been written to propose a less fluid link between policy and action than policy makers appear to propose by their repetitive legislating (Ball, 2006). My study supports this area of research and requires that equality specialists and managers be mindful of organisational cultures when drawing up policy. It calls for the equality legislation to be rethought in terms of these dynamics of interpretation at all levels in universities; to consider the usefulness of these imperatives over the organic evolution of the sector as a whole and whether their gaze should be directed elsewhere.

I have mapped out some of the threats to equality and diversity work and in doing so perhaps illustrated some of the spaces of hope and opportunities for change. Specialists in the institution need to access these spaces and link the work between these opportunities to move the agenda forward. For example if the use of academics' own expertise by specialists were linked into institutional reward/ recognition structures this would help to bridge the divide between these two professional groups. Specialists and managers could develop schemes to reward academics' initiatives in supporting students in tutorials and lectures, making visible those practices of these individuals in an attempt to normalise them. By doing so they would also challenge the negative representations that academics hold of the work. At an institutional level, there was a clear possibility for a link between equality and diversity and economic imperatives through international students. As this market expands if universities are to compete successfully they may begin an ongoing process of improvement to outdo their opponents in providing the best learning environments for these students (arguably through supportive environments). Furthermore as the equality legislation requires ongoing internal audits to assess the effect of institutional policy, specialists could harness this to assess workers' everyday actions, focusing on process and outcomes, to promote equality minded academics.

Looking to the future, I will briefly comment on some further possibilities for research that would take my work forward. First it would be interesting to see what effect the introduction of impact assessments have on the culture and practice of universities toward equality and whether these change the position of specialists in the institution. To question how they influence the identity of this work and the link between training and practice, as it is actual performance and outcomes that will be measured. Research could go on to consider what the link is between training and practice in universities. Looking at the effectiveness of the specialists' training programs on influencing work practices in the institution would support universities' own task in assessing impacts of interventions.

Second my work raised a number of themes that were not developed in my analysis, such as the silences and circumventing around race and class. For the equality agenda to be taken forward, this repression must be explored to inform the work in these areas.

Third this research was limited to the faculty of arts and social sciences and it may be that different trends are found in other faculties such as medicine and engineering, because of their different features and imperatives. For example the notion of fitness to practice influences arrangements in medical schools and for a number of years the lack of female workers has been a focus for change in engineering through national networks like the Women's Engineering Society. It may be that a comparison between faculties supports the necessity for policy informed from the ground level that delineates across these professional groups.

Finally the points raised in this thesis are not likely to be sacred to this type of institution, but to generalise to others from this work would not be possible. My focus on academics could be expanded to contrast how different sectors have dealt with these changes in equality legislation. This might involve a systematic review of what has been done across

various fields to highlight these issues or primary research in other organisations.

Overall I have argued in this research that effective strategies to promote the equality agenda amongst academics must be based on an understanding of the interaction between professional identity (grounded in institutional, disciplinary and personal reflections) and the explicit and implicit promotion of the principles of equality in the university. It is armed with this knowledge that practitioners can present and practice a positive position in the agenda. So I return to the title of this chapter esse quam videri — to be and not to seem to be — the equality and diversity agenda must be accepted positively by the institution and individuals within in order to create constructive practices and cultures.

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# APPENDIX ONE

Main areas:

a) Broad reflection on equality and diversity in the university sector

b) University policy and practice

c) Departmental action and staff development

d) Personal perspective on issues from experience with staff.

## Interview schedule for managers:

a) Thanks for taking the time to meet with me. What I'm interested in talking with you about today is staff's opinions and experiences of working with a diverse group of colleagues and students with different abilities and needs. There are no right or wrong answers here, I'd like to hear a diverse range of views, so please feel free to share your view point even if it differs from others.

I would like to record this interview so I don't miss any of what is said. Names will be anonymised in the transcription and I will make every effort to remove any identifying material, so all comments will be completely confidential. Only myself and my supervisors Debbie Epstein and Katy Greenland will see the transcript. Is this alright with you, please feel free to ask me to stop the recording device at any time. You can also let me know that you would like to see the transcript at any time today or in the next month.

