

Commercialising the Academic's Public
Role: Theorising the Politics of Identity
Constitution and Practice in UK Research-
led Business Schools

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Declaration

Except for commonly understood and accepted ideas, or where specific reference is made, the work in this dissertation is my own and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration. The work has not previously been submitted in part or in whole to any university for any degree or other qualification. In accordance with the regulations of the Judge Institute of Management the dissertation contains no more than 80,000 words of text.

Abstract

This research explores the concept that the business school and the identities of faculty are the product of competing discourses that seek to totalise meaning. The theoretical framework draws on the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, which although widely identified as postmodern, differs from much postmodern analysis in retaining, yet radically reconstructing, the emancipatory interest of Marxism and the politicisation of the Enlightenment project. Laclau and Mouffe's assumption of the radical contingency of all objects and identities provides new insights into how hegemonic projects attempt to fix the meanings of objects and practices. Three distinct articulations of the business school are identified through an analysis of policy documents and interviews with faculty at six UK research-led schools. Each articulation binds together key signifiers, such as identities and discourses, in a chain that invests them with particular meanings. The analysis focuses on academics' engagements with external stakeholders, including industry, government and the wider public, and in particular, the possibilities for developing a critical public role that challenges conventional ideas and prevailing wisdom. The 'commercial enterprise' articulation of the business school institutionalises the public role as a 'third mission' alongside teaching and research. Business schools take a greater interest in measuring and controlling the public work of faculty, which poses a threat to their freedom to speak out on the major issues of the day, especially if their comments are deemed to 'tarnish the brand' or jeopardise relationships with commercial sponsors. However, drawing on the theoretical insight that identities and practices are ultimately contingent, my analysis also contradicts a prevailing mood of pessimism in the literature about the totalising effects of hegemonic projects such as commodification. These projects dislocate the field of discursivity in which the business school is constituted, making available a number of subject positions that are compatible with the performance of critical public work. I conclude that critical intellectual identities and practices can be accommodated, and indeed fostered, within a commercialised environment.

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Chapter 1: Studying the Public Role of UK Business School Faculty

Introduction

This thesis represents an amalgam of my research interests. I am interested in the interactions that academics have with audiences outside the university, which I refer to throughout as the academic's public role. I am interested in the notion that the university has a democratic function in society as a source of social criticism. I am also interested in postmodern ways of theorising the social world and how these can contribute to our understanding of a critical public role for academics. My greatest challenge in completing this research has been knitting these interests together to form a coherent project. The thread that connects each of these strands is the debate about the mission and objectives of the business school. Business schools are a good choice for analysing the public role because they are close to market and have shallow roots in the university. They experience tensions between being legitimate academic departments and being professional schools that are 'relevant' to practice. These tensions are manifest in policies and practices and in the language used to describe and analyse business schools.

The aim of this chapter is to outline my research project, to place it in the context of debates about the business school and to provide an overview of the chapters to follow. I begin by providing a brief introduction to the business school debate, which has taken place both in the popular press (newspapers, radio, television etc) and in the academic literature. The debate in the popular press has focused on the complicity of business schools in recent corporate scandals, while the academic literature has focused on the concept of relevance. I then outline two aspects of the relevance debate: the notion of Mode 2 knowledge production and criticism of critical management scholars for failing to develop a more active public role. This is not intended to be a comprehensive review of the literature, simply a brief introduction to ideas and themes that I develop throughout the thesis. These revolve around whether business schools have a role to play as critics of business activity and if so, what factors assist or impede faculty who seek to perform this role.

In the second section I briefly examine the research philosophy that guides my inquiry. All research is grounded in a set of philosophical assumptions, though many researchers seem scared of acknowledging and exploring them, in fear that their work will appear 'unscientific' and unworthy of serious consideration. I do not hold those fears, and in this section I locate my inquiry in the critical tradition, combining elements of postmodernism and critical theory. I reject the positioning of these schools of thought as mutually exclusive, arguing that it is possible, and desirable, to work with insights from both orientations to develop a theoretical framework that is sensitive to both macro and micro-level phenomena. My aim is to develop an understanding of macro-level processes of change that influence the public role of business school faculty, whilst remaining attentive to how this plays out at the micro level of identities and practices. I complete this second section by introducing my two research questions and briefly explaining their key theoretical components – discourse and identity. In the final section, I provide an overview of the seven chapters to follow.

Business Schools: Sites of Contestation

Business schools are becoming an ever more prominent feature of the UK higher education landscape. In the past decade the number of schools has grown from 14 to 101. Business school faculty represent one in four of all active social science researchers and management has become the largest undergraduate and postgraduate subject in the UK, representing 12% of all UK students in 2000/1 (Association of Business Schools, 2003; Jeffcutt, 2003)¹. The history of UK business schools is a history of contestation over their roles and objectives and this contest has intensified in recent years as business schools have come under increased public scrutiny. Debates have taken place in the academic literature, as well as in the popular press and in this section I provide a brief overview of both, in order to put my research in context.

The debate in the popular press has been ignited by high profile corporate scandals, especially in the US, concerning questionable accounting practices, insider trading scandals and fraud. In November 2001 Enron, once the seventh-largest company in the US, created the biggest bankruptcy filing in US corporate history after announcing it had overstated earnings by \$600 million dating back to 1997. In the wake of the Enron scandal, senior executives from conglomerate company Tyco were charged for fraudulently obtaining \$600 million through fraudulent stock sales. In the post-mortems that followed, fingers were pointed at business schools for breeding a culture of corporate greed. Writing in the *Guardian*, Caulkin (2004) comments:

The business schools which validated the enterprise culture were also the ones that gave us Enron, Tyco and 'Chainsaw Al' Dunlap. More generally, they are at least partly to blame for the paralysing cynicism with which the public has come to regard all companies and their managers. (March 28, 2004)

Some of the most vociferous criticism of business schools has come from within. Harvard professor Shoshana Zuboff (2003) blames the models of managerial capitalism taught in business school courses for contributing to "the pandemic of corporate narcissism, greed, rigidity and sheer cluelessness" of corporate management. While nothing on this side of the Atlantic has matched the scale of the US fiascos, questions have also been raised about the actions of UK business schools. Sumantra Ghoshal, a leading management 'guru' at the London Business School until his death early in 2004, believed that business schools must share the blame for developing theories such as transaction cost economics and agency theory that exclude moral and ethical dimensions, on the grounds that these dimensions cannot be quantified.

Business schools do not need to do a great deal more to help prevent future Enrons; they need to stop doing a lot that they currently do. They do not need to create new courses; they need to stop teaching some old ones. But first,

¹ My use of the term 'business school' is in a generic sense and therefore includes management schools. It is possible to draw a distinction between business and management schools, however such a distinction is not considered fruitful for this study.

faculty members need to own up to their own role in creating Enrons.
(Ghoshal, 2003)

The financial relationships that business school faculty develop with large corporations have also come under scrutiny in the popular press. Mangan (2003) notes that many US business school faculty earn large payments for consulting or serving on corporate boards, which can lead to conflicts of interest in the classroom. Enron, for example, was used regularly as an exemplar of leadership 'best practice'. In a teaching video used at the University of Virginia's Darden Graduate School of Business Administration, then president Jeffrey Skilling comments that when Enron works on a project, customers have nothing to worry about. "They know it's clean, absolutely clean, because Enron's involved. That's the way we do business." In February 2004, Skilling was charged with 35 counts of fraud, insider trading and lying about the state of the firm's finances (Mangan, 2002).

To date, the debate in the popular press about the complicity of business schools in corporate scandals has focused on the teaching function, implying that business schools' primary influence on managerial practice is through the classroom. For Zuboff and Ghoshal, the problem is that MBAs and executives are taught theories that encourage unethical and immoral behaviour. It is easy to get the impression that modifying the curriculum is all that is needed to absolve business schools from responsibility in any future scandals. After all, Ghoshal (2003) states that business schools "do not need to do a great deal more to help prevent future Enrons". In this thesis, I present a fresh perspective on this debate by suggesting that faculty could indeed do more, by taking a more active and critical public role. By public role I mean work activity by faculty that extends outside the academic community into the public arena, such as engagements with practitioners, membership of committees or advisory groups related to public policy, involvement with think-tanks and political parties, and appearances in the media. This definition *excludes* the interactions that academics have with other academics and with students (at undergraduate, postgraduate or 'executive' level). By critical public work, I mean work activity that extends beyond the audiences of faculty and students *and* which is critical of conventional ideas and received wisdom. Certainly, the classroom is one location where faculty can have impact, but they can also have influence through their research and through the relationships they have with profit and non-profit organisations, with government agencies and with the general public. Perhaps if business school faculty adopted a more questioning public role, some of the soul-searching in the wake of Enron, Tyco, WorldCom and others might have been unnecessary.

While recent US corporate scandals ignited the business school debate in the popular press, the debate in the academic literature has taken a different, but related track, centred on the concept of relevance. What does relevance mean? Who must business schools be relevant to? Are business schools relevant and if not, why not? These are the questions that have preoccupied writers on the topic. In the US, a high profile contribution comes from Stanford University Professor Jeffrey Pfeffer, who (in conjunction with Christina Fong) states that:

although business schools and business school education have been commercial successes, there are substantial questions about the relevance of their educational product and doubts about their effects on both the careers of their graduates and on management practice. (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002, p.78)

According to Pfeffer and Fong, US schools have become obsessed with quantitative, scientific research in a quest for academic respectability and legitimacy on campus. As a result, they are too focused on analysis and problem solving, with insufficient attention given to problem finding, the practice of managing and interpersonal skills. Business schools face increased competition from consulting and training companies, e-learning and company in-house programmes and Pfeffer and Fong believe that unless they become more relevant to practice these “competitive institutions may pose a substantial and growing threat to their continued prosperity, if not to their very existence” (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002, p.93).

A different perspective on the issue of relevance is put forward by Goldberg (1996), who believes that utility and practical application are poor criteria for assessing the knowledge produced within business schools and that such criteria threaten core academic values of independence, academic freedom, open inquiry and research excellence. Goldberg fears that the credibility and independence of business schools will be compromised if business school research agendas become more responsive to the needs of industry.

These core values are the only real sources of value of business school research and thinking. To sacrifice them in the name of short-term expedience will be to lose the ultimate competitive advantage possessed by business schools. (Goldberg, 1996, p.345)

While it is important to be aware of the US business school debate, not least because of the scale of business school education there, this research project focuses on UK business schools. As in the US, the issue of relevance has been a hot topic in the UK and in the remainder of this section I examine two aspects of this debate.

Engaged, But Not Critical? The Case of Mode 2

In the UK, one focal point for the relevance debate has been the theorisation of Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge production developed by Gibbons et al. (1984). Mode 1 is the traditional, scientific approach to knowledge creation that universities have historically engaged in, characterised by disciplinarity and a preoccupation with theory. The authors argue that Mode 1 is being replaced as the primary form of knowledge production by Mode 2, which is transdisciplinary and concerned with practical application (Gibbons et al, 1984). Tranfield and Starkey (1998) brought this framework into the business school debate by proposing a Mode 2 agenda for management research, on the grounds that management is not a Mode 1 field given its lack of a unifying paradigm and fragmented intellectual terrain. Tranfield and Starkey’s Mode 2 agenda involves a continuous interplay between theory and practice, with academics consulting with managers to generate managerial blueprints and managers applying theories to develop new insights. To refine the policy propositions set out in their paper, the Foundation for Management Education (FME) and British Academy of Management (BAM) funded a report by Starkey and Madan (2001), a report that has reignited debate about the mission and objectives of the business school and the public role of business school faculty. Starkey and Madan identify a ‘relevance gap’ in management research, arguing that while business wants greater relevance “researchers in universities cling to a different view of knowledge” (2001, p.S3). The Mode 1 model is out of touch with the needs and desires of

stakeholders and funding bodies and unless business schools adopt Mode 2 they “run the risk of obsolescence, to be replaced by new providers, perhaps management consulting firms or the burgeoning corporate university 'movement'” (p.S6).

Starkey and Madan’s report has become a lightning rod for critics of what is perceived to be an increasingly commercialised and uncritical business school model. Weick (2001) rejects the assertion that business school academics should shoulder the blame for any perceived lack of relevance, arguing that “the relevance problem is also that practitioners will not set aside their fads and begin to work with fundamentals” (p.S72). The ‘relevance gap’ persists because practitioners want their ‘real world’ to be treated as if it were *the* real world, thereby failing to understand that their world is idiosyncratic, egocentric and unique. Instead of Mode 2, Weick advocates a reaffirmation of a more traditional notion of the university, in which faculty challenge the status quo, acknowledge uncomfortable facts and ask questions that others lack the courage to ask (Weick, 2001).

Grey (2001) rejects Starkey and Madan’s characterisation of universities as ‘ivory tower’ institutions detached from practice, arguing that universities have always exhibited both Mode 1 and Mode 2 attributes in the production of socially useful knowledge. Grey attributes current concerns about relevance, conceived narrowly as practical application, to policies that have attempted to make universities more ‘enterprising’ and commercial. He argues that far from being a solution to the problem of relevance, any shift towards Mode 2 will exacerbate the problem, stating that Starkey and Madan:

mistake the consequence of a partial commercialization of universities – ie. increased competition from commercial institutions – for a cause for undertaking a further commercialization of universities. But to follow that prescription would inevitably lead to a future scenario in which the question will be: why have universities and business schools at all? And there will be absolutely no convincing answer. (Grey, 2001, p.S29)

Grey argues that if understood merely as producers of commercially useable knowledge, universities will lose their distinctive qualities of independent validation and disinterestedness and therefore undermine the case for their continued existence. He believes university academics must continue to critically examine current beliefs and assumptions, even if that criticism might not seem ‘relevant’ at a particular time. For example, the current government’s use of research to inform policies on social exclusion is only possible because academics continued to conduct this research even when previous governments had dismissed it as irrelevant (Grey, 2001).

Critical, But Not Engaged? The Case of Critical Management Studies

Mode 2 knowledge production, where future scientific advance is understood to be conditional upon the erosion of traditional boundaries between the spheres of academia and commerce/industry, has been one focal point of the relevance debate in the UK. It has provoked expressions of concern that the established role of academics as independent and disinterested critics will be compromised by the push to forge closer ties with corporate organisations. Another take on the relevance debate identifies a different issue. Here, it is not the lack of a critical orientation that is the problem, but the alleged failure of critical management scholars to develop a

critical public role. The regular target for these criticisms is the grouping known as critical management studies² (CMS), defined by Cunliffe et al. (2002) as

A branch of management theory that critiques our intellectual and social practices, questions the “natural order” of institutional arrangements, and engages in actions that support challenges to prevailing systems of domination. (p.489)

In terms of theoretical and political orientation, CMS appears to provide an ideal framework for developing a critical public role, by placing critique at the heart of its agenda. Indeed, Grey and Willmott (2002), both influential contributors to CMS, contend that business schools are a fertile terrain for critical work in comparison to other professional schools. Whereas other professional schools operate under a broad agreement that their graduates are more effective within their domains than the untrained, business schools cannot claim their graduates are more effective managers than those who do not receive a business school education, which therefore makes management studies more vulnerable to critique. This, combined with the fragmentation of management knowledge and the near collapse of the positivist consensus within social science, offers fruitful terrain for critical management scholars to operate in (Grey & Willmott, 2002).

Despite being well positioned to develop a critical public role, critical management scholars are routinely and vigorously criticised for their efforts in the public arena, often by those sympathetic to the CMS agenda. Mir and Mir (2002) argue that while critical management academics have made important contributions to the academic literature, the quest for academic credibility has become an end in itself.

Critical scholars in the academy write for the academy and speak to the academy. Although this is a necessary task that serves the important purpose of broadening the conversation in the field, it loses its edge and purpose unless it seeks to move beyond this space. In this context, it is telling that although there are many good critical scholars in the management academy, there are hardly any public intellectuals. (p.119)

The suggestion here is that business school faculty have a role to play as ‘public intellectuals’ in communicating with audiences outside the academy. The notion of relevance is again to the fore, with Mir and Mir suggesting “their relevance has been circumscribed by their inability or unwillingness to take on a broader and a more explicitly political agenda (p.108)”.

If these assertions are correct, why don’t critical management scholars develop a more active public role? For Mir and Mir, the blame lies largely with the actors themselves, for being unable or unwilling to venture outside the academy more often. Parker (2002) also believes CMS has little influence on the world outside the academy, stating it has “strengthened the popular diagnosis of academics as people who argue about things that nobody else understands or particularly cares about”

² CMS is a recent phenomenon, having become a regular feature in UK and US conferences only in the late 1990s, growing out of labour process conferences in the UK from 1983 onwards. Its origins are generally traced to Alvesson and Willmott’s collection *Critical Management Studies* in 1992.

(p.116). However, in contrast to Mir and Mir, Parker provides structural explanations, suggesting that academics work within increasingly bureaucratized semi-corporate organisations under a range of constraints from administrators and funders. The result is that in the interests of career progression, there is little time left for public work.

It is easier for critical B-School academics to simply be academics than the leaders of a new social movement. It is difficult to do both of these jobs at the same time...Writing unread scholarship counts, organizing activism does not. (Parker, 2002, p.129)

As with the Mode 2 debate, the CMS case provides an interesting reference point for my research into the academic's public role. Do business school faculty identify with a critical public role? Grey and Willmott (2002) certainly appear to do so.

The aim of transforming management practice, although partly about B-schools, especially in terms of education, is one that can only be achieved in concert with other political movements and through non-academic media. This is a possibility that CMS has only just begun to explore but that we believe needs to be encouraged and developed. (p.417)

The debates about Mode 2 and CMS reflect tensions that are felt acutely within business schools, criticised on the one hand for being insufficiently 'academic' and on the other for being insufficiently 'relevant' to the business world (Grey, 2001). This is certainly not a recent phenomenon, illustrated by Veblen's statement 85 years ago that "a college of commerce...belongs in the corporation of learning no more than a department of athletics" (Veblen 1994, p. 209-210). If more recent contributors are to be believed, the business school faces new competitive threats and the way it deals with these tensions could well determine its future survival. The notion of a critical public role is central to these debates, but has received too little attention within both the academic literature and the popular press. Business schools undoubtedly serve an economic function by providing students with technical training and by commercialising research, but do they (or should they) also have a wider public role? Do business schools exist to legitimate management or do they also have a democratic function as scrutinisers of business activity? It is questions such as these that make the business school an appropriate site for investigating the academic's public role.