## 1) Can you tell me about your background/ career/ what your job role is?

What do you see as the most significant factors likely to impact on HE over the next 5 to 10 years? What might be the implications for Square Mile?

What are your priorities in the university's development over the next 5 years? Where do the opportunities and challenges lie?

What do you see as the major equity and diversity issues in the UK HE sector as a whole?

What support would you need to achieve a more equitable organisation, e.g. locally, nationally?

## 2) What are the tensions in the equality and diversity project in this university?

Is there a unified equality and diversity agenda or is it fragmented?

Where in the institution does the main pressure for equality activities and policies originate?

What are the more comfortable areas of equality and diversity debates and policy making and what are the more uncomfortable or difficult areas and why?

## 3) Are staff offered any training in equality and diversity in this university? If so in what areas?

How does the university inform staff about its equality policies? How about if new policies are created, how do you get informed about them?

Have you been on any equality and diversity training?

What support do you provide for tutors and are you aware of how many people take it up?

Do staff participate in this training?

What are their responses to it, do you think it makes a difference to their practice?

## 4) In your experiences how do students fare in relation to the opportunities and rights provided by the university's equality policies?

What do you think might need more attention?  How could the university improve in terms of equality policies and practices?

What in your view are the most positive aspects of the university's equality policies?  What has worked well?

## 5) How has recent legislation affected your approach to equality and diversity?

**One of the things I'm interested in is how different universities approach these activities differently. How are you different from a university such as say, London School of Economics?**

Different emphasis on activities?

Why do those differences exist?  What are the different approaches? (institutional history, origin, strengths, limitations)

What do you think affects the outcomes of your work?  Does the location of Square Mile affect outcomes? Political factors and resources?

Do you feel that your equality and diversity initiatives make a difference?  Can you give examples?

**6) What resources are allocated to equality and diversity in your department?**

Do you feel resourcing is a constraint on what you can do? (people/politics/location)?

**7) Do you have much communication with the equality and diversity unit? Or when have you been in communication with the equality and diversity division?**

Do you draw on them in supporting your work?

**8) What are your main equality and diversity issues?**

For staff (e.g. employing diverse people at all levels),
For students (retention of certain groups).

**9) Based on your experiences what kind of student/ academic does well in this university? What kind of characteristics do they need?**

**In your view, what impact, if any, has the audit culture had on equality issues for academics?**

**Can you see any conflict/ contradiction between academic's and student's equality rights?**
**Ask for examples.**

**11) How do you think academics should be encouraged to take up initiatives and draw on policy (are they)?**

**What do you think academics perceive are the main barriers? How are you tackling these?**

Do equality and diversity initiatives make a difference?

Where are there weaknesses?

# APPENDIX TWO

## Participant consent form and information sheet

Here is a short information sheet about my research project to clarify what will be involved and how your input will be used.

The study is an investigation of university academics' experiences of and reflections on policy implemented to protect, support and encourage all students.

Data will be collected mainly through interviews with a range of university staff members. All interviews will be audio recorded unless this is declined. The data will provide the basis of my PhD thesis and you will be informed of any publications arising from the data.

Anonymity of all participants will be maintained through the use of pseudonyms at transcription. All references to individuals will be anonymised and any individuating or personal information will be removed. You may ask to see the transcriptions up to three weeks after they have been transcribed. The transcription will only be read by myself and my supervisors (Katy Greenland and Debbie Epstein), and the data will not be shared with any other researchers. The transcripts will be stored securely and in line with ESRC requirements interview transcriptions will be stored by the university after the PhD is completed.

If you have any questions or comments to make about the research feel free to contact me on the address below.

APPENDIX TWO

If you are still willing to take part in the research please could you sign the consent form below.

I would like to thank you again for your time and your interest in this study.

Best wishes,

Hannah Boyd

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E mail. boydhk@cf.ac.uk

I have read and agree with the above guidelines for the purposes of this study and write up.

Agreement to recording of interview.

Agreement to transcription and processing of data.

Agreement to analysis of data.

Agreement to writing and other public presentation or publication of data including quotations.