Research Philosophy and Questions

Having set the scene by introducing the debate about the role of the business school, my next task is to briefly outline my research philosophy, which I describe as a critical approach that combines elements from critical theory and postmodernism. I then introduce the two research questions that have driven my enquiry and provide some explanation of the theoretical framework that underpins them.

One of the challenges in undertaking this research has been to combine an interesting area of empirical inquiry with a coherent theoretical framework. My supervisor tells me that students tend to come to PhD study with a well-developed interest in one of these aspects, but not both. For me, it was the empirical topic that was the main catalyst for enrolling in the PhD. As a journalist I learnt about, and identified with, the notion that journalists are not just employees with loyalties to their paymasters, but that they have a civic responsibility to break through the 'spin' and hold those in

authority accountable for their actions. As a prospective academic I identify with a similar role, believing that academics have a public duty to challenge prevailing wisdom through their teaching, research and other forms of engagement with the wider public. By opposing conventional ideas, academics can make a valuable contribution to the democratic process.

These are the assumptions I brought to the research, but I was less sure about which theoretical avenue to pursue. At a general level, there is a choice between a mainstream approach and a critical approach. I concur with Alvesson and Deetz (2000) that each approach contains a set of philosophical and political assumptions, even though mainstream approaches tend to marginalise or deny their existence. In contrast to mainstream research, “critical research puts these issues at the forefront and sees them as central for both reflection and creativity” (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p.3). Critical research is about challenging assumptions, being sceptical about truth claims and exploring tensions and alternatives that disrupt established orders. Mainstream research, in contrast, is more about reinforcing the established order, thereby providing legitimacy for management prerogative and control (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000).

It is no surprise, given the nature of my research, that I am drawn towards the critical approach. In my experience, the positioning of university faculty as critics of the status quo is marginalised within dominant conceptions of higher education, which place more value on their contribution to the economy than to the health of the political system. This is an established order I would like to question and disrupt. Within a critical approach, however, it is possible to pursue various theoretical avenues. Alvesson & Deetz (2000) identify two critical orientations – ‘critical theory’, which draws from the Frankfurt School and ‘postmodernism’, originating from the French structuralist tradition. Both share a dissatisfaction with the modernist project of progress and emancipation, yet are sometimes regarded as mutually exclusive schools of thought. Critical theorists are said to focus on the unrealised potential of the modernist project, while postmodernists regard the whole project as problematic. Critical theorists are said to focus on the macro-politics of the global economy and the nation state, while postmodernism is attuned to micro-politics at the local level, rejecting the grand narratives of critical theory (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000).

I have never been comfortable with this portrayal, preferring to view each as a lens that provides a valuable but partial insight into the social world. In reading the literature, I found work on categories such as commodification, common within critical theory, useful for gaining a macro-perspective on changes in UK higher education, but less useful for understanding how these changes impacted at the micro-level of academic’s individual experiences. Here I found postmodern ideas more relevant, especially the primacy accorded to language and identity. From the beginning, therefore, I have sought to develop a theoretical framework that combines elements from both critical orientations, arguing, for example, that processes such as commodification and bureaucratisation can be viewed as contingent, discursive structures rather than as the inevitable products of capitalist development.

In formulating research questions, my aim was to develop questions that incorporate both my theoretical approach and empirical topic. I came up with two:

- **How is the business school constituted in discourse?**
- **How are identities related to the public role constituted in contemporary UK research-led business schools?**

The first research question emphasises the primacy of discourse and concerns the discursive struggle over the constitution of the business school. It is clear from the business school debate summarised earlier that there are competing definitions of its mission and objectives. My theoretical framework, to be discussed in depth in chapter 3, assumes that reality is socially constructed and the business school is a ‘site of contestation’ where competing discourses battle to define it and its relationship to society. The objective of this first research question is to explore the tensions between these competing ways of understanding the business school.

The second research question concerns the public role of faculty in UK business schools whose main priority is research, rather than teaching. This second question highlights the theme of subjectivity that is characteristic of postmodern approaches, which reject the idea of an autonomous, sovereign individual with a fixed, unitary identity in favour of a view where identity is fragmented, fluid and constantly performed. The research focus, therefore, is not only how the business school as an organisation is constituted within discourse, but the processes by which subjectivity of faculty is shaped. I explore a range of identities in relation to the public role and consider how these identities are made available by particular hegemonic articulations.

Overview of the Chapters

Chapter 2 is a theorisation of a critical public role for academics. I begin by asserting that the university, as a source of social criticism, serves an important democratic function. Drawing on debates about academic freedom, I identify three threats to the continued viability of a critical public role – professionalisation, which rewards academics for communicating with other academics rather than the public; commodification, which increases the university’s reliance on external funders and devalues social criticism; and the epistemological crisis of modernist science, which has undermined academic authority by demonstrating the value-laden nature of facts. Overall, the literature is pessimistic about the possibilities for faculty continuing to play a role as critic in an increasingly professionalised, commercialised and postmodern university. Having used debates about academic freedom to contextualise the issues around a critical public role, I explore these issues in greater depth by examining the literature on intellectuals, which can broadly be divided into modern and postmodern approaches. The modern approaches draw on discourses of reason, rationality and universality to position the intellectual as a detached observer who has superior access to knowledge. In contrast, postmodernists such as Bauman and Foucault argue that intellectuals have lost their authority as bearers of universal values and objective, scientific knowledge. This problematises the position of the modern critical intellectual and the notion of a privileged role for academics protected by academic freedom. In the final section of the chapter, I signal my desire to explore a middle ground in what has become a polarised debate around extreme versions of modernism and postmodernism. Such a middle ground considers how the critical public role of faculty can be reformulated in a manner consistent with the critique of modernity, engaging postmodern ideas to rethink, rather than abandon, this role.

Chapter 3 introduces the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, first articulated in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985). Although the short form in the literature is usually ‘Laclau and Mouffe’, hereafter the term ‘discourse theory’ will be used to refer to a body of work that has been developed largely by Laclau, either in collaboration with Mouffe or by himself in response to contributions from Slavoj Žižek and others. Discourse theory has a distinctive social ontology and associated vocabulary that distinguishes it from other forms of discourse approaches that have made an impact within organisation studies, such as Foucauldian analysis and Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis. In this chapter I introduce the key assumptions and concepts of discourse theory and compare and contrast it with these more established frameworks. To evaluate discourse theory, I focus on three recurring debates in social theory: idealism-realism, structure-agency and relativism. Although widely identified as postmodern, discourse theory differs from much postmodern analysis in retaining, yet radically reconstructing, the emancipatory interest of Marxism and the politicisation of the Enlightenment project. This asserts the primacy of political action, countering the criticism of those who regard postmodernism as breeding nihilism and anti-politics. By conceptualising discourse as material practice, discourse theory avoids amaterial conceptions of social interaction, which some Foucauldian studies have tended towards, and also an unquestioning adherence to a realist ontology, which grounds critical discourse analysis. By asserting the materiality of discourse, discourse theory takes a different view on the structure-agency debate, seeing structure and practice fused into a single process, whereby the structure exists only in the discursive practices that reproduce or transform it. I conclude the chapter by problematising discourse theory’s understanding of processes such as commodification, which retains an essentialism that is not compatible with the framework’s philosophical premises.

Chapter 4 is a consideration of methodology (an epistemological concern with how we understand the social world), and method (concerned with how we study the social world). On these issues, discourse theory is not well developed. Laclau and Mouffe have tended to ignore methodological issues and while secondary authors have attempted to fill the gap, many empirical ‘applications’ of discourse theory adopt a voice and perspective that is inconsistent with its philosophical premises. Discourse theory’s rejection of objective realities and causal explanations in favour of assumptions of a socially constructed reality implies that reflexivity is critical, yet the seminal texts of discourse theory display an almost complete failure to acknowledge this aspect, with analysis presented as if it was an objective description of the social world. I argue that narrative position warrants greater consideration and recommend a more ‘confessional’ style, which allows greater opportunities for critical reflection. Laclau, Mouffe and other discourse theorists are also criticised for failing to provide methodological guidelines for conducting empirical research. While acknowledging that a ‘toolkit’ of techniques would be incongruous with the philosophical premises of discourse theory, I suggest it is feasible to develop concepts and principles that can be used in empirical analysis. The second half of this chapter explains how I went about constructing the data for analysis. I make no claims to this being a ‘scientific’ research design, but do believe there is a value in providing a rationale for the design decisions that were taken, together with an analysis of the implications of these decisions for the knowledge claims that can be made. The final section describes how I went about analysing the data. While I acknowledge the value in drawing from a range of theoretical schools and approaches, my research is aimed at developing the

concepts of discourse theory itself, through their application in an empirical setting. The analysis involves identifying distinct articulations that have competed for hegemony over the constitution of the business school. Each articulation binds together key signifiers, such as identities and discourses, in a chain which invests these key signifiers with particular meanings.

Chapter 5 is the first of three chapters based on an analysis of the empirical data. These chapters identify three articulations that have competed for hegemony in the constitution of the business school: the business school as a vocational/professional school, as an academic department and as a commercial enterprise. The central argument is that since its inception, the UK business school has been a site of contestation between these three articulations, each of which has sought to effect a fixation of meaning around its mission and objectives. This struggle between the three competing articulations is an on-going struggle, manifest in the tensions, disagreements and debates that characterise discussions about the role of the business school. In this first empirical chapter, I outline each articulation's myths, subject positions and nodal points, based on their representation within 'official' discourses such as commissioned reports and government policy documents. The first articulation constitutes the business school as a vocational/professional school and business school faculty as vocationally-oriented 'teachers' and 'trainers'. Within this chain the business school is a practical, not an academic, institution. Teaching takes priority over research and developing links with industry becomes a priority, with practitioners having a part to play as teachers. In this articulation, 'relevance' means training competent managers and the practical application of knowledge. In the second articulation, which constitutes the business school as an academic department, business school faculty are constituted as 'academics' and 'scholars', research takes priority over teaching and communication with other academics is valued above communication with audiences outside the academy. In this articulation, to be 'relevant' means breaking new ground for business through independent scientific research. The third articulation constitutes the business school as a commercial enterprise and a creator of wealth within in a 'knowledge economy'. Business school faculty become 'entrepreneurs' and 'experts' and knowledge becomes a commodity that is commercialised, exploited and disseminated to non-academic audiences. In this third articulation, 'relevance' means developing intellectual property that can generate and stimulate commercial activity, thereby making a contribution to the wealth of the nation. In the first two articulations, the public role is largely constituted as an 'out-of-hours' activity, meaning business schools take little interest in managing it. By contrast, in the third articulation the public role becomes a core activity alongside teaching and research and accordingly, it legitimises attempts by business schools to measure and control it.

Chapter 6 draws on my interviews with 60 faculty in six UK research-led business schools and considers their identification with these three articulations of the business school, each of which is associated with practices for directing, funding, measuring and regulating the activities of faculty. The theme of this chapter is the tensions, contradictions and inconsistencies that faculty experience in their day-to-day activities. On the one hand, faculty are under pressure to publish scholarly articles to satisfy the demands of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). On the other hand, they are also under pressure to develop closer relationships with external stakeholders, especially government and industry. The RAE represents and reinforces the academic

department articulation of the business school by placing highest value on communication with other ‘academics’. This has implications for the strategic direction of business schools, with many faculty believing there is no option but to ‘play the RAE game’. In terms of practices for measuring and rewarding performance, it means that faculty have little incentive to undertake public work, especially junior faculty who are under pressure to develop an academic publication record. In terms of recruitment, the pressures of the RAE means business schools are reluctant to hire applicants without this track record. The hegemonic influence of the RAE featured prominently in my interviews with faculty, but I also heard stories that contested, confused and contradicted this interpretation. While some schools are redesigning their performance management practices to place greater value on academic publications, others are developing performance indicators that recognise public work. While scholarly publications remain important for those wanting an ‘academic’ career, business schools are developing research centres that undertake sponsored research and where revenue generation and engagement with external constituencies takes priority over scholarly publication. Overall, it is not possible to construct a coherent story about the nature of, and changes to, the public role of faculty within contemporary UK research-led business schools. This suggests the business school is located on a highly contested discursive terrain, with several articulations competing to (hegemonically) fix the meaning of objects, practices and identities.

Chapter 6 considers the implications of this contest for the public role generally, whereas in chapter 7, I consider possibilities for the performance of *critical* public work within these schools. The focus is on the commercial enterprise articulation, since this is the subject of intense and on-going debate within the literature. I argue that it contains both threats and opportunities for the development of a critical public role. As the public role becomes institutionalised as a core activity alongside teaching and research, business schools are incentivised to think strategically about their ‘third mission’ and they become more conscious of their public profile. This can lead to censorship of faculty whose critical public work is perceived by business school management to tarnish the publish image of the school. Censorship can also occur when external sponsors seek to exert undue influence on the work undertaken by faculty. Although censorship does not appear to be widespread, self-censorship by faculty is common, which means avoiding potentially controversial work that might upset either the business school or key external stakeholders. While these threats to the critical public role cannot be ignored, there is also cause for optimism that is not present in the literature. In the second part of the chapter, I consider opportunities for the performance of a critical public role, based on the theoretical insights of discourse theory and the interview data. The commodification of knowledge and the epistemological crisis of modernity dislocate the field of discursivity in which the business school is constituted, making available a number of subject positions that are compatible with the performance of critical public work. A second, and related, opportunity concerns working within the commercial enterprise articulation to reassert the value of a critical public role for universities. The identity of the critic can be represented within the commercial enterprise articulation of the business school, with ‘critique’ becoming a commodity that is ‘sold’ in external interactions.

Chapter 8 draws the various strands of the thesis together. I argue that discourse theory has much to contribute to our understanding of organisational processes by

providing a novel rethinking of agency and structure. Discourse theory counters a tendency of other discourse approaches to present individuals as passive recipients of change, without reverting to an absolute voluntarism which privileges agency. However, in line with my critique of commodification (outlined in chapter 3) I argue that more needs to be done on conceptualising the process by which the contingency of structures becomes evident, since existing formulations rely on the incorporation of an extra-discursive realm that is not consistent with discourse theory's philosophical assumptions. I then argue that discourse theory makes a useful contribution to the literature on the social role of intellectuals, which is useful for thinking about the academic's public role. It provides a means for deconstructing determinist, modernist conceptions and can be drawn on to construct a new identity which positions faculty as 'critical and engaged experts' who expand the scope of democratic debate. Next, I return to the literature on academic freedom and conclude that while my research provides evidence of the threats to academic freedom from professionalisation, commodification and the crisis of modernity, it also provides cause for optimism. The traditional defence of academic freedom as the pursuit of objective, scientific 'truth' has been weakened by the critique of modernity, but academic freedom can continue to be defended on the basis that a critical academy which puts forward critique from a range of values-based positions serves an important democratic function. Finally, I return to the debate on the role and mission of the business school, which is the thread that connects the various strands of my research. In returning to the debates about Mode 2 and the impact of critical management studies, I outline a position in which business schools are critical *and* engaged, positions that tend to be presented within these debates as mutually exclusive.

Chapter 2: Theorising the Academic's Critical Public Role

Introduction

In Chapter 1 I gave a brief overview of the debate about the role of the business school. Implicit in those debates is the notion of a *critical public role*, understood as interactions with audiences outside the university which involve a challenge to conventional ideas and prevailing wisdom. The debate in the popular press has focused on the teaching function, but implies that business school faculty have a role to play as scrutinisers of industry and government activity. The debate in the academic literature has focused on relevance, but implies that business school faculty have other responsibilities besides teaching and research. This includes the dissemination of research, but extends to activities such as consulting, policy advice for government and non-governmental organisations, interactions with think-tanks and commentary in the media. I concluded the discussion by suggesting that the notion of a critical public role is central to these debates and warrants further study.

In this chapter, I critically review existing theorisations of a critical public role for academics. I begin by suggesting that the university has an important democratic function as a source of social criticism. This democratic function is embodied in the concept of academic freedom, which, in theory, promotes (or at least defends) a critical, questioning public role for academics. I examine three main threats to this role: the professionalisation of knowledge, which encourages faculty to *neglect* their critical public role; the commodification of knowledge, which serves to *devalue* this role, and the critique of modern science, which *undermines* the public role, by challenging the foundations on which critical public work has traditionally been based. The tone of the literature is highly pessimistic, with these three factors cited as reasons for a decline in academics' identification with 'critical' positions and a corresponding increase in identification with 'technical' positions. Broadly speaking, the critic challenges the dominant order, whereas the technician acts in ways that reproduce and legitimise it. In accepting this proposition, one must be careful not to slip into a nostalgic belief that there was ever a vibrant critical 'public intellectual' tradition within UK universities. Nevertheless, the impression is that any critical public role is all but impossible to sustain in a higher education context that is increasingly professionalised and commodified and where academics' authority has been undermined by the critique of positivist science.

Having raised concerns about the continued viability of a critical public role for university faculty, I explore these issues in greater depth through the lens of the literature on intellectuals in society. This literature is useful for considering the relationship between academics (as intellectuals) and society and in particular, how faculty are positioned in their critical public work. I review major contributors to this literature, including Weber, Mills, Mannheim, Gramsci, Bauman and Foucault and locate their conceptions on a continuum of modern and postmodern approaches. Modern conceptions tend to position the intellectual as 'detached' from the 'masses' and 'elevated', due to their (alleged) superior access to objective, scientific knowledge. Postmodern conceptions raise questions about detachment, objectivity, the superiority of scientific knowledge and the very distinction between elite and mass that lies at the heart of the signifier 'intellectual'. These postmodern perspectives problematise our understanding of academic freedom and the democratic function of

the university, as traditionally understood within modern discourses. Taken to their extreme, they denounce any privileged role for academics as critics of society, however I argue there is a middle ground that deserves further consideration, which sees postmodernism as a useful lens for rethinking (rather than abandoning) the notion of a critical public role for academics.

This chapter has two aims. The first is to consider the democratic function of the university, embodied in the concept of academic freedom, and contemporary challenges to that role in the form of professionalisation, commodification and the epistemological crisis of modernity. The second aim is to use the literature on intellectuals to theorise a range of alternative positions for the performance of a critical public role.

Academic Freedom and Democracy

In Western democracies, there is generally wide acceptance of principles such as freedom of expression, independence of the judiciary from the executive, scrutiny of powerful institutions and a sovereign parliament elected by universal suffrage. Each of these principles implies that democratic institutions be open to critique from individual citizens and other institutions. Monbiot (2000), himself a staunch critic, argues that a healthy democracy is one which is open to challenge.

A political system is only as good as the capacity of its critics to attack it. They are the people who enforce the checks and balances which prevent any faction – the corporations, the aristocracy, the armed forces, even, for that matter, trade unions or environment groups – from wielding excessive power. (p.357)

For Mills (1958), intellectuals both within and outside the university, have a *duty* to “be consistently and altogether unconstructive”, since “to be constructive within the going scheme of affairs is to consent to the continuation of precisely what we ought to be against” (p.141). The ideal is the creation of an ‘adversary culture’, where the status quo can be scrutinised and judged and where citizens are provided with cultural resources for critical reflection (Brint, 1994; Keat, 2000). The performance of this role of critic requires freedom – freedom of the press, freedom of the judiciary and one that receives less public attention, the freedom of the university. This asserts that in a free society a university has a moral purpose, combining an intellectual purpose of free and open inquiry and a social purpose as a source of social criticism independent of political authority and economic power (Tasker & Packham, 1990). If academics fail to accept this ‘duty’ to be critical, they become ‘mandarins’ who legitimate the activities of powerful institutions (Chomsky 1969).

The democratic function of the university is embodied in the notion of academic freedom. Packham argues that alongside the independence of the judiciary and freedom of the press, it is a bulwark of society and one of the first freedoms attacked when a state moves towards absolutism (Packham, 2002). UK universities have relied mainly on tradition and university autonomy to safeguard academic freedom, which reduced the need to articulate the idea in legislation (Savage, 2000). However, the attack on autonomy represented by the Education Reform Act of 1988 prompted Lord Jenkins, Chancellor of University of Oxford, to move an amendment to the Act. The successful amendment defined academic freedom as:

The freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions. (Education Reform Act 1988, cited in Savage, 2000, p.29)

Academic freedom has become a target of managerial and government agencies who perceive a lack of accountability in the phrase and regard it as a symbol of resistance against managerialism (Taylor et al, 1998). Supporters of academic freedom, such as Menand (1996) believe it is a "key legitimating concept of the entire enterprise" (p.4), allowing universities to maintain a diversity of perspectives and to deliver the rigorous contest of ideas, while opponents see it as means of propagating left-wing ideology and avoiding necessary market-driven reforms (Kelsey, 2000). Irrespective of which position is taken, it is clear that academic freedom is a highly contested notion. Within the literature there are perceived to be three main threats in the contemporary context of the university: professionalisation, commodification and the crisis of modernity. I will consider each of these briefly.

The professionalisation of knowledge is blamed for academics abandoning their social role as critical intellectuals and becoming detached from political life (Brunner et al, 2000). The decline of non-academic public intellectuals has moved in step with the expansion of universities and the concomitant trend towards increased specialisation of knowledge (Posner, 2001). Today's public intellectuals, therefore, are likely to be "safe specialists" residing within university departments (Posner, 2002, p.6). Jacoby (1987) laments the decline of the public intellectual in American culture, evidenced by the decline in the numbers of freelance writers and a corresponding increase in salaried academics. For Jacoby, institutional factors have encouraged academics to specialise and write for other academics rather than the public; with career advancement based on publication in abstract and small readership journals, written in a language that deliberately obscures. Jacoby blames academics for accepting the security offered by the profession and neglecting their role of addressing the public, arguing that academic freedom not only loses its relevance, but is partly to blame for making the intellectual's existence in the university a safe and comfortable one – "for many professors in many universities academic freedom meant nothing more than the freedom to be academic" (Jacoby, 1987, p.118).

A second challenge to academic freedom is from the commodification of knowledge. Universities enjoy a location in an expanding market for their 'knowledge' services, but it is also a marketplace where traditional sources of funding – which in most cases are drawn from the public purse and supplemented by endowments – are insufficient to sustain the level of activity necessary to cover operating costs and compete nationally and internationally. For an increasing proportion of academics, work is undertaken in mass, McDonaldised environments (Jary, 2002; Parker and Jary, 1995; Parker, 2002b) where there are mounting pressures from the state as well as from industry to collaborate more closely, and in numerous ways, with other suppliers of funding – notably, the private sector (Craig & Amernic, 2002; Willmott, 2003). Universities are seen as sites of capital accumulation and the production of intellectual property, which is sold in an increasingly competitive market (Antonacopoulou, 2002). As knowledge is conceived to be critical to the economy, academics are urged to become more 'customer-facing' as a condition of receiving

funding. This has provoked expressions of concern that recurrent and relentless pressure to attract funding for research fetters and compromises the established role of academics (Soley, 1996). It is feared that academics hesitate to undertake research or to speak out (e.g. on social and environmental issues) where the expression of academic freedom is perceived to discredit their standing as impartial experts and/or to damage their chances, or those of colleagues, of securing and maintaining funding (Hart, 1989).

Slaughter and Leslie (1997) argue academics' increasing involvement in the marketplace has weakened their justifications of the need for academic freedom. This participation has undercut the tacit social contract in which academics received monopolies of practice in return for disinterestedly serving the 'public good'. In this commercialised context, the meaning of academic freedom becomes the freedom to be entrepreneurial and engage in commercial activities, not freedom from interference from industry and government, as originally conceived. Marginson (1997) and House (2001) refer to the biotechnology and biomedical sectors as examples of where the forging of commercial partnerships between universities and these sectors has compromised the academic's role as critic. Who will safeguard the public interest, they ask?

The third challenge to academic freedom comes from the epistemological crisis of modernist science. Modernist science grew out of the Western Enlightenment, which promised an autonomous subject progressively emancipated by knowledge acquired through scientific methods. Scientific discourse asserts its access to the truth, separating rational and logical thought from mere contemplation. The social organisation of scientific knowledge requires an institution (the university), autonomous and independent from society, which can validate its authority and ensure its social relevance (Fridjonsdottir, 1987). It therefore provides a justification for academic freedom, as demonstrated by Monbiot (2000).

Academic freedom is a guarantor of our wider liberties. Science tells us who we are and how we can live better. It is the glass through which we perceive the world. If distorted, it twists our understanding of the ways in which we might progress, of the alternatives to existing models of development.
(p.284)

Notable in the quotation above is the assumption of the transparency of science. Monbiot believes this transparency is threatened by the commercialisation of the university because it detracts from a 'pure' research agenda. He argues that academics must be free to conduct research as they see fit. Arguably, a greater threat to the concept of academic freedom comes from the postmodern critique of modernist science, which has challenged its transparency. The assumption that scientific observation allows access to 'reality' is opposed by the postmodern claim that reality is socially constructed. The foundational status of normative values such as freedom is also contested, with postmodernism asserting that the meaning of such terms are constructed and contested through power relations and social networks. In postmodernism, scientific explanations become a meta-narrative that legitimates mechanisms of social control (Lyotard, 1984), rather than relating to the discovery of truth, as in conventional justifications of academic freedom. These attacks on

positivism have undermined academic authority by encouraging relativism and demonstrating the value-laden nature of facts (Dworkin, 1996).

In sum, the threats to academic freedom from professionalisation, commodification and the crisis of modernity reflect increasing uncertainty about the legitimacy and viability of a critical public role for academics. In the remainder of this chapter, I reflect on a variety of conceptions of the critical public role, as articulated within the literature on the social role of intellectuals. The use of this literature requires justification on two counts. First, the ‘intelligentsia’ is not a concept that sits easily in 21st century Britain. Certainly, the signifier ‘academic’ cannot simply be substituted with ‘intellectual’ (however defined), as not all intellectuals are academics. Indeed, as will be discussed in the empirical chapters, the idea of academics being ‘intellectuals’ had little resonance with my respondents. As noted, however, the decline of non-academic public intellectuals has moved in step with the expansion of universities and the concomitant trend towards increased specialisation of knowledge, with intellectuals being attracted to the security and career structure offered by the academy. The university, therefore, is increasingly the focus of writers on intellectuals in society. Second, there is also the issue of political orientation, since the literature on intellectuals almost exclusively deals with those on the Left. I see no reason why the critical position need be confined exclusively to those on the Left. Our understanding of contemporary politics in Western democracies demonstrates that critics of the status quo come from the Right, as well as the Left. In seeking to understand how identifies in relation to the public role are constituted within UK research-led business schools, I saw no legitimate reason for selecting respondents on their political orientation and I conducted numerous interviews with faculty who consider themselves both critical and right wing. The literature on intellectuals is associated with the Left and often directed at social transformation from the Left, but is, I argue, just as useful for understanding critical positions on the Right.

The next section begins by examining a number of conceptions of the intellectual, each of which can be positioned on a continuum of modern and postmodern approaches. To a greater or lesser extent, Weber (1949;1989) Mills (1951;1958;1959) and Mannheim (1991) appeal to a belief in the individual as a sovereign agent, a belief in reason, a belief in universal truths and values and a belief in progressive emancipation through scientific knowledge. This constitutes the modern critical intellectual as a detached figure who stands above ‘the masses’ and who claims superior access to objective, scientific knowledge. More recent contributors to the literature, such as Bauman (1987) and Foucault (1980), deconstruct this modernist conception and provide alternative conceptualisations based on postmodern ways of thinking. I begin by examining Weber’s position on value-freedom, which constructs a boundary between the spheres of science and politics.

Constructing the Modern Intellectual

For Weber (1989), specialisation is the way of making a “definitive and worthwhile” (p.9) contribution to scientific knowledge; it is also the only legitimate means of contributing to the life of the public sphere. Scientists contribute in two related ways. First, they provide factual, value-free knowledge that presents an alternative to prejudice and preconception; and secondly, they recognise and respect the limits of scientific knowledge with regard to its impotence on matters of moral choice or value commitment. Intellectual integrity involves establishing facts and determining logical

relations, which includes acknowledging ‘inconvenient facts’ but it does not, for example, set out to provide politically uncomfortable evidence.

Weber’s identification of the limits of the scientist’s sphere of competence is founded upon his appreciation of the irreconcilability of conflicts between different value spheres. For Weber, a value sphere is not a worldview (or value orientation), but an appropriate mode of decision-making. Whereas value orientations are subjective and created by individuals, value spheres have an objective presence and exist independently and prior to individuals. Weber argues the sphere of science is limited to answering ‘if’, rather than ‘whether’ questions, which belong in the sphere of politics. Authorities in medical science, for example, can answer the (technical) question of how to prolong life, but they have no place in answering the politico-ethical question of whether life should be prolonged, just as technical experts in nuclear science can answer the question of how to make or destroy weapons of mass destruction but are not qualified to adjudicate on whether or when such weapons should be made, used, or disarmed.

Qua scientists, academics are urged by Weber and his sympathisers to avoid engagement in politics. To do so risks confusing and compromising the confidence of the public in scientists producing and disseminating unbiased, factual, value-free knowledge. On this view, scientists must be free from political commitments and dependencies if their analysis is to produce the value-free knowledge that is pivotal for making informed value judgments (Schluchter, 1979; Scott, 1997). Unless this division is respected, knowledge claims made in the name of science become suspect, as its findings are understood to be susceptible to corruption by extra-scientific influences. Any temptation to meddle in public life by blurring the boundary between the provision of factual information and the expression of opinionated views must be resisted. The challenge for scientists, then, is to do everything in their power to resist the political intrusion of values and politics into the sphere of science. It is for this reason that value freedom is the ‘duty’, as well as the distinctive terrain, characteristic of the scientist’s sphere of activity.

Shumway (2000) has recently reaffirmed this view when he berates the humanities for departing from the Weberian ideal by encouraging relativism and/or endorsing political correctness. This departure, he believes, has undermined academics’ authority by giving the impression of deviation from the ideals of objectivity and disinterest upon which professional expertise is properly founded. Shumway urges academics to proclaim objectivity publicly as a primary goal even though “our abstract knowledge holds that disinterest is impossible” (2000, p.167). The condition of possibility, and perhaps also the justification of this seemingly hypocritical stance, which chimes with Weber’s ‘ethic’ of responsibility (Weber, 1949), is that “the public continues to value disinterest, to believe that there is knowledge above politics” (Shumway, 2000, p.167). It is by appealing to, and affirming, this popular belief that scientists can best achieve credibility and authority for their knowledge claims. In this way, neo-Weberians acknowledge the force of the postpositivist critiques of Weber’s intention to place ‘facts’ and ‘values’ in “watertight compartments” (Gouldner, 1973, p.63) but argue, nonetheless, that this fiction can, and must be, maintained (with the collusion of a public that is prepared or educated to accept it) if modernity is not to slide into irrationalism and nihilism. Academics are urged to reassert the established discourse within which they are inscribed as specialised experts distinguished, *qua*

scientists, by an unequivocal commitment and capacity to distinguish facts from values, and politics from science. While recognising that a stance of value freedom is unlikely to render academics politically dominant, the neo-Weberian claim is that it will at least make them politically relevant (Schluchter, 1979). In short, the commonsense idea and expectation of the academic as ‘technical expert’, which is legitimised by Weber’s argument, is understood to empower, rather than impede, the contribution of the academic to the public sphere by limiting their role to advancing a specialist field of expertise.

Like Weber, Mills believes in reason and the emancipation through scientific knowledge. Mills (1951) argues that excessive specialisation within the academy has led to a “deadening the mind” (p.130), creating “supposedly apolitical technicians, as against free intellectuals” (p.135). Specialists are co-opted into the value orientation of those for whom they work, thereby losing their capacity for challenging authority. For Mills (1959), the academic is a ‘political animal’, since values guide the selection of problems for scientific study. However, the political role of the academic does extend to an activist role, such as standing for public office, as this would indicate “a disbelief in the premise of social science and in the role of reason in human affairs” (p.192). Completely objective social science is impossible, but this does not require the scientific paradigm to be abandoned. In conducting scientific inquiry,

the aim ought to be, again, to be clear about the values in terms of which they are selected, and then to avoid as best one can evaluative bias in their solution, no matter where that solution takes one and no matter what its moral or political implications may be. (Mills, 1959, p.78)

The values that underpin social science are freedom and reason, values that “have become moot” (1959, p.167) in postmodernity. These can no longer be defended as transcendental values, but must be fought for as political ideals, since “to practice social science is, first of all, to practice the politics of truth” (1959, p.178).

The faith in science displayed by Weber and Mills is characteristic of modernist conceptions of the academic’s public role. Another recurring theme is the appeal to independence and the construction of the university as an entity separate from society. After all, the signifier ‘intellectual’ gains meaning from its Other, namely the ‘non-intellectual’, or, more commonly, the ‘masses’. The notion that the intellectual is somehow ‘elevated’ or ‘detached’ from the masses and is therefore able to study social life from the ‘outside’ gives legitimacy to the position of the critical intellectual. This is achieved partly by an appeal to objectivity and the truthfulness of science, as articulated by Mills and Weber, but also by an assumption that intellectuals, unlike the masses, are able to transcend their immediate situation. For Mills, the political task of the scientist is to educate the masses about the structural causes of their personal situations because “by their own private experience they can only know a small portion of the social world” (1958, p.173).

The ability of the intellectual elite to transcend their own immediate social situation is a theme that also appears in Mannheim’s conception of the ‘freely floating intellectual’. Like Mills, Mannheim (1991) asserts there is no possibility of discovering a universal truth, since there are multiple competing worldviews on the

political landscape. However, it is possible to produce a synthesis of these worldviews and that task belongs to the intellectuals.

It is not likely to be developed by a class occupying a middle position but only by a relatively classless stratum which is not too firmly situated in the social order."..."This unanchored, *relatively* classless stratum is, to use Alfred Weber's terminology, the "socially unattached intelligentsia". (Mannheim, 1991, p. 137, emphasis in original)

Mannheim asserts that the intelligentsia share a common heritage of education, which, unlike those without education, enables them to keep an open mind rather than blindly accepting the ideology of a particular group. Education, therefore, is the source of autonomy and independence, enabling intellectuals to take a "broader point of view" to capture the "whole of the social and political structure" (1991, p.162). This 'external' view allows intellectuals to reflect critically on what is widely taken for granted. Intellectuals can attach themselves to classes in situations where members of those classes are unable to theorise their own position, but this affiliation does not imply subservience.

Weber, Mills and Mannheim formulate different conceptions of the social role of intellectuals, but they share an allegiance to the discourses of modernity. The modern critical intellectual is a sovereign agent who is guided by reason, the search for 'truth' and the possibility of emancipation through scientific discovery. Postmodernists such as Bauman and Foucault have deconstructed these positions, but before turning to their work, it is appropriate to mention briefly the contribution of the new class theorists, which provided an early critique of the modernist conceptions of the intellectual. Gramsci's (1971) assumption that intellectuals are mere technicians formulating the ideologies determined by the interests of other classes is critiqued by Gouldner (1979) and Konrad and Szelenyi (1979), who argue that intellectuals have become a class in themselves, pretending to carry out the historical mission of the working class but instead establishing their own class domination over it. New class theory suggests that academics hide their own interests behind claims to universal truth, justice and emancipation. The new class, which includes academics, develops an 'ideology of professionalism' that stresses its autonomy and independence from business and political interests and purports to represent the welfare of the collective. However, behind this ideology the new class is elitist and self-serving, using its special knowledge and cultural capital to advance its own material interests and to control its own work situation (Gouldner, 1979; Konrad and Szelenyi, 1979). Further critique of the modern conception of the intellectual comes from postmodern perspectives and it is to these that I now turn.

Deconstructing the Modern Intellectual

The postmodern critique goes to the heart of what it is to be an 'intellectual'. For Bauman (1987), intellectuals (or more specifically, 'public intellectuals') are a product of the Enlightenment, appealing to reason, standing outside partisan politics and rising above one's specialisation to address issues of broader public concern. Bauman argues there has been a shift from modern intellectuals as legislators of universal values to postmodern intellectuals as interpreters of social meanings. The modern strategy of intellectual work is the 'legislator' role.

It consists of making authoritative statements which arbitrate in controversies of opinions and selects those opinions which, having been selected, become correct and binding. The authority to arbitrate is in this case legitimized by superior (objective) knowledge to which intellectuals have a better access than the non-intellectual part of society. (Bauman, 1987, p.4)

For 'legislators', the authority of knowledge is grounded in the use of procedural rules, such as the scientific method, which assures the attainment of truth and moral judgement. Since their knowledge is universally valid, 'legislators' have the right and duty to validate beliefs which are held in various sections of society. Bauman criticizes Mannheim's concept of the 'freely floating intellectual' for trying to revive the idea of intellectuals as legislators. Mannheim gives the intellectuals the mission of adjudicating between ideologies, to reveal them as partial and prejudiced world-views and to disclose their lack of universal foundation. The intellectual therefore, assumes a privileged position of independence above all particularised social locations and stands above the political world as analyst and critic (Bauman, 1987).