Signature:

Name:

# APPENDIX THREE

## Transcription Coding

**ELIZABETH RICHARDS – Northern Lights,**
**Pro Vice Chancellor, Teaching and Learning**

ER You know it is not at all that we are not, and I mean we have got a lot of Islamic presence on our campus, you know, and we are actually, we, we are uhm keen to, as far as possible, cater for the needs of Muslim students. But that is a really **complex** area. Loads of Muslim students actually study in the West because they don't, they don't want that to happen. So with what, if we did that, which is pushed very much by the society of Muslims, in one foul swoop we would alienate uhm, uhm people, our Muslim students from Thailand and other groups. There is a lot of uhm difference in opinion amongst our own UK Muslim students on that issue. You know, I mean to say that that is what Muslim students want in and of itself is **highly complex.** Loads of Muslim students actually study in the West because they don't, they don't want that to happen. So with what, if we did that, which is pushed very much by the society of Muslims, in one foul swoop we would alienate uhm, uhm people, our Muslim students from Thailand and other groups.

| Positive justification |
| --- |

| (De?-) Essentialising |
| --- |

| Problematises difference |
| --- |

| Repeatedly describes as complex |
| --- |

| Reinforce status quo |
| --- |

# APPENDIX FOUR

## Key pieces of equality legislation

**Disability Discrimination Act** (1995) — made it unlawful to discriminate against disabled people in respect of employment; rights of access to goods, facilities, services, and buying or renting land or property; education and transport. Discrimination is defined as "when a disabled person is treated less favourably than someone else and the treatment is for a reason relating to the persons disability and that reason does not apply to another person and that treatment cannot be justified".

**Human Rights Act** (1998) — reinforcing the European convention for human rights in a UK context, protecting universal rights and freedoms and the principles of dignity, fairness and equality.

**Race Relations Amendment Act** (2000) — extends the requirements of the 1976 Race Relations Act to take action to promote race equality. The changes in the law developed in response to the Macpherson Report (1999) and are intended to help public sector organisations eradicate institutional racism.

**Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act** (2001) — developed a comprehensive definition of disability as a person who has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long term adverse effect in his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This extended the DDA to teaching and learning and the requirement for a proactive stance in HEIs.

**Disability Discrimination Amendment Regulations** (2003) — taking a proactive approach it required funded bodies (like HEIs) to produce a policy describing the institution's disability equality duty. This includes

duties to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people, tackle all forms of harassment and bullying and promote participation in public life. It extended protection to cover people who have HIV infection, cancer and multiple sclerosis from the moment they are diagnosed and removed the requirement that a 'mental illness' be "clinically well recognised".

**Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations** (2004) — to protect employees and students in further and higher education from discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. The regulations make it illegal to discriminate against, victimize or harass, anyone on grounds of their sexual orientation. Where there is a genuine occupational requirement for a person to be of a particular orientation, employers may treat job applicants differently on those grounds.

**Gender Recognition Act** (2004) — to protect employees and students from discrimination on the grounds of their gender reassignment status.

**Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations** (2003) — provided a certain level of protection for people on the grounds of religion or belief. The regulations ensure that direct and indirect discrimination; victimization and harassment on the grounds of religion or belief are treated as unlawful.

**Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations** (2005) — a new definition of indirect sex discrimination in employment matters and vocational training. The new provisions prohibit harassment of a sexual nature or harassment on the grounds of sex, with a provision specifically stating that less favorable treatment of women who are pregnant or on maternity leave is unlawful sex discrimination

**Employment Equality (Age) Regulations** (2006) — covers vocational training, including higher education and employment in all sectors for the prevention of discrimination (direct and indirect) or harassment on the grounds of age.

## APPENDIX FOUR

**Racial and Religious Hatred Act** (2006) — made it an offence to stir up hatred against persons on religious grounds. The legislation ensures that protection against harm is provided to people because of their religious beliefs or lack of religious beliefs.

**Equality Act** (2006) — established the Commission for Equality and Human Rights and laid out its responsibilities. It makes discrimination unlawful on the grounds of religion or belief in the respect of provision of goods, facilities and services, the disposal and management of premises, education, and the exercise of public functions. It also creates a duty on public authorities to promote equality of opportunity between men and women, and to prohibit sex discrimination in the exercise of public functions.