The irony, suggests Bauman, is that the concept of intellectuals was coined at a time when the unity of reason was already disintegrating. Modernist discourses assume that there is nothing 'beyond' modernity – that it is progressive, inevitable and the highest point of development. For Bauman, postmodernism has exposed this myth, viewing modernity as "an enclosed object, an essentially complete product, an episode of history, with an end as much as a beginning" (p.117). The objectification of modernity questions the authority claims upon which it is grounded, creating a crisis of confidence in the intellectual community. The belief in universal truth and judgement has been replaced by recognition that the validity of the judgement depends on the 'site' from where it has been made and the authority ascribed to that site. Bauman argues that since the authority of intellectuals is no longer taken for granted, intellectuals must adopt a new, postmodern role of 'interpreters', which:

consists of translating statements, made within one communally based tradition, so that they can be understood within the system of knowledge based on another tradition. (Bauman, 1987, p.5)

In the interpreter role, legislative ambitions are abandoned, given the plurality of world-views. In a world where consensus on values is unlikely, the interpreter becomes a mediator of communication between communities, a specialist in the "art of civilized conversation" (p.143) whose aim is conveying understanding, rather than making judgements. Bauman's position has similarities with Habermas (1991), whose model of 'communicative action' is also based on mutual understanding and shared knowledge. However, while Bauman believes that consensus is unlikely, Habermas has faith in reason and the possibility of a rational consensus.

Like Bauman, Foucault (1980) provides a deconstruction of modernist conceptions of the intellectual. Specifically, his target is the 'universal' intellectual, which closely resembles Bauman's 'legislator' role. Foucault opposes Left intellectuals (such as Jean-Paul Sartre) who purport to represent universal values and who purport to speak on behalf of others, such as the proletariat. The universal intellectuals are represented spatially as being outside, a positioning which gains legitimacy from a sense of detachment, which supposedly permits an objectivity and a sense of being able to see things in their true form. Foucault rejects this positioning on both ontological and

political grounds. Ontologically, he rejects the idea that academics can be outside the 'truth', instead locating them within a regime of truth through their production, control and dissemination of knowledge. For Foucault, truth is not outside power. Politically, he argues that the universal intellectual is not connected in practice with political struggles and therefore has little influence on these struggles. Foucault claims the universal intellectual has been replaced by the 'specific' intellectual, who operates

within specific sectors, at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them (housing, the hospital, the asylum, the laboratory, the university, family and sexual relations). (1980, p.126)

The premise is that people's specific activities have become increasingly politicised. Foucault's exemplar is Robert Oppenheimer, an atomic scientist who criticised US nuclear weapon development programme in the period after WWII and accrued political power from his specific position in the order of knowledge. Prestige is given to people, such as Oppenheimer, who possess expert knowledge (whether that person acts as a technician in the service of authority or as a critic of that authority) rather than the critical public intellectual whose opposition is grounded in universal values (Foucault, 1980). Foucault is concerned with politics, however it is a different form of politics from writers who construct a modernist conception of the intellectual. Foucault's specific intellectuals necessarily occupy a specific position and engage with real, material, everyday struggles. He believes they are a potentially revolutionary force, not because they represent the 'truth' of the 'oppressed', as in modernist conceptions, but because they can problematise systems of power/knowledge domination from their own location. Therefore, the specific intellectual engages in micro-politics at the local level, rather than working at the macro-political level of the global system and nation state and pursuing a project of social transformation (Foucault, 1980).

The issue of representation is problematic for both Bauman and Foucault and raises doubts about the viability of academics engaging in critical public work. In the broadly modernist conceptions of the intellectual reviewed earlier, the intellectual's primary role is representation, justified on the grounds that intellectuals have an external perspective that the masses do not, or that their job is to formulate the ideology for the class with which they choose to affiliate. In contrast, Bauman's 'interpreter' merely conveys understanding and facilitates communication, while Foucault is hostile towards any role for intellectuals in representing the masses, seeing that as part of the problem, rather than the solution (Radhakrishnan, 1990). This concern, together with claims that academics, as intellectuals, can no longer credibly stand as the bearer of universal values, questions the legitimacy of academics' critical engagement with external audiences. If academics problematise the nature of concepts such as justice, truth and human rights, how can they engage meaningfully in public debate? Do Bauman and Foucault go too far in rejecting the modern conception of the intellectual? These questions are addressed in the following section.

Reconstructing a Critical Public Role in Postmodernity

It is ironic that I have chosen a postmodern approach for investigating the role of business school faculty as critics of society, since postmodernism is often seen as the main culprit for the decline of a critical public role for academics. I first realised this

when I attended a conference in London on the decline of the public intellectual. Having come to the thesis with an impression that commercialisation posed the greatest threat to a critical public role for academics, I expected this to be the main topic of debate. This received little attention compared to postmodernism, which speaker after speaker attacked for depoliticising the university. These attacks were directed at both the substance and the style of postmodernism. Boggs (2000) argues that in its extreme form, postmodernism completely ignores the macro elements of the global system and nation state in favour of an attention to micro politics, grounded in the localised elements of everyday life. Foucault's rejection of grand narratives and the focus on micro-politics at the expense of macro elements erases the possibility of any large-scale social transformation. Boggs states that while Foucault provides valuable insight into the domination inherent in Enlightenment rationality, the privileging of discourse over institutional life causes structures to disappear and concrete referents to be lost.

Foucault's theories in the end amount to a recipe for antipolitics. He furnishes no social grounding for his critique of domination or for potential modes of resistance to that domination. (Boggs, 2000, p.214)

The style of postmodernism is also blamed for academics withdrawing from the public sphere and neglecting their 'duty' to be critical intellectuals. A prerequisite for interactions between academics and external constituencies is that such interactions take place in a language that is intelligible to all. Epstein (1990) argues that the complex jargon associated with postmodern ways of theorising the social world is unintelligible to the public and to other academics not part of the postmodern 'in-crowd'. This conveniently creates a "refuge from the seemingly impossible demand of creating an effective left politics" while enabling academics to maintain an "aura of radicalism" (p.29). Critical intellectual activity it may be, but public work aimed at changing society it is not (Epstein, 1994).

In attending the conference on the decline of the public intellectual, I was struck by the polarised nature of the debate. Those critical of 'postmodern' perspectives talked as if there existed a singular, unified, uncontested postmodernism, while those critical of 'modern' perspectives did the same. I found my allegiance torn between sympathies for the identity of the academic as critic of society and for critiques of rationality, reason and universality offered by postmodern perspectives. As a result, I became drawn to a position in the middle ground between the extremes of modernism and postmodernism. Best and Kellner (1997) argue convincingly that binary distinctions between modernity and postmodernity and between micro and macro politics are unhelpful for exploring the critical role of intellectuals. Kellner (2002) notes that political struggle involves both micro and macro politics. For example, the collapse of Soviet-style communism in 1989 involved struggles at specific sites, such as universities and churches, as well as at the macro level of mass demonstrations. Intellectuals were involved at various points, from the local and specific to the national and universal. Michael (2000) is another advocate of a middle ground between the extremes of modernism and postmodernism, suggesting academics must depend less on their role as interpreters within specialised fields and more on appeals to Enlightenment values of truth, justice and equality. Michael argues that however contested these terms have become, they are the terms around which democratic debate takes place, so if academics are to contribute meaningfully to public debate,

appeals to them are necessary. This does not, however, require academics to regard universals as foundations that are fixed for all time, merely as terms that orient political argument and provide it with rhetorical force (Michael, 2000).

Conclusion

This chapter has considered what are perceived to be intensifying threats to a critical public role for academics. These include: the professionalisation of the academy, which, it is held, encourages academics to withdraw from public debate; the commodification of higher education, which makes universities increasingly reliant on external sponsors and academics more reluctant to speak out on issues of social concern; and the critique of positivist science, which has undermined academics' appeals to truth and universal values. The tone of the literature is highly pessimistic about the viability of a critical public role for academics in this increasingly professionalised, commodified and postmodern world. This places doubt about the legitimacy of notions such as academic freedom and the democratic function of the university. Taken as a whole, this literature tends towards determinism, seeing the threats to academic freedom as the result of structural factors. This neglects agency and fails to provide a convincing explanation for why some critical activity continues to prosper.

Having raised concerns about the continued viability of a critical public role for university faculty, I turned to the literature on the social role of intellectuals. Although the signifiers 'academic' and 'intellectual' are not synonymous, this literature provides valuable insights into how a critical public role for faculty can be theorised. In reviewing seminal contributions from Weber to Foucault, I have identified constructions of the modern intellectual, which draw on discourses of reason, science and universality, and deconstructions of these conceptions, which problematise each of these discourses. The modern intellectual stands 'apart from' and 'above' the masses on the basis of his/her superior knowledge. In the postmodern deconstruction, this identity is rejected in favour of a positioning of intellectual activity 'within' a specific and local site. Taken to its extreme, postmodernism denounces any privileged role for academics, but my continued attachment to the notion of the academic as critic has drawn me towards a middle ground between the extremes of modernism and postmodernism. The challenge from here on is to consider how the critical public role of academics can be reformulated in a manner consistent with the critique of modernity. The key word here is critique – viewing postmodernity as a means for rethinking (rather than abandoning) the notion of a critical public role. The arguments put forward by Best and Kellner, Michael and others are convincing, but warrant, I believe a more detailed theorisation. In the following chapter, I introduce Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, which I argue, offers a potentially fruitful way forward.

Chapter 3 – Theorising the Politics of Identity Constitution and Practice

Introduction

Discourse theory (based on the work of Laclau, Mouffe and others) has, until very recently, been absent from the burgeoning culturalist and managerialist literature on organisational discourses and related issues of identity, for several possible reasons. First, it is positioned in *political* philosophy rather than sociology and psychology, the two main fields on which theorising on management and organisation has been based. Second, it is based on a complex deconstruction of two major theoretical traditions, structuralism and Marxism. The deconstructionist method adopted by Laclau and Mouffe presupposes extensive knowledge of these theories, which is unfamiliar ground for many researchers in organisation and management. Third, and perhaps most significantly, it is based on a distinctive social ontology and associated vocabulary that distinguishes it from other forms of discourse-based approaches that have received increasing attention in the organisation and management literature (eg, Foucault, Fairclough). It is not as if discourse theory has been ‘tried and tested’ and then discarded by organisation theorists, since I found virtually no mention of it in the organisation studies literature. This presents an exciting opportunity and a difficult challenge. The opportunity is to make a contribution to the organisation studies literature by considering what discourse theory can add to existing frameworks. The challenge is that this is relatively uncharted territory, which means a certain amount of imagination must go into studying organisations such as business schools.

The aims of this chapter are first, to develop a theoretical framework that forms the basis for the empirical component of the research and second, to critically evaluate the framework by comparing it to alternative frameworks and engaging with key debates in social theorising. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section briefly outlines the philosophical premises of discourse theory and introduces its key concepts. This is not intended to be an in-depth overview, merely an introduction designed to outline some key assumptions and concepts and to prepare the reader for a more detailed discussion to follow. The second section considers three theoretical issues in social theorising (idealism-realism, structure-agency and relativism). I analyse discourse theory’s contributions to these debates by comparing it with Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis and Foucauldian discourse analysis. All three approaches share a ‘family resemblance’ of social constructionism yet each occupies a different position on these three recurring debates. In the third and final section, I focus on discourse theory’s concept of ‘dislocation’, which is central to its conceptualisation of ‘agency’ and ‘structure’. It also plays a central role in my empirical analysis, with the challenges to academic freedom described in the last section (professionalisation, commodification and the crisis of modernity) interpreted as dislocations of the discursive terrain upon which the business school is constituted. In this final section, I argue there are problems with Laclau’s (1990) definition of the concept, since it incorporates an extra-discursive element that is incompatible with the anti-essentialism of discourse theory’s philosophical premises. I suggest a rearticulation that is compatible with these premises – a rearticulation that informs my use of the concept in the empirical chapters to follow.

Discourse Theory Outlined

The use of the term discourse *theory* to refer to the work of Laclau, Mouffe and others is useful not only for enabling a boundary to be drawn around their work, but also as a way of emphasising the importance of theory to their discourse-based approach. Unlike other discourse approaches, which are often described as approaches to discourse *analysis* (such as ‘critical discourse analysis’) and which provide a set of methodological guidelines and specific techniques for analysis, discourse theory offers little guidance on how empirical work based on the framework should be conducted. Rather, it is predominantly concerned with theory, and in particular, the philosophical (ontological and epistemological) premises concerning the role of language in the construction of the social world. Chapter 4 will consider the methodological challenges of employing discourse theory in empirical work, but this chapter is concerned with introducing and evaluating the framework, with a particular emphasis on its philosophical premises.

The relational character of identity is one of the central philosophical premises of discourse theory and is based on a critique of structuralism. Discourse theory builds on the insight of Saussure (1983) that language constitutes rather than reflects social reality. Saussure conceptualised language as a chain of signs, with each sign made up of a signifier (sound or written image) and a signified (meaning). For Saussure, the meaning of signs is derived from their difference to other signs, rather than from any inherent characteristic of an object. For example, a cat is identified not because of some essential, internal quality, but because it is different from a dog, or a mouse (Best, 2000). Saussure sees signs as positive facts, which are the products of conventions of a ‘speech community’ and asserts that these signs form a network or structure. Saussure distinguished between two levels of language: *langue* and *parole*. *Langue* is the unchangeable structure of language, the set of linguistic rules that speakers adhere to in order to communicate meaningfully, whereas *parole* refers to its use in particular circumstances. *Langue* is formal and essential and constitutes the focus of analysis for linguistics, whereas *parole* is contingent and random, which makes it unsuitable for scientific analysis (Saussure, 1983).

Poststructuralist theories such as discourse theory accept structuralism’s assertion about the relational character of meaning and identity but reject the distinction between *langue* and *parole* and the associated view of language as a stable and totalising structure. Whereas structuralism regards the meaning of signs as fixed, poststructuralists contend that meaning can change according to context. For example, in an employment context the sign ‘work’ can mean the opposite of ‘leisure’, yet in a leisure context, its opposite is ‘passivity’ (eg, ‘work at your game’). This dissolves the distinction between *langue* and *parole* since it is in actual language use that the structure of language is created, reproduced and changed. Individual speech acts draw on the structure in order to communicate meaningfully and yet may challenge the structure by assigning new meanings to signs (Weedon, 1997).

In addition to sharing poststructuralism’s critique of structuralism, discourse theory draws on Derrida’s (1976) concept of *différance* and its inference that every affirmation of identity is premised on the active deferring of certain possibilities. Identity not only lacks an essence, but its meaning depends on its relationship to those identities from which it is differentiated. Discourse theory defines the *constitutive outside* as that externality which is a condition of existence of all objectivity. The

constitutive outside blocks the identity of the inside, but yet is a prerequisite for the construction of the inside. Identity therefore, is negatively constituted, incomplete and ultimately unstable. “Unfixity has become the condition of every social identity”, so that “the sense of every social identity appears constantly deferred. The moment of ‘final’ suture never arrives” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.85-6).

The relational character of identity is employed by discourse theory to deconstruct orthodox Marxist theorising and its privileging of a class identity. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) believe that Marxism is in crisis because it cannot explain the emergence of new social movements in the 1970s, such as the ecology movement, that do not appear to be organised around a class consciousness.

What is now in crisis is a whole conception of socialism which rests upon the ontological centrality of the working class, upon the role of Revolution, with a capital ‘r’, as the founding moment in the transition from one type of society to another, and upon the illusory prospect of a perfectly unitary and homogenous collective that will render pointless the moment of politics. (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.2)

To theorise these plural contemporary social struggles Laclau and Mouffe turn to Gramsci, whose theory of hegemony goes beyond the concept of a class alliance by arguing that identity is constructed on ideology – an organic and relational whole which creates a ‘collective will’ and brings people together around ‘basic principles’ (Gramsci, 1971). However, Laclau and Mouffe argue that Gramsci retains an essentialist core in that even though the meaning of social relations depends on hegemonic articulations whose success is not guaranteed by any laws of history, Gramsci insists that class is always a single unifying principle. Their conclusion is that the direction of the workers struggle and of all other social movements is not uniformly progressive and that there are no privileged positions (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985)³.

Discourse theory endeavours to replace an essentialist theory of hegemony based on essence and stable ground with a theory that draws on the insight that all identity and objectivity is negatively constituted, incomplete and ultimately unstable. Within this theory of hegemony is a conceptualisation of power that approaches that of Foucault, who sees power not as a repressive force that people possess and exercise over others, but as a productive force that constitutes the social world (Foucault, 1980). In discourse theory, the affirmation of any identity or objectivity involves the displacement of other identities and objectivities that compete for hegemony. “The constitution of a social identity is an act of power...identity as such *is* power” (Laclau, 1990, p.31, emphasis in original). *Politics* is the term used in discourse

³ Laclau and Mouffe’s reading of the Marxist tradition has been challenged by several commentators, including Geras (1987), Boccock (1986), Mouzelis (1988) and Best and Kellner (1991). Geras, for example, accuses Laclau and Mouffe of constructing a ‘straw man’ by selectively appropriating Marxist orthodoxy to present a view of determinism and economism, while ignoring other aspects of Marxist thought that counters this view. The importance of this debate is recognised, but is not considered central to this thesis because the focus is Laclau and Mouffe’s contribution to poststructuralist thinking.

theory to describe the ways in which different hegemonic projects constitute the social in a way that excludes other ways. Before expanding on this concept, however, it is first necessary to introduce the concepts of *antagonism* and *articulation*, which represent preconditions for politics.

As noted earlier, discourse theory opposes conceptions of social conflict (such as Marxism) in which antagonisms are understood as a clash of agents with fully constituted identities and interests. By contrast, drawing on poststructuralist insights into the negative constitution of identity, it argues that social antagonisms occur because agents are unable to attain their identities. In this view, the source of antagonism is a radical 'otherness' where every objectivity, identity or meaning exists in an antagonistic relationship to all other objectivities, identities and meanings. For example, the identity 'worker' exists in an antagonistic relationship from all other identities, such as 'student', 'father'. This 'constitutive outside' serves two important functions, both threatening identity and yet at the same time making it possible.

On the one hand, it "blocks" the full constitution of the identity to which it is opposed and thus shows its contingency. But on the other hand, given that this latter identity, like all identities, is merely relational and would therefore not be what it is outside the relationship with the force antagonizing it, the latter is also part of the conditions of existence of that identity. This link between blocking and simultaneous affirmation of an identity is what we call "contingency," which introduces an element of radical undecidability into the structure of objectivity. (Laclau, 1990, p.21)

It is through the concepts of the constitutive outside and the contingency of every objectivity that discourse theory claims the 'impossibility of society'.

The incomplete character of every totality necessarily leads us to abandon, as a terrain of analysis, the premise of '*society*' as a sutured and self-defined totality. (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.111, emphasis in original)

While the logic of contingency means that all objectivity, identity and meaning is contingent, discourse theory also seeks to account for the relative stability of the social world through the concept of articulation. Articulation is "*the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social*" (1985, p.113, emphasis in original). Articulation involves the bringing together into relationship, through *chains of equivalence*, identities that were once isolated. Equivalence is negatively constituted, since the basis of equivalence is the presence of an antagonistic force confronting the articulation. "Differences are equivalent to each other as far as all of them belong to this side of the frontier of exclusion" (Laclau, 1994, p.169). Discourse theory distinguishes between *moments* (articulated identities in a chain of equivalence) and *elements* (identities which have not been articulated). *Discourse* is the collection of moments that results from articulation, and it is to this contentious concept that I now turn.

Discourse theory's conception of discourse extends to all social practices and relations such that "every object is constituted as an object of discourse" (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, p.108). Objects have an existence external to discourse, but they have no meaning prior to, or external to, their articulation within discourses. So, for

example, sheets of paper (or the VDU) on which these words are printed (displayed) exist externally to whatever discursive practice operates to render them (and its readers) meaningful as a distinctive identity (e.g. 'article'). This all-encompassing definition of discourse departs from forms of analysis which assume or imply that discursive and non-discursive elements of reality can be unequivocally distinguished (e.g. Foucault, 1980; Fairclough, 1992). In discourse theory, there is no ontological difference between the linguistic and behavioural aspects of a social practice. Laclau (1990) uses the example of building a wall to illustrate this point

At a certain moment I ask my workmate to pass me a brick and then I add it to the wall. The first act – asking for a brick – is linguistic; the second – adding the brick to the wall is extralinguistic...the two actions share something that allows them to be compared, namely the fact that they are both part of a total operation which is the building of the wall...This totality which includes within itself the linguistic and the non-linguistic is what we call discourse. (Laclau, 1990, p.100)

Laclau and Mouffe (1985) highlight Foucault's allegedly inconsistent distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices. In *The Birth of the Clinic* (1973), Foucault argues that clinical medicine must be regarded as the

establishment of a relation, in medical discourse, between a number of distinct elements, some of which concerned the status of doctors, others the institutional and technical site from which they spoke, others their position as subjects perceiving, observing, describing, teaching, etc. It can be said that this relation between different elements (some of which are new, while others were already in existence) is effected by clinical discourse: it is this, as a practice, that establishes between them all a system of relations that is not "really" given or constituted *a priori*. (Foucault, 1973, cited in Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.107)

Laclau and Mouffe argue that in this account, the 'non-discursive' institutions and techniques are not external to the system structuring them but are modified by the articulation of clinical discourse. Therefore, these so called 'non-discursive' elements can only be conceived of as discursive articulations.

Having introduced the concepts of discourse, antagonism and articulation, we can now return to discourse theory's understanding of politics. It was noted earlier that articulation results in the establishment of identities, relationships and ultimately discourses. These discourses, established through the exclusion of alternative discourses, can achieve relative stability over time to achieve an "objective presence" (Laclau, 1990, p.34) and yet are characterised by a radical contingency. This objective presence tends to conceal "that entity's contingency and historicity" (p.34), a process called *sedimentation*. For example, the understanding of 'children' as a group with distinctive characteristics from 'adults' has nowadays achieved an 'objective presence', however several hundred years ago 'children' were seen and treated as 'small adults'. This is a sedimented discourse – it has become so firmly established that its contingency is forgotten and it appears as an objectivity (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). At any time however, sedimented discourses can enter the play of politics and be problematised in new articulations. This process of *reactivation* reveals the contingent and historical origins of the articulation. In discourse theory the

processes of sedimentation and reactivation correspond to the *social* and the *political* respectively. This affirms the primacy of politics, since social relations are understood as contingent and historical rather than the manifestations of an essential and immutable social order. A society without politics is inconceivable because it would mean a closed totality reproducing itself through repetitive practices. A completely political moment is also impossible since any political construction takes place against the background of sedimented practices (Laclau, 1990).

Let us now return to discourse theory's concept of hegemony. The precondition of any hegemonic activity is the ultimate unfixity of all objectivity, meaning, identity and structures as a result of its negative constitution. Hegemonic articulation is the attempt to effect the ultimately impossible fixation of meaning and in doing so construct stable systems of identities which function as collective wills and yet have no essential or *a priori* origins (Laclau, 1990). Because of this ultimate unfixity, there is no possibility of a hegemonic articulation (whether it be Left or Right) securing, ahistorically or acontextually, the place of power. The universality of the social order is an impossibility and yet it is because of this impossibility that a particular hegemonic articulation assumes the role of symbolising the absent universality of the social (Laclau, 1995). The hegemonic process can therefore be understood as the competition between various hegemonic articulations to fill the empty place of power. Discourse theory introduces the term *myth* as another name for a hegemonic articulation. Myths emerge through structural dislocation and suture that dislocated space through the constitution of a new space of representation. They have a hegemonic effect by forming a new objectivity through the rearticulation of dislocated elements (Laclau, 1990).

Discourse analysis is distinct from other discourse approaches in its preoccupation with articulating a new theoretical and political direction for left politics. Whilst all discourse approaches have political implications for social actors, discourse theory proposes a new theory of politics in the form of a *radical and plural democracy*. Mouffe (1989) describes this political project "as being both modern and postmodern" (p.33), a project that defends the political content of the Enlightenment whilst abandoning its epistemological foundations. Although the Enlightenment played an important part in establishing democracy, Mouffe argues it has become an obstacle to understanding new forms of politics, such as the emergence of social movements and identity politics. Democracy is the distinctive feature of modernity, but postmodern theorising has recognised

the impossibility of any foundation or final legitimation that is constitutive of the very advent of the democratic form of society and thus of modernity itself. (Mouffe, 1989, p.34)

Modernity's attempt to replace the foundation of God or Nature with a foundation of Man and Reason were doomed to failure because of this radical indeterminacy. The crisis of modernity is therefore a crisis of foundations, not of the political project itself.

Radical democracy demands that we acknowledge difference – the particular, the multiple, the heterogeneous – in effect, everything that had been excluded by the concept of Man in the abstract. Universalism is not rejected but

particularized; what is needed is a new kind of articulation between the universal and the particular. (Mouffe, 1989, p.36)

The project of radical and plural democracy sees multiplicity and conflict as the *raison d'être* of politics. It involves the linking together of diverse struggles (such as anti-racism, anti-sexism, concern for the environment and the defence of workers rights) in a new left-wing hegemonic project.

In summary, although widely identified as postmodern, discourse theory differs from much postmodern analysis in retaining, yet radically reconstructing, the emancipatory interest of Marxism and its politicisation of the Enlightenment project. It rejects conceptions of society, for example, that conceive of it as a full and totalised objectivity, rather than as a series of articulations that identify 'society' in different ways. Meaning is fixed hegemonically and is therefore subject to contestation as there is always a dislocation between any specific meaning and the totalising aspiration to know what 'society' is. The social, within which conceptions of society are generated, is theorised as a sedimented form of objectivity that is (temporarily) stabilised through a hegemonic operation of power relations. Social formations are established by excluding other alternatives, thereby achieving relative permanence over time and assuming an 'objective' presence. This 'objectivity' occludes its historical and contingent origins. Identifications become sedimented as a consequence of processes of hegemonic fixing, but they are inherently vulnerable to 'reactivation' as their taken-for-grantedness becomes problematised and de-naturalised.

Discourse Theory's Position on Key Debates in Social Theorising

Discourse theory represents a novel amalgam of developments in Marxist, poststructuralist and psychoanalytic theory and is receiving increasing application in the social sciences. It has yet to make a significant impact on the study of organisational discourses and related issues of identity, but deserves closer examination of its potential contribution to the field. In this part of the chapter, I analyse discourse theory's position on three key debates in social theorising: idealism and realism; structure and agency; and relativism. Any theory that seeks to make an impact on its field must be scrutinised on where it stands in relation to these debates and indeed, much of the critique of discourse theory has focused on them. All three debates are longstanding and it would be naïve to believe that discourse theory has resolved them, just as it is naïve to believe they will ever be resolved to the satisfaction of all who participate in them. Nevertheless, the positions developed by Laclau, Mouffe and others who have contributed to discourse theory occupy some new conceptual spaces that are worthy of consideration.

To elaborate on these positions and to assist in emphasising their distinctiveness, I contrast discourse theory with other two forms of discourse-based analysis that *have* made an impact on organisation studies: one, 'Foucauldian analysis', is based on the work of Michel Foucault, and the other, critical discourse analysis, is most closely identified with Norman Fairclough. All three approaches can broadly be defined as 'social constructionist', in that they adopt a critical approach to taken-for-granted knowledge and share a view of the world that is historical and culturally specific. All three approaches also share the assumption that our understanding of the world is created through social processes and that these constructions of 'knowledge' and

'truth' have social consequences (Burr, 1995). However, the aim of this section is not to focus on the similarities between these approaches, but on the differences. While all three approaches share the 'family resemblance' of social constructionism, they differ, to a greater or lesser extent, in their position on these three recurring debates within social theorising.

Idealism-Realism

Much of the critique of discourse theory has focused on its distinctive social ontology. Discourse theory attempts to stake out a conceptual space between idealism and realism by asserting that objects do exist external to consciousness, yet only have meaning through their discursive constitution. It also claims to be materialist, by dissolving the distinction between the discursive and the non-discursive and conceiving of discourse as material practice. This distinctive ontology has been attacked by critical realists, who argue that the failure to distinguish between the discursive and non-discursive condemns it to idealism. In this section, I outline the main criticisms of discourse theory's ontology and provide some rebuttal to those criticisms.

Geras (1987) accuses Laclau and Mouffe of a "shamefaced idealism" (p.65), interpreting the statement that "every object is constituted as an object of discourse" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.108) as saying that

all objects are given their being by, or are what they are by virtue of, discourse; which is to say (is it not?) that there is no *pre*-discursive objectivity or reality; that objects not spoken, written or thought about *do not exist*. (Geras, 1987, p.66, emphasis in original)

Geras' accusation that discourse theory denies the existence, or 'being' of an extra-discursive reality is based on a misunderstanding of Laclau and Mouffe's position, which is spelt out clearly in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*.

The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has *nothing to do* with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in these sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their 'specificity as objects is constructed in terms of 'natural phenomena' or 'expressions of the wrath of God', depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they would constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence. (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.108, emphasis in original)

This clarification has not satisfied the critical realists, who claim that social life operates according to a range of mechanisms which have their own 'generative effect' on events but which are always mediated by one another in producing the event. Critical realists employ transcendental arguments to claim not only that there is a world external to discourse, but also that this reality has a causal impact outside its constitution in discourse. Bhaskar (1998), in a debate with Laclau concerning the ontological differences between critical realism and discourse theory, comments:

I accept of course that all extra-discursive realities are constituted within discursive practice, from the point of view of their intelligibility. But that's not to say that they're constituted in discursive practice from the point of view of their causal impact. (Bhaskar & Laclau, 1998, p.13)

Bhaskar notes that most diseases had a causal impact long before there was a concept of them, as did global warming. So, whereas discourse theorists argue that extra-discursive reality only has meaning through discourse, critical realists maintain this extra-discursive world has a causal impact, and therefore meaning in and of itself. In response to Bhaskar, Laclau argues that while discourse theory and critical realism both acknowledge a transcendental realism (that there is a world beyond our experience of it), they differ in the way the transcendental is understood. Critical realists use the concept of intransitivity to explain that objects exist and act independently of our knowledge of them. For Laclau, however,

this intransitivity of objects which is supposed to be behind all experience as the ground of all the regularities in experience is simply one more discourse which cannot be conceded to be different in quality from the discourse which are seen as transitive. (Bhaskar & Laclau, 1998, p.10)

Therefore, for Laclau, while discourse theory accepts that objects exist and act independently of thought, it integrates the notion of intransitivity as a discursive element, so that "the intransitivity of the object is itself transitivity" (Bhaskar & Laclau, 1998, p.10). The concept of intransitivity is useful for constituting a scientific discourse as a totality, yet scientific discourse is based on a set of premises that are themselves challengeable. By this manoeuvre, critical realism's ontology becomes one possibility for discursively constituting the real, in a way that makes science possible, whereas for discourse theory, ontology is "everything which is constituted in discourse" (Bhaskar & Laclau, 1998, p.13).

A useful illustration of these theoretical positions comes from examining Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, which is based on a critical realist, materialist ontology. Unlike discourse theory, critical discourse analysis has made a significant impact in organisation studies. Higher education has been a focus of Fairclough's empirical work, which makes it particularly relevant to this thesis. Critical discourse analysis involves linguistic analysis of actual language use and attempts to investigate "relationships of causality and determination" between these discursive practices and social structures (Fairclough, 1993, p.135). Unlike discourse theory, critical discourse analysis distinguishes between discursive and non-discursive practices. For Fairclough, discursive practice is the process of text production and consumption and is just one dimension or moment of every social practice. Discourse both constitutes and is constituted by other social dimensions, such as social structure, in a dialectical relationship.

The discursive constitution of society does not emanate from a free play of ideas in people's heads but from a social practice which is firmly rooted in and oriented to real, material social structures. (Fairclough, 1992, p.66)

Since the discursive and non-discursive elements of a social practice each have their own logic, each must be analysed on its own terms using appropriate tools. Critical

discourse analysis can analyse the discursive dimension but other tools, such as economics, are needed to study the non-discursive dimension.

For Fairclough (and critical realists in general) structures, such as capitalism, have a separate and real ontological status and are attributed causal powers that produce certain effects. For instance, he argues that the marketisation⁴ and commodification of contemporary culture is a distinctive feature of 'late capitalist' societies. One cultural consequence of this is the general reconstruction of social life on a market basis and an associated shift in emphasis from production to consumption. According to Fairclough, this has caused an extensive restructuring of the boundaries between 'orders of discourse'⁵ and between discursive practices. In higher education, this has resulted in universities facing increasing pressure to raise income from private sources and to see their students as 'customers'. To "illuminate" (1993, p.157) these changes, Fairclough engages in a detailed textual analysis of press advertisements for academic posts, a conference programme, an academic curriculum vitae and entries in undergraduate prospectuses. In critical discourse analysis, the analysis of actual language use takes centre stage. Fairclough acknowledges that Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory has informed his thinking, but believes it lacks "the analysis of actual texts which I would see as essential to discourse analysis" (1992, p.93). His focus, therefore, is the *discursive representation* of changes in the structure, not an analysis of how such changes in the structure have taken place, since critical discourse analysis can analyse the discursive dimension but other tools, such as economics, are needed to study the non-discursive dimension. The assumption is that the language of university documents analysed *mirrors* the structures and that analysis of texts from different periods illustrates how the structures have changed. For discourse theorists, structures, such as 'late-capitalism', have no ontological autonomy and no causal powers, existing only in the discursive practices that reproduce and transform them. Whereas Fairclough views discourse as *mirroring* the structures, discourse theorists would focus on how discourse *constitutes* structures.

Several commentators have criticised discourse theory for neglecting the study of institutions because of its preoccupation with identity (Bocock, 1986; Jessop, 1982; 1990). Best and Kellner (1991) note that

While discourse theory can illuminate the ways in which social contradictions are experienced and played out in political struggles, political economy and analysis of forces of domination and resistance are necessary to analyse the extra-discursive aspects of society – the state, economic structures, existing political movements, and so on – none of which are adequately theorized by interpreting them as forms of 'discourse'. (1991, p.203-4)

⁴ Marketisation, according to Fairclough, is when universities, under pressure from government, come increasingly to operate as if they were profit-seeking organisations competing to sell products to consumers (Fairclough, 1993).

⁵ The concept of 'order of discourse' refers to the totality of discursive practices of an institution and relationships between them eg, the order of discourse of the school.

These critics are correct in asserting that discourse theory has not been overly concerned with analysing organisations and institutions and my research begins to address that gap. The issue is how to conceptualise institutions without falling into a realist position which regards them as extra-discursive phenomena that exert a causal impact on the discursive realm. Torfing (1990) offers a way forward, by suggesting that institutions such as “‘state’ and ‘economy’ are analysed as open-ended discursive formations, which are criss-crossed by hegemonic struggles re-activating the political ‘origin’ of their institutional forms” (p.64). Thus, the ‘state’ and ‘economy’ are viewed as partial and precarious and the outcome of hegemonic struggle, yet are able to achieve varying degrees of ‘sedimentation’ and therefore can appear as durable and stable. This understanding is reflected in the research questions for my thesis, which assume that the business school is constituted discursively – the product of a hegemonic struggle between competing articulations that attempt to effect the (ultimately) impossible fixation of meaning. In contrast to institutions which appear stable and durable, I argue that no articulation of the business school has become highly sedimented, to the extent that our understanding of what the business school ‘is’ has become taken-for-granted.

In discussing issues of idealism and realism it is also useful to position discourse theory alongside Foucauldian approaches to discourse analysis. It is acknowledged there is no ‘one best way’ for adapting Foucault’s theorising to the empirical study of organisational phenomena, but Foucauldian approaches in general stand accused of overplaying discourse and paying insufficient attention to material circumstances (Newton, 1998). Paul Du Gay has been strongly influenced by Foucault’s ideas and his work on ‘enterprise discourse’, with its focus on the changing context of UK higher education, is especially relevant for my research. Du Gay and Salaman (1992) contend that the discourse of enterprise is behind a range of organisational reforms that replaces organisational regulation with market regulation. As the discourse of enterprise becomes hegemonic more areas of human activity become conceptualised in terms of commodity production and consumption. Du Gay and Salaman (1992) regard enterprise discourse as a totalising and individualising economic rationality, where ‘patients’, ‘passengers’ and ‘pupils’ are reconstructed as ‘customers’.

There can hardly be a school, hospital, social services department, university or college in the UK that has not in some way become permeated by the language of enterprise. Enterprise has remorselessly reconceptualised and remodelled almost everything in its path. (1992, p.622)

Du Gay’s conception of enterprise discourse has received much attention in the organisation studies literature, but is criticised for being insensitive to material concerns. He claims it has achieved hegemony over other organisational discourses, yet also acknowledges evidence from empirical research which suggests that the discourse, and its associated focus on ‘excellence’ is *not* being adopted in most organisations (Du Gay, 1996). Du Gay acknowledges these material circumstances, but sees no need to modify his argument about the salience of enterprise discourse, whatever the empirical data might suggest (Newton, 1998). What is needed, according to Newton, is “an understanding of subjectivity and organisation which attends to agency and ‘materialism’ yet avoids dualism, essentialism and reductionism” (p.441). Discourse theory makes a novel contribution to this goal, by dislocating the thinking that dualises discourse and material practice. Contrary to the

claims of idealism, Laclau and other discourse theorists assert the materiality of discourse.

The performance of [an] act is what I call discourse; it is not that discourse produces some kind of material effect, but that the material act of producing it is what discourse is. (Bhaskar & Laclau, 1998, p.13)

By conceptualising discourse as material practice, discourse theory seeks to avoid amaterial conceptions of social interaction, which some Foucauldian studies have tended towards, without succumbing to an unquestioning adherence to a realist ontology, which grounds critical discourse analysis. Woodiwiss (1990) refuses to accept this attempt to “seek a third way in the realm of ontology, where only two exist” – idealism and realism.

This is the choice that no additional ontological choice, whether it be for or against materialism, for or against humanism or whatever can substitute for. (Woodiwiss, 1990, p.69)

Torfin (1990) defends discourse theory’s ‘third position’, which he calls ‘radical materialism’, by making two claims – first, that “matter is constituted as form in and through discourse” (p.54) and second, that a logic of negativity “constantly penetrates and disturbs the relational totality of social forms and thereby prevents them from fully absorbing the existing matter” (p.54). Torfin argues that idealism is characterised by the reduction of matter to form, whereas ‘radical materialism’ insists on a systematic weakening of form.

The materialist position claims that there is an irreducible relation between form and matter in the sense that matter is never completely absorbed by its form. Such a definition of materialism makes it possible to avoid its confusion with realism. (Torfin, 1990, p.53)

Thus, discourse theory is philosophically realist by asserting that objects do exist independently of language and thought, yet it is distinct from other forms of realism with its claim that extra-discursive reality only has meaning through discourse and that discourse is penetrated by a negativity which prevents it from fully absorbing matter and achieving the status of a totalised object. An existing material phenomenon, such as an earthquake, can be attached to different discursive forms, but that does not put into question its existence. In fact, it is because there is something external to discourse that objects can be constructed differently in and through discourse.

Structure-Agency

The relationship between agency and structure is one of the most contested debates in leftist social and political analysis. Agency is understood as the open, reflexive and intentional quality of human beings (Willmott, 1994), while structure is the complex and relatively enduring relationships that define the basic properties of the system and permit its continued reproduction (Torfin, 1999). The agency-structure debate comes about because most social phenomena can be explained both by their structural determinants and by the social actions that brought them about. Are agents self-determining, or are they passive effects of the social structures into which they are born? In this section, I outline discourse theory’s approach to this question, which

has endeavoured to overcome the dualism inherent in it. 'Agents', according to discourse theory, are not sovereign individuals with preconstituted interests while 'structures' are not totalised objects that determine the actions of 'agents'. While the dualism of agency and structure has been a preoccupation for many, it was neither a stimulus nor a preoccupation for Laclau and Mouffe in their early work, which is based on a deconstruction of traditional Marxism. Nevertheless, they have been forced, in response to criticism, to refine their conceptualisation of 'agents' and 'structures' and their work provides a novel recasting of this debate. In this section I identify three distinct stages in the development of discourse theory's approach and discuss how Laclau and Mouffe have responded to their critics.

No discussion of the structure-agency nexus would be complete without a mention of Giddens' (1984) influential contribution. His structuration theory marked an advance on previous approaches to the study of power predicated on the dualism of agency and structure. Giddens' duality of action and structure is an attempt to find a middle ground between voluntaristic theories, which focus on human agency, and deterministic theories, which focus on structural constraints of social action. Giddens argues that structure and agency are mutually involved in the production of each other, which he calls structuration. Structure is produced by and acts back on the knowledgeable agents who are the subjects of that structure which they instantiate through their constitution of it. This understanding of structure as both medium and outcome of action makes it possible for agents to resist the determining power of structures (Giddens, 1984).

Like Giddens, critical realists seek to avoid the polar extremes of voluntarism and determinism. Bhaskar (1989) draws an ontological distinction between preconstituted social structure, which human agents inherit from the past, and current social interaction, with the latter taking place in the context provided by the former. These preconstituted social structures are the product of actions taken by agents in the past but appear 'ready made' to the current generation of actors. The existence of these structures is a necessary condition for the existence of intentional agency, but they also constrain agency. For example, in language, the act of speaking presupposes structures in the form of rules and grammar and in order to communicate successfully speakers are constrained by these rules and grammar (Lewis, 2002). In this way, social structures, understood as pre-existing and therefore relatively autonomous from current social interaction, 'make a difference' to the actions of agents, or, in the vocabulary of critical realism, exert a 'causal influence'. Critical realists deny that the behaviour of actors is determined by social structures. For example, while a person in an English-speaking country must use the pre-existing rules of English grammar to be understood, these rules do not determine what the person says or writes (Lewis, 2002). The charge of reification of social structures is also denied. While structures are the products of actions taken in the past and exert a causal influence on current actions, they are not conscious decision-making entities. Structures 'condition' and 'shape', but they do not determine, argue the critical realists.

Fairclough's critical discourse analysis adopts a critical realist ontology and is a useful demonstration of some of the problems with this position. His ontological commitment to critical realism is reflected in the aim of critical discourse analysis, which is to

systematically explore often opaque relationships of *causality and determination* between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes. (Fairclough, 1993, p.135, emphasis added)

Fairclough has a two-sided view of language – “it is socially shaped, but it is also socially shaping, or constitutive” (Fairclough, 1993, p.134). This socially constitutive view of language resembles Giddens’ theory of structuration in which agency and structure are fused together in a single moment, but is difficult to accommodate with Fairclough’s commitment to a critical realist view of the world in which structures are pre-existing and have causal powers. Fairclough seems caught between claiming, on the one hand, that agency and structure are fused together and on the other, that structures pre-exist and have causal influence on agency. He simply cannot have it both ways.

Fairclough aims to explore the relationship between discursive practices and social structures (as he defines them), but there is little evidence of this in his empirical work. In his study of the marketisation of discourse in UK universities (1993), Fairclough provides many linguistic *illustrations* of the commodification of education discourse but largely ignores the issue of how this actual language use constitutes social structures. Fairclough implies that commodification is something that is ‘done’ to discourse and because of this there is little examination of how this process takes place, since it is in the non-discursive realm and therefore unsuitable for critical discourse analysis. We are left with the ‘effects’ of commodification but have little understanding of the process itself.

A related problem with the combination of Fairclough’s ontological commitment to critical realism and the methodological approach of his empirical analysis is that agency all but disappears. Fairclough is concerned with the identity of agents, but these identities are ‘constructed’ by discourses and there is little indication of how agents can resist, or reconstruct these ‘subject positions’. Fairclough notes that the marketisation of discourse in UK universities involves “a reconstruction of professional identities on a more entrepreneurial (self-promotional basis)” (1993, p.157), but he makes no attempt to investigate how academics have received and responded to these changes. Fairclough does acknowledge the *possibility* that the “largely ‘top-down’ changes in discursive practices” (p.158) might be marginalised, resisted or ignored by academics, but it is difficult to see how he can account for not only how agents can resist the ‘causal powers’ of preconstituted structures, but also how these structures can be transformed through actual language use.

Fairclough’s application of critical realist ontology illustrates some conceptual difficulties with the critical realist approach to the structure-agency debate. First, it is not clear that critical realism has resolved the dualism of agency and structure, since while it is acknowledged that social structures are the product of actions taken by agents in the past, at the moment of interaction with agents they assume an ontological autonomy. In critical discourse analysis, these structures are pushed to the background since they obey a non-discursive logic that is not amendable to discourse analysis. This objectification of social structure is productive for the conduct of Fairclough’s linguistic-oriented ‘scientific’ study of discourse, but does not allow him to provide a convincing explanation of how agents interact and ‘make a difference’ to

these preconstituted social structures that they encounter in every-day social interaction. Subjectivity, it seems, remains an Achilles heel of critical realism.

Discourse theory makes a useful contribution to thinking about subjectivity and how the dualism of structure and agency can be overcome. On one level, it facilitates a deconstruction of the ontological autonomy that critical realism attributes to 'structures', highlighting that such a claim is discursively generated. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, this dissolves the distinction that critical realists maintain between ontology and epistemology, which is interpreted as a language game whose effect is productive for the conduct of social science (Willmott, 2002). Or to use Laclau's words, "the intransitivity of the object is itself transitivity" (Bhaskar & Laclau, 1998, p.10). On a second level, discourse theory offers its own account of agency and structure that seeks to avoid the extremes of voluntarism and structural determinism. It would be naïve to claim that Laclau, Mouffe and other discourse theorists have resolved the dilemma, but they do provide a novel account that problematises both the idea of structural determination and the sovereign agent. The approach to structure and agency has proceeded in three distinct stages. Its early position, articulated by Laclau (1977), is based on an Althusserian theory of interpellation. The second position, outlined by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) is heavily influenced by the poststructuralism of Foucault, while the most recent position, set out by Laclau (1990) draws of the psychoanalysis of Lacan, in response to criticisms from Žižek (1990).

Discourse theory's first theorisation of agency and structure appears in Laclau's (1977) book *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, where he adheres to an Althusserian theory of interpellation in which language makes individuals into ideological subjects. Althusser (1971) states that

Ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing. (Althusser, 1971, p.174, emphasis in original)

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe reject Althusser's concept of interpellation on the grounds that it presupposes that subjects are constituted by ideological practices that are themselves determined by underlying social structures (see the next section 'Relativism' for an elaboration of this point). Laclau and Mouffe retain Althusser's idea that the identities of subjects are discursively constructed and combine it with Foucault's notion of 'subject positions' within a discursive structure. This counters the classical notion of the essential subject with preconstituted interests and demonstrates that "subjects cannot, therefore, be the origins of social relations...as all 'experience' depends on precise discursive conditions of possibility" (1985, p.115). Foucault's position on structure and agency is worth further consideration, to get a sense of what is distinctive about Laclau's (1990) third position. As with the discussion of critical realism, I will consider applications of Foucault that have appeared in the organisation studies literature.

Foucault developed a theory of the subject that challenges the modernist understanding of the subject as a sovereign and autonomous entity. Foucault shows that power does not inhere in the interests or intentions of human subjects but in

discourses, which, although neither true or false in themselves, produce effects of truth. Foucault argues that “discourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject’ (Foucault, 1972, p.55). The dualism between the subject and ‘objective’ structures is therefore misplaced, with the subject instead bound to power-knowledge relations which traverse both subjects and social structures. While supposedly providing a non-essentialist and non-dualistic understanding of structure and agency, Foucault has been criticised for replacing economic determinism by structures with cultural determinism by discourse and therefore undermining the significance of agency. The image is that agents are ‘captured’ by discourses and are subjected to their effects⁶.

Using Foucault’s theory of the subject, Du Gay & Salaman (1992) note how the culture of enterprise “involves cultivating enterprising subjects – autonomous, self-regulating, productive, responsible individuals” and is inscribed into mechanisms such as application forms “through which senior management in enterprising companies seek to delineate, normalize and instrumentalize the conduct of persons in order to achieve the ends they postulate as desirable (p.626). For Du Gay & Salaman, enterprise discourse has become hegemonic to the extent that even those who oppose it act in ways that reproduce it:

Even if people do not take enterprise seriously, even if they keep a certain cynical distance from its claims, they are still reproducing it through their involvement in the everyday practices within which enterprise is inscribed. (Du Gay & Salaman, 1992, p.630)

Du Gay’s presentation of an image that agents are ‘captured’ by discourse has been criticised by ‘fellow Foucauldians’ Fournier and Grey (1999), who argue that by stressing the totalising effects of enterprise discourse on subjectivity Du Gay “fail[s] to account, or even allow, for resistance or alternatives to enterprise” (1990, p.117). This gives the impression enterprise discourse is the only discursive resource on which employees’ identities will be configured, rather than seeing enterprise as one discourse amongst others, such as professional discourses, that are often deeply rooted in organisational practices. Fournier and Grey argue that Foucault *can* account for resistance, but suggest Du Gay has neglected Foucault’s emphasis on the fragmentary and contradictory operation of discourses.

⁶ It is important to note that Foucault does not develop one, consistent position on structure and agency throughout his writing. His work is often split into three periods – archaeological, genealogical and a concern for ethics (Burrell, 1988; Best & Kellner, 1991). Burrell notes that in Foucault’s early work, the ‘knowing subject’ disappears and attention is focused on discourse alone, with humans appearing as “mere objects” (p.224). Best and Kellner argue that in his later work, Foucault shifted his emphasis from ‘technologies of domination’ to ‘technologies of the self’ in which his earlier, deterministic view of the subject is rejected in favour of a view in which individuals can transform their own subjectivities. Most commonly, however, Foucault’s contribution to structure and agency refers to his earlier position.

The debate between Du Gay and Fournier and Grey reflects a wider debate within Foucauldian approaches about the conceptualisation of resistance. Thompson and Ackroyd (1995) suggest that 'no actual accounts of resistance can normally be found in such studies' (p.624). Fernie and Metcalf (1998), for example, draw on Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977) to equate call-centres and sweatshops, an interpretation which drew criticism from Taylor and Bain (1999) for their failure to make reference to any form of employee resistance. Knights and McCabe (2003) believe Fernie and Metcalf misuse Foucault's analysis, since "Foucault never suggested that power was as totalising as these authors suggest even in prisons, let alone in the factory or office" (p.1591). Working with Foucault's notion of 'governmentality', Knights and McCabe examine how individuals resist the imposition of team working by sustaining identities from their 'private lives' rather than constructing an identity that corresponds with the corporate self desired by management.

As noted earlier, discourse theory's second position on structure and agency has its origins in a Foucauldian approach, with its conceptualisation of 'subject positions' within a discursive structure. This second position has been criticised by some commentators for overplaying agency, and by others for underplaying agency. Rustin (1988) accepts that society is best understood through the notion of contingency, rather than totality, but believes discourse theory extends the logic on contingency too far, ending up with a "wholly voluntarist" approach (p.167). Similarly, Dallmayr (1989) believes that by deconstructing essentialism and highlighting the construction of hegemony, discourse theory produces a "probably excessive emphasis on autonomous action and initiative" (p.131), while Osborne (1991) says that the logic of contingency means that "almost anything is possible" (p.210). All three commentators believe that discourse theory pays insufficient attention to the way in which 'extra-discursive' structures place limits on the possibilities of social action. While they correctly identify discourse theory's assertion of a radical contingency, they fail to acknowledge the concept of sedimentation, in which discourse becomes so firmly established that its contingency is forgotten, so that it *appears* as an objectivity. It is this concept that can account for the fixity of discursive structures and the limits of agency.

Discourse theory's second position on structure and agency has also been criticised for underplaying agency and it is this criticism that prompted Laclau (1990) to move away from Foucault's notion of 'subject positions' within a discursive structure. Žižek (1990) criticises Laclau and Mouffe (1985) for having a theory of the subject, yet having no theory of subjectivity. In line with the criticism of the Foucauldian position, Žižek argues that Laclau and Mouffe's theory of the subject refers to the 'positioning' of subjects within a discursive structure, but fails to capture the way in which agents act, resulting in a marginalisation of agency and a situation in which the subject is 'spoken for' by pre-existing discursive structures. Žižek proposes the incorporation of psychoanalysis, via Lacan's notion of the subject as a 'subject of lack' in which the process of subjectivation, of assuming different subject positions, is ultimately to enable us to avoid the traumatic experience of a self-blockage of full identity.

The subject is correlative to its own limit, to the element which cannot be subjectified, it is the name of the void which cannot be filled out with

subjectivation: the subject is the point of failure of subjectivation. (Žižek, 1990, p.254)

Laclau's (1990) response, in *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, is to radicalise the subject. Drawing on Lacan, Laclau states that the subject has a structural identity but it is characterised by a constitutive lack, which makes it impossible for the subject to fully express its identity.

The creator has already been partially created through his or her forms of identification with a structure into which s/he has been thrown. But as this structure is dislocated, the identification never reaches the point of a full identity. (Laclau, 1990, p.60)

The process of subjectivation is the attempt to fill the empty space of the lack through identification with hegemonic articulations. These articulations, which attempt to 'fix' the meaning of discursive structures, are ultimately contingent. Dislocation is the process through which the contingency of these discursive structures become evident. Dislocation prevents the complete structuration of the structure and prevents the subject from being determined by the structure. However, it is through dislocation that agency emerges: "the subject exists because of dislocations in the structure" (Laclau, 1990, p.60). Thus, while 'subject positions' refers to the positioning of individuals within a discursive structure, such structures have no determining capacity because they are themselves open to dislocation.

Thus, in contrast to the ontology of critical realism, which underlies critical discourse analysis, discourse theory's articulation of structure and agency does not involve the coming together of two established totalities. This 'decentering' of the structure through dislocation means that the subject is not simply determined by the structure, not does it constitute the structure.

The question of *who* or *what* transforms social relations is not pertinent. It's not a question of "someone" or "something" producing an effect of transformation or articulation, as if identity was somehow previous to this effect. Rather, the production of the effect is part of the construction of the identity of the agent producing it...For example, once cannot ask *who* the agent of hegemony is, but *how* someone becomes the subject through hegemonic articulation instead. (Laclau, 1990, p.210-1)

Whereas critical realism argues that structures are preconstituted and therefore implies that structure comes before agency, discourse theory argues it is not a matter of one before the other. Through processes of articulation and hegemonisation, agents and structures both create and, at the same time, are created. In this way, discourse theory seeks to account for the significance of identity in mediating the relationship between agency and structure and through this manoeuvre, to avoid both structural determinism and absolute voluntarism.

I return to the concept of dislocation in the final section of this chapter, where I argue that discourse theory's existing conceptualisation of this process is *not* consistent with its philosophical premises and is therefore in need of revision. First however, I turn to another recurring issue in social constructionist thought, that of relativism, and briefly examine how discourse theory approaches this issue.

Relativism

The accusation of relativism has been a long-standing critique of all social constructionist approaches that adopt an anti-foundationalist and anti-essentialist position. For the purposes of this discussion, relativism holds that everything is equally true, right and good and it is therefore impossible to defend any particular claims or set of values. In this section, I consider where discourse theory stands in relation to this debate, along with critical discourse analysis and Foucauldian approaches. I argue that discourse theory is positioned between modern and postmodern approaches and therefore avoids the extreme relativism that is often attributed to Foucault's work. It acknowledges that the values of the Enlightenment should continue to be defended but holds that this defence must be conducted through political argument rather than through an appeal to foundations. Before elaborating on this point, I first consider where the other approaches stand on the issue of relativism.

Critical discourse analysis avoids the charge of relativism because it maintains a distinction between ideological and non-ideological discourses that is inherent in Marxist theorising. Fairclough (1993) argues that discursive practices can have ideological effects that contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between social groups which, in turn, distort the process of (truthful) knowledge production. It is the task of the analyst to reveal the role of ideological discourses in the maintenance of these unequal relations of power (Fairclough, 1993). In contrast, Foucault adopts a more relativistic position by excluding the concept of ideology. Foucault (1980) argues that ideology "always stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth" (p.118). For Foucault, the issue is not how ideology conceals truth but "seeing historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false" (p.118). Foucault rejects the Marxist notion of 'false consciousness' in which agents are deceived by ideology, and also the possibility that agents are able to somehow 'get behind' ideology to become enlightened. On the issue of whether it is possible to defend any set of values, Foucault's rejection of all foundations results in an extreme form of relativism where deconstructing power relations seems to be an end in itself. Foucault states that "the questions I wanted to ask are not determined by a preestablished political outlook and do not tend toward the realization of some definite political project" (Foucault 1991, p.375). Willmott (1994) argues that Foucault, by failing to spell out a basis for why one set of power relations should be abolished in favour of another, "paints himself, and his devotees, into a corner." (1994, p.115)⁷

⁷ Again, I recognise the dangers in making generalisations about Foucault's position. Best and Kellner (1991) note that in his later work, Foucault attempts to positively appropriate key aspects of Enlightenment thinking and comes to regard the complete rejection of modern rationality as dangerous. However, they also note that "throughout his work, Foucault's remarks on political tactics are highly vague and tentative, and nothing like a 'Foucauldian politics' ever emerges" (p.55). On balance, I suggest it is reasonable to attribute to Foucault a relativist position.

The question then, is where to position discourse theory in this debate. Like Foucault, discourse theory rejects a Marxist understanding of ideology on the grounds that in the Marxist tradition, ideological practices are determined by underlying social structures. Discourse theory retains the sign 'ideology', but infuses it with new meaning to represent 'objectivity' and the denial of alternative possibilities. Ideology consists of "the non-recognition of the precarious character of any positivity, of the impossibility of any final suture (Laclau, 1983, p.24). Therefore, while a society without ideology is unthinkable (since it acts to stabilise social relations), ideology does not distinguish between what are just and unjust social relations. Does this force discourse theory into an extreme relativist position? Geras (1987), for one, argues that by dispensing with foundation, discourse theory

slides into a bottomless, relativist gloom, in which opposed discourses or paradigms are left with no common reference point, uselessly trading blows. (Geras, 1987, p.67)

According to Geras, this makes discourse theory scientifically useless (since it cannot determine what is true) and politically useless (since it cannot determine good from bad). Norris (1993) concurs with Geras, accusing discourse theory of lacking a critical edge and having "disabling political consequences" (1993, p.291). Norris lumps discourse theory together with other postmodern approaches that reject foundations, arguing it "can do nothing to challenge forms of injustice and oppression since it offers no arguments, no critical resources or validating grounds for perceiving them *as* inherently unjust and oppressive" (p.287, emphasis in original).

Norris typifies a tendency of those who critique the political implications of post modern theorising to construct a binary opposition between post modern theories and other 'critical' approaches to research, most notably critical theorists such as Habermas. Alvesson and Deetz (2000) promulgate this simplistic understanding in their conclusion that:

critical theorists see the modernist's project as sick and see hope for reconstruction in recovering good aspects and redirecting the future; postmodernists pronounce its death and proclaim the absence of a thinkable future. (2000, p.15)

Discourse theory attempts to move beyond the binary opposition of the modern and postmodern to occupy a new conceptual space. It seeks to dissolve the absolutist foundations on which modern theorising is built and yet defend itself against accusations of nihilism. It also seeks to articulate a positive 'horizon' or utopia (as opposed to a foundation) that empowers political agents without falling into naïve optimism about the 'progress' of contemporary societies.

Compared to Alvesson and Deetz, Best and Kellner (1997) provide a more nuanced understanding of postmodernism by outlining 'strong' and 'weak' versions of postmodern theories. 'Strong' postmodern theory puts the emphasis on 'post' and suggests a definite break or rupture with the past, whereas moderate versions put the emphasis on 'modern' and interpret postmodernism as a mutation of the modern and as a shift, or turn, within modernity. Forms of postmodern politics mirror these positions. At the 'strong' end of the continuum the possibility of emancipatory social transformation is rejected. At the 'weak' end the belief in large-scale transformation

is retained but, in contrast to modern politics, the emphasis is on local rather than global struggles (Best & Kellner, 1997). Foucault's rejection of a political project and his focus on local sites of struggle would position him at the 'strong' end of the continuum, but where does discourse theory stand?

Discourse theory uses the postmodern critiques of essentialism and foundationalism to reconstruct Enlightenment values and socialist politics and therefore occupies a middle position. Laclau (1989) rejects the idea of a boundary between modernity and postmodernity marked by the outmodedness of metanarratives, because it presupposes a theoretical discourse that says something has 'ended'. To say something has ended is to say there must be something new (and concrete), which is not what postmodernism is about. Therefore,

postmodernity cannot be a simple *rejection* of modernity; rather, it involves a different modulation of its themes and categories, a greater proliferation of its language games. (Laclau, 1989, p.65)

Mouffe (1989) takes a similar position, opposing "a certain kind of apocalyptic postmodernism which would like us to believe that we are at the threshold of a radically new epoch" (p.38). Instead of rejecting the values of the Enlightenment, discourse theory seeks to provide better justifications for those values than the Enlightenment could provide.

I would like to argue that it is precisely the ontological status of the central categories of the discourses of modernity, and not their content, that is at stake; that the erosion of this status is expressed through the 'postmodern' sensibility; and that this erosion, far from being a negative phenomenon, represents an enormous amplification of the content and operability of the values of modernity; making it possible to ground them on foundations much more solid than those of the Enlightenment project. (Laclau, 1989, p.66)

Like Habermas (1987) discourse theorists see the Enlightenment as an 'unfinished project'. However, the concept of antagonism precludes the possibility of any rational consensus, as envisaged by Habermas. Antagonism

forecloses any possibility of a final reconciliation, of any kind of rational consensus, of a fully inclusive 'we'. For us, a non-exclusive public sphere of rational argument is a conceptual impossibility. (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p.xvii)

Laclau and Mouffe accept that the prospect of a rational harmony constitutes an ideal or 'horizon' that should be pursued, but assert that without conflict and division pluralist democratic politics would be impossible, since any consensus is the result of hegemonic articulation which always has a constitutive outside that impedes its full realisation.

The discourses of modernity emphasise rationality, foundations, totality and emancipation. These are discourses about essences and fully present identities. Postmodernity, on the contrary, is concerned with how these fully present identities are threatened by a constitutive outside, which weakens the absolutist pretensions of modernist discourses. An acceptance of this radical vulnerability leads not to an abandonment of the emancipatory project of the Enlightenment, but to an awareness

of its discursive operation (Laclau, 1989). Laclau argues that the collapse of the discourse of foundations does not lead to political nihilism. In the discourse of foundations, political argument is about discovering the reality external to the argument. The recognition that there is no ultimate ground makes political argument more important since it is politics that constructs social reality. The abandonment of the discourse of foundations does not, therefore, result in nihilism because

in as much as argument and discourse constitute the social, their open-ended character becomes the source of a greater activism and a more radical libertarianism. Humankind, having always bowed to external forces – God, Nature, the necessary laws of History – can now, at the threshold of postmodernity, consider itself for the first time the creator and constructor of its own history. (Laclau, 1989, p.79-80)

Returning to the issue of relativism then, the question is whether it is possible, within discourse theory, to defend a set of claims or values. Discourse theory asserts that it *is* possible, by dissolving the dualism of objectivism and relativism and rejecting the binary opposition of the existence of some universal criterion and the rule of arbitrariness. For Mouffe (1989, p.37) "affirming that one cannot provide an ultimate rational foundation for any given system of values does not imply that one considers all views to be equal". It is possible to distinguish between the just and the unjust, but this cannot be done outside a given tradition, since "there is no point of view external to all tradition from which one can offer a universal judgement" (p.37).

Discourse theory, it seems, has avoided an extreme relativist position, but has it done so without appealing to any foundation? Aronowitz (1998) argues that discourse theory's concept of radical and plural democracy cannot be conceived of in an anti-foundational framework. Radical democracy must be seen as an ethical *a priori* and therefore discourse theory cannot escape the essentialism it attributes to Marxism. Laclau's response is to distinguish between foundations and horizons, with the latter being a hegemonic formation that constitutes itself as a totality. Laclau argues that the ontological status of the Enlightenment is a horizon. Enlightenment values such as equality and rights are seen as discourses that become a horizon through political argument, rather than relying on human essence as their foundation.

A horizon, then, is an empty locus, a point in which society symbolizes its very groundlessness, in which concrete argumentative practices operate over a backdrop of radical freedom, of radical contingency. (Laclau, 1989, p.81)

In conclusion, discourse theory avoids an extreme relativist position and accusations of political nihilism through a radical reconstruction and politicisation of the Enlightenment project. Whereas Habermas sees postmodernism as weakening Enlightenment values and breeding irrationalism, conservatism and anti-politics, discourse theorists believe that postmodern theorising can provide better justifications for the pursuit of Enlightenment values than foundationalist claims. In doing so, they assert the primacy of political action, which is far from the apoliticism that has been attributed to their view.

Rethinking Dislocation

In this final section, I revisit discourse theory's concept of *dislocation*, because of its central place in discourse theory and its relevance to my research on business schools.

Dislocation is important for discourse theory because it accounts for the contingency of social structures and new forms of identification by agents. Dislocation is relevant to my research because it illuminates the challenges to academic freedom and a critical public role for faculty that were discussed in chapter 2. In the empirical chapters to follow, I interpret professionalisation, commodification and the epistemological crisis of modernity as dislocations that have intensified hegemonic struggles over the constitution of the business school. In addition to highlighting the contingency of discursive structures, professionalisation, commodification and the crisis of modernity have ‘thrown up’ new identities for business school faculty to identify with. While each dislocation threatens the possibility of a critical public role, it also provides new opportunities for faculty to critically engage with external audiences. The concept of dislocation is useful, therefore, for illuminating the experiences of business school faculty and for countering the pessimism of the literature on academic freedom. However, while I employ the concept of dislocation, I wish to rearticulate its meaning because existing conceptualisations appear inconsistent with the philosophical premises of discourse theory. In this section, I focus on Laclau’s (1990) articulation of dislocation and suggest that it incorporates an extra-discursive element that is incompatible with the anti-essentialism of discourse theory’s philosophical premises.

Laclau (1990) argues that modern societies are becoming increasingly ‘dislocated’, illustrated by processes of commodification, bureaucratisation and globalisation. Concerning commodification, Laclau laments the pessimism of the Frankfurt School theorist Adorno, who assumes capitalism has an internal logic that dissolves social relations and transforms objects into commodities, creating regimented societies that precludes the possibility of a non-capitalist alternative. Laclau argues this bleak assessment does not correspond to reality.

It is without doubt true that the phenomenon of commodification is at the heart of the multiple dislocations of traditional social relations. But this does not mean that the only prospect thrown up by such dislocations is the growing passive conformity of all aspects of life to the laws of the market. (Laclau, 1990, p.51)

Laclau cautions readers not to get caught up in the nostalgia of traditional social relations, since the world before capitalist expansion had its own forms of oppression. Moreover, he suggests that the dislocation caused by commodification highlights the contingency of the structure and provides new possibilities for political action.

The dislocation of social relations, on the other hand – *generated by a phenomenon such as commodification* – provokes acts of resistance which launch new social actors into the historical arena; and the new actors, precisely because they are moving on a dislocated terrain, must constantly reinvent their own social forms. (Laclau, 1990, p.52, emphasis added)

Here Laclau slips into a critical realist understanding whereby commodification acts as a ‘causal mechanism’ that generates certain effects. He does not argue that these effects are predetermined by capitalist logic, but he does appear to be introducing an extra-discursive dimension that contradicts the assumption of discourse theory that “all objects are constituted within discourse.” This latter interpretation is also noted by Howarth (2000), who, in explaining dislocation, states that:

Laclau uses the concept to introduce an 'extra-discursive' dynamism into his conception of society. He concludes that late modern societies are undergoing an 'accelerated tempo' of dislocatory experiences. This increasingly dislocatory condition is explained by reference to processes such as commodification, bureaucratisation and globalisation, all of which can be seen as the contemporary manifestations of what the Marxist tradition labelled 'combined and uneven development'. (Howarth, 2000, p.111)

While Laclau recognises that commodification has a potentially liberating *effect*, he does not see the commodification process *itself* as open to transformation.

I believe a much more optimistic vision is gained of the prospects opening up for contemporary struggles. The *latter start from the reality of the commodification phenomenon and attempt to control it socially*, not to wage a merely defensive struggle against an apparently self-regulating and inexorable structure. (Laclau, 1990, p.52, emphasis added)

Laclau's position is distinct from that of the Frankfurt School, in that he does not see the capitalist system as a self-regulating totality that operates according to a logic that is internally determined. However, by introducing this extra-discursive dimension, Laclau creates the impression that processes such as commodification are the inevitable results of capitalist transformation and therefore, there is a structural logic that operates outside the realm of discursive struggle.

In one sense, our analysis keeps within the field of Marxism and attempts to reinforce what has been one of its virtues: the full acceptance of the transformations entailed by capitalism and the construction of an alternative project that is *based on* the ground created by those transformations, not on *opposition to* them. Commodification, bureaucratization, and the increasing dominance of scientific and technological planning over the division of labour should not necessarily be resisted. Rather, one should work within these processes so as to develop the prospects they create for a non-capitalist alternative. (Laclau, 1990, p.55-56, emphasis in original)

It is not clear why Laclau resorts to words such as 'reality' and 'grounds' in discussing commodification, because this language is not consistent with the anti-foundationalist and anti-essentialist premises of discourse theory. An understanding of commodification that is consistent with its radical social ontology would see it as an 'object' constituted within discourse, whose meaning is contingent upon particular articulations in the field of discursivity. Rather than seeing commodification as a 'ground' on which capitalism is transformed, it should be seen as a 'myth' or a 'horizon' that emerges through (rather than prior to) structural dislocation and which sutures that dislocated space through the constitution of a new space of representation. Seen in this way, commodification has an 'existence' external to discourse, but is conceived as a contingent element of the discursive field rather than as an inevitable product of capitalist transformation. The implications of this rearticulation of dislocation will become clearer in the empirical chapters to follow.

Conclusion

Discourse theory's radical transformation of the ontology-epistemology nexus and its rearticulation of several keenly contested debates in social theorising suggests a

potentially significant contribution to the study of organisations. Discourse theory is philosophically realist by asserting that objects do exist independently of language and thought, yet it is distinct from other forms of realism with its claim that extra-discursive reality only has meaning through discourse. It makes a useful contribution to thinking about how the dualism of agency and structure can be overcome by offering an account that problematises the idea of structural determination and is attentive to the role of subjectivity in the creation of agency. It also avoids falling into an extreme relativist position by seeking to retain the values of the Enlightenment and to provide better justification of these values than foundationalist positions. Potentially, discourse theory is a framework from which an understanding of organisations can develop that accounts for agency and materialism and yet succeeds in avoiding dualism, essentialism and reductionism. In the chapters to follow, I employ the theoretical framework developed in this chapter to analyse the contest over the role of the business school and the possibility of a critical public role for business school faculty. The next chapter examines issues of methodology that were raised by my engagement with discourse theory and also describes the method I undertook in conducting the empirical work.

Chapter 4: Method and Methodology: Constructing the Corpus

Introduction

The inclusion of a ‘method’ chapter in a thesis such as this, which claims a critical and postmodern orientation, is a problematic one. A ‘method’ chapter is, after all, one of the sedimented practices of thesis writing that is often understood through its articulation within a discourse of positivist science. As Gergen (1985) notes:

the sciences have been enchanted by the myth that the assiduous application of rigorous method will yield sound fact – as if empirical methodology were some form of meat grinder from which truth could be turned out like too many sausages. (1985, p.273)

This positivist ‘myth’ about the existence of an objective truth ‘out-there’ waiting to be ‘captured’ by empirical study has been well and truly deconstructed by postmodern approaches, of which discourse theory is one. Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) go so far as to argue that:

Most postmodernists do not talk about methodology. One could even say that postmodernism is anti-methodological. ‘Anything goes’ is one slogan in harmony with this orientation. (2000, p.184)

How then, can I justify the inclusion of this chapter whilst claiming to remain consistent with the ontological and epistemological premises of discourse theory? My justification is based on a distinction between ‘method’ and ‘methodology’, terms that are conflated in much discussion of empirical work. Methodology is an epistemological consideration which concerns how we know the social world, whereas method concerns the methods used to study the social world (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Once this distinction is accepted, the dualism that Alvesson and Skoldberg construct between modern and postmodern approaches to methodology is dissolved. Premises about how researchers know the social world are central to the assumptions of discourse theory and have far-reaching implications for the conduct of empirical work drawn from its theoretical constructs. Failure to talk about methodology would, therefore, be a major oversight and for this reason this chapter is as much a consideration of methodological issues pertinent to discourse theory as it is a description of the method employed in the empirical work.

Laclau, Mouffe and other discourse theorists have done much to advance the theorising of this unique body of knowledge, but the discussion of methodological issues and their implications for conducting and presenting empirical ‘applications’ of discourse theory is considerably less advanced. Several questions warrant further consideration: What is the ‘object’ of analysis? How is the researcher ‘positioned’ in relation to the data? What narrative form is appropriate? Are the concepts of ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’ appropriate concepts for assessing empirical analysis? These issues have largely been ignored by Laclau and Mouffe, with the job left to a number of secondary authors, such as Howarth (2000) and Phillips and Jorgensen (2002). Useful contributions have been made, yet many empirical ‘applications’ of

discourse theory adopt an objectivist form of representation that is inconsistent with its philosophical premises. This chapter considers these issues and attempts to develop a more reflexive methodological approach that is both feasible and consistent with discourse theory's epistemological and ontological assumptions. Following Alvesson & Skoldberg (2000, p.7) the aim is to "intellectualize method" – to inform the empirical practice of discourse theory with its philosophical and theoretical ideas.

Having discussed methodology, I move to a discussion of method, with the aim of ensuring that you, the reader, understand how the empirical work was undertaken and why it was undertaken this way. This, I argue, is as important in postmodern research as in positivist research, where terms such as reliability and validity are nodal points. In this second section I discuss the research design decisions that were made, the justifications for these decisions and their implications for the claims that can be made, based on the data. Consistent with the philosophical premises of discourse theory, it is more appropriate to talk of 'data construction' than of 'data collection', since these philosophical premises hold that no data remains unaffected by the researcher. I conclude this chapter with a brief overview of how I went about analysing the data. Laclau and Mouffe provide few, if any guidelines for conducting empirical analysis, while many secondary authors on discourse theory, such as Howarth, have looked to other poststructuralist approaches, derived from the work of Foucault and Derrida, for ways of analysing empirical material. While I acknowledge the value of drawing on a range of theoretical approaches, one of the aims of my research is to develop, rearticulate and transform the key concepts of discourse theory itself through the 'application' of its concepts in an empirical setting. Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) have provided a useful starting point and my analytical approach draws from, and seeks to build on, their approach.

Methodological Issues

In the previous chapter I noted that discourse theory is based on a distinctive social ontology that distinguishes it from other discourse-based approaches that have received increasing attention in the organisation and management literature. By conceptualising discourse as material practice, discourse theory seeks to avoid amaterial conceptions of social interaction, which some Foucauldian studies have tended towards, without succumbing to an unquestioning adherence to a realist ontology, which grounds critical discourse analysis. Discourse theory is philosophically realist by asserting that objects do exist independently of language and thought, yet it is distinct from other forms of realism with its claim that extra-discursive reality only has meaning through discourse. What then are the epistemological implications of discourse theory's ontology, and specifically, what are the methodological implications?

Poststructuralist approaches such as discourse theory reject positivism's search for scientific laws based on empirical generalisations which can form the basis of testable predictions and oppose naïve conceptions of truth that assume the existence of an objective reality. According to Williams (1999):

The objective is no longer the revelation of truth, and the focus shifts to the issue of meaning. Thus methodological issues relate to the resolution of ambiguity in the construction of meaning, to the possibilities of meaning, and to the effects of meaning. (1999, p.251)

The focus of methodology, therefore, is how language constructs phenomena, not how it reflects and reveals it. Since discourse theory assumes there is no meaningful reality external to discourse, the purpose of research is not to get 'behind' the discourse, to find out what people 'really' mean, or to discover 'the reality' behind the discourse. Instead, discourse itself becomes the object of study, with attention paid to how reality is constituted in ways that make it appear objective. Therefore, the analyst works with what is said or written, exploring patterns in and across the statements and identifying the social consequences of different discursive representations of reality (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). Laclau (1989) argues that the aim of analysis is not to establish causal explanations, because this would only introduce a new rationalistic foundation.

On the contrary, it is rather a question of narrating the *dissolution* of a foundation, thus revealing the radical contingency of the categories linked to that foundation. My intention is *revelatory* rather than *explanatory*. (Laclau, 1989, p.72, emphasis in original)

'Revelation' is itself a problematic metaphor because it suggests that discourse theory can expose 'the truth' about the construction of the social world, rather than being seen as one more construction alongside foundationalist claims, which are the focus of its critique. This is symptomatic of a lack of reflexivity that characterises the seminal works of discourse theory and many empirical applications that draw from it. It is to this issue that I now turn.

Discourse theory's rejection of objective realities and causal explanations in favour of assumptions of a social constructed reality implies that reflexivity should be a central methodological issue for researchers seeking to 'apply' discourse theory. Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) define reflexivity as the ambivalent relation of a researcher's text to the realities studied and see it consisting of two characteristics: careful interpretation and reflection. Careful interpretation implies that all references to empirical data are the results of interpretation rather than a mirroring of some external 'reality', whereas reflection is "the *interpretation of interpretation* and the launching of critical self-exploration of one's own interpretations of empirical material (including its construction)" (2000, p.6, emphasis in original). This requires that the researcher's practices be brought into the reflexive arena (Pollner, 1993). According to Hatch (1996), reflexivity is *the* defining characteristic of the crisis of representation created by the postmodern insight that language constitutes reality rather than mirrors it. Once the belief in scientific objectivity is abandoned, the role of the researcher is radically problematised. Hatch states that

Modernist organizational theory places the researcher outside the frame of study, whereas interpretive, feminist and postmodern approaches argue for positioning the researcher within this frame. (Hatch, 1996, p. 360)

Reflexivity, therefore, is seen as an integral part of social constructionist approaches to knowledge and yet an analysis of the seminal texts of discourse theory shows an almost complete failure to explicitly discuss and recognise the reflexivity of the researcher's role and the 'truth status' of the claims made. Phillips and Jorgensen (2002, p.22) argue such issues are "largely ignored by Laclau and Mouffe, their theory and analysis being presented as if they were objective descriptions of the

world and its mechanisms". The secondary literature on discourse theory, including empirical 'applications' of the theory, (see for example, Barros & Castagnola, 2000; Clohesy; 2000) are also deficient since the authors make little or no mention of how the philosophical premises of a socially constituted reality influence their own research practice.

In defence of Laclau and Mouffe, they do acknowledge that their conclusions should not be seen as a universal discourse.

There is not one discourse and one system of categories through which the 'real' might speak without mediations. In operating deconstructively within Marxist categories, we do not claim to be writing 'universal history', to be inscribing our discourse as a moment of a single, linear process of knowledge. (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p.3)

Nevertheless, the narrative form adopted in both the primary texts of discourse theory and its empirical 'applications' reproduces the subject-object dualism in the relationship between the investigator (subject), and that which is studied (object). In modernism, this is an unproblematical relationship since the researcher is assumed to be a stable, sovereign entity who has access to the 'scientific method'. This makes the researcher capable of objective observation on the research object, which itself is held to be stable (Williams, 1999). However, discourse theory rejects this subject-object dualism, suggesting the need for a more reflexive, self-conscious approach to representation.

The development of narrative theory has highlighted the relationship between the narrative position adopted in a text and the philosophical premises of the theoretical framework adopted and is therefore useful for informing this discussion. Hatch (1996) describes four general narrative positions, or voices, used to construct social science writing: the main character tells the story, the minor character tells the story, the narrator tells the story as observer and the analytic or omniscient narrator tells the story. In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, the most influential account of discourse theory, Laclau and Mouffe are minor characters in the story. In this position, which involves the use of the first person, the narrators are within the story and yet maintain an external perspective on events. Some reflexivity is permitted, exemplified by Laclau and Mouffe's quotation above, yet for most of the time the narrators are positioned as objective observers. This represents a form of 'ontological gerrymandering', in that the deconstruction of social world is presented as separate from that world and immune from deconstruction (Woolgar & Pawluch, 1985). The activities of others are regarded as worthy of analysis, yet the textual activities of Laclau and Mouffe themselves are not considered worthy of attention. Hatch argues for a consistency between the narrative position adopted and the epistemological assumptions regarding the possibility of objective knowledge. Applied to Laclau and Mouffe's writing, this recommends a 'confessional tale', where the researchers are 'immersed' in the research setting and have greater opportunities for reflection.

Again, in defence of Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* is a theoretical treatise and therefore might present fewer opportunities for self-reflection than empirical accounts where researchers are interacting with research subjects. However, even in these studies (such as Ho & Tsang, 2000) there is little explicit

consideration of the way in which the narrative position ‘produces’ the research subject. Perhaps, as Hatch suggests, objectivist forms predominate, even in social constructionist accounts, because of the preference of book publishers and journal editors for more objectivised narrative forms (Hatch, 1996). However, this is not a constraint for my research and I have chosen, therefore, to adopt a more ‘confessional’ style in my analysis of the empirical material. This seems particularly relevant since, as a PhD student and prospective academic, I am very much part of the culture under study and am therefore well positioned to engage with critical self-reflection as I construct the data and my interpretation of it. However, because I am immersed in the culture I share many of the taken-for-granted, common-sense understandings that appear in the data, which is exactly what my analysis is intended to examine. This makes the creation of a reflexive methodology, which brings into consciousness my own assumptions about academics, their public role and their positioning within business schools, even more important than otherwise might have been had I not been part of the culture under study.

Closely associated with reflexivity in social constructionist research is the issue of relativism. In chapter 3, I discussed relativism in relation to whether it is possible to defend any particular claims or set of values and concluded that discourse theory avoids an extreme relativist position through a radical reconstruction and politicisation of the Enlightenment project. Another aspect of the relativism debate which concerns methodology is that if everything is equally true, right and good, how is it possible to judge one interpretation of the empirical phenomena as superior to other possible interpretations? In positivist approaches, the concepts of reliability and validity are used, however Phillips and Hardy (2002) argue that in discourse approaches both are nonsensical concepts.

Validity – the idea that the research closely captures the "real" world – is not relevant when epistemological and ontological assumptions maintain that there is no "real" world other than one constructed through discourse. Reliability – the idea that results are "repeatable" – is nonsensical when one is interested in generating and exploring multiple – and different – readings of a situation. (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p.79-80)

Is it possible to evaluate the truth claims of different accounts of discursive phenomena, and if so, how? Foucault’s (1981) concept of ‘order of discourse’ offers one way forward. According to Foucault, ‘truth’ and ‘falsity’ are relative to the concepts and logics of a particular order of discourse, meaning that if there are agreed standards within a particular order of discourse, then it is possible to discriminate between competing accounts. This line of thinking is reflected by a range of authors who have put forward criteria for assessing the ‘quality’ of research accounts in social constructionist approaches. Howarth & Stavrakakis (2000) argue that

the ultimate tribunal of experience is the degree to which accounts provide plausible and convincing explanations of carefully problematised phenomena for the community of social scientists. (2000, p.7)

This appeal to the ‘community of social scientists’ is not without its problems, however. First, while it acknowledges the collective aspect of knowledge production, it is also a conservative notion, implying that interpretations are only valid if they gain acceptance by others. This ignores the argument that transgressing conventional

understandings is necessary for scientific advance. For example, tensions in Kuhnian 'normal science' activity can be exposed and addressed only by 'revolutionary' thinking that transcends its limitations. The second difficulty is that it assumes there is agreement on what constitutes a high quality empirical account, when a review of the literature reveals no such agreement exists. In mentioning "plausible and convincing explanations" Howarth and Stavrakakis are staking a claim for credibility as a criterion. Potter & Wetherell (1987), on the other hand, suggest 'fruitfulness', which emphasises the importance of producing new knowledge and so potentially avoids the conservatism inherent in an appeal to the community of social scientists. They also suggest 'coherence', which is appealing and yet hostile towards the notion of paradoxes and contradictions, which are an integral part of 'deconstructive' approaches such as discourse theory.

In reviewing the literature, the criteria put forward by Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) appealed as being sensitive both to the issues involved in assessing the quality of empirical accounts and to the connection between empirical accounts and the theoretical frameworks from which they emerge. Alvesson and Skoldberg present the concept of empirical material as argument, stating that

empirical material cannot unambiguously falsify or verify theories, but it can generate arguments for or against the championing of theoretical ideas and a particular way of understanding the world. (2000, p.275)

They argue that good empirical research should be sensitive to the interpretive dimension of social phenomena, should include critical reflection about the political context of the research and should demonstrate an awareness of the ambiguity of language. Finally, empirical accounts should lead to the development of theory. These criteria emphasise coherence and thoughtfulness, yet also create a space for flexibility and creativity. Various interpretations of the empirical data can be considered, yet one interpretation can be emphasised if it is perceived to 'fit' the empirical material better than other interpretations, or if it is more likely to lead to theoretical insight (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000).

Associated with the debate on how to judge the quality of interpretative research accounts has been a debate about the extent to which it is necessary, or even desirable, to provide methodological guidelines for conducting empirical work. Attacks on discourse theory have generally proceeded on two fronts. The first concerns the theory's distinctive ontology and was discussed in Chapter 3. The second comes largely from supporters of discourse theory, who, while attracted to its ontology and associated vocabulary, are nevertheless concerned about the lack of methodological guidelines for approaching a research domain. Howarth (1998), for example, states that

Laclau and Mouffe need to lay down, however minimally, a set of methodological guidelines for practitioners, as well a set of questions and hypotheses (à la Lakatos) for clarification and development. Thus far, the only clear methodological rule consists in a 'non-rule': rules can never be simply applied to cases, but have to be articulated in the research process...The lack of adequate responses to the epistemological and methodological questions pose significant problems for researchers working within discourse theory. (Howarth, 1988, p.291)

Howarth (2000) makes his own attempt to “operationalise” (p.2) discourse theory, yet he fails to provide a single description of an empirical application of Laclau and Mouffe, preferring instead to examine applications of Foucault and Derrida’s discourse theories.

Laclau, Mouffe and others involved in developing discourse theory have vigorously defended the first, ontological attack, but have largely ignored the methodological criticism on the grounds that the definition of methodological guidelines would be inappropriate. Laclau (2000) stresses that his discourse approach

is not a closed system which has already defined all its rules and categories, but an open-ended programme of research whose contours and aims are still very much in the making. (Laclau, 2000, p. xi)

Discourse theorists are concerned to prevent the subsumption of each empirical case under its own theoretical concepts and logics. Rather than applying a pre-existing theory to a set of concepts, the aim is to articulate concepts through each instance of empirical research. According to Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000, p.5) the “concepts and logics of the theoretical framework must be sufficiently ‘open’ and flexible enough to be adapted, deformed and transformed in the process of application”. Williams (1999) concurs, arguing that in discourse approaches “methodology itself has a dynamic quality, and cannot be seen as a static blueprint which will facilitate analysis” (p.251).

Certainly, I am not suggesting that the provision of a set of methodological techniques, a “meat-grinder” in Gergen’s (1985) words, is desirable. It would be incongruous to adopt a formula approach when the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning the paradigm challenge this positivist approach to knowledge generation. I am also conscious of the danger of merely attempting to ‘apply’ the concepts of discourse theory in an empirical setting without making a contribution to the development of the theory. My argument is that it is possible to work with the concepts and vocabulary of discourse theory without developing a set of methodological guidelines that construct a theoretical straightjacket. There is no ‘one best way’ for applying discourse theory, but that should not deter researchers from investigating possibilities for the empirical ‘application’ of discourse theory in a way consistent with its philosophical premises. It is hoped that my research makes a contribution in this direction.

In conclusion, the recognition in postmodern approaches that there is no objective truth ‘out-there’ waiting to be discovered by researchers does not inevitably lead to the conclusion that considerations of methodology and method can be dispensed with altogether. By understanding methodology as an epistemological issue, it becomes an essential consideration in designing research projects, conducting empirical work and presenting ‘findings’. Discourse theory is underdeveloped in this area, which poses significant challenges for conducting this research project. In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss how I went about meeting these challenges. First, I describe and provide a rationale for the empirical research design and in the final section I outline my approach for analysing the data.

Constructing the Data

I began this chapter by suggesting that the concept of a method chapter in a thesis that claims a postmodern orientation is problematic, since our common-sense understanding of ‘method’, as articulated in a discourse of positivist science, is that its rigorous application yields objective ‘facts’ about the social world. I then attempted to contest this understanding by distinguishing between method and methodology and by articulating these concepts within a postpositivist discourse that gives primacy to the concept of reflexivity. In this section I confront another sedimented practice of PhD research – data collection. The hegemonic effect of positivism has been to define data as existing independently of the researcher – something that is ‘out in the field’, waiting to be ‘collected’. This dualism between the researcher (subject) and that which is studied (object) is deconstructed by social constructionist approaches to knowledge. No data is unaffected by the researcher, and it is therefore more appropriate to talk of ‘data construction’ rather than ‘data collection’ (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). In this section, I outline my research design and in particular, how I went about constructing the data for empirical analysis. I also provide rationale for the choices that were made, together with an analysis of the implications of these choices for the claims that can be made following the analysis. In doing so I do not pretend to have formulated a ‘scientific’ research design in terms of sampling and hypothesis testing, since their totalising effect on the discursive practices of academic research is denied and resisted. Rather, the aim is to state clearly what was done and why, so the reader can understand the processes undertaken in formulating my conclusions.

To begin, it is worth recalling the research questions and objectives outlined in chapter 1. The primary objective is to explore the concept that the business school and the identities of business school academics in relation to their public role are the product of competing discourses that seek to totalise meaning. Related to this are two research questions: How is the business school constituted in discourse? How are identities related to this public role constituted in contemporary UK research-led business schools? Business schools are a good choice for analysing the public role because they are close to market and have shallow roots in the university. They experience tensions between striving for academic legitimacy within the university and being seen by external stakeholders as relevant and practical. In discourse theory terms, they are a ‘site of contestation’, where various discourses are engaged in a struggle to define the role of the business school and its relationship to society. My own positioning, as a prospective business school academic, was another reason for making the business school the focus of my research. This project has given me insights into the challenges and opportunities of working in a business school and the different ways of developing an academic career. I am in the process of constructing my work identity, and this research has given me the opportunity to explore the multiple identities that are available – teacher, scholar, entrepreneur to name just a few.

In addition to justifying my decision to focus on business schools, it is necessary to provide rationale for other research design choices that were made. The decision to focus on the UK context was determined by time and financial constraints. I did collect and analyse archival material on US business schools, because the US experience has been pivotal in the development of UK business schools. However, all of my interviews were with business school academics working in the UK. While this

prevents me from drawing detailed comparisons between the two contexts, it allows me to explore the UK context in greater depth. As will be discussed in the final chapter, a comparative study involving US business schools represents an opportunity for future research.

My next design decision concerned what methods of 'data construction' to use. Phillips and Hardy (2002) distinguish between 'naturally occurring' texts, such as archival data, and 'researcher-instigated discourse', such as interviews. While both play a useful role in discourse approaches, 'naturally occurring' texts are considered a better data source because they are "actual examples of language in use" (p.71), whereas interviews are of themselves, "not part of the discourse that constructs the organization" (p.72). In addition, interviews are criticised for being a public relations vehicle for respondents, who can simply 'give the party line' rather than say 'what is really going on'. I reject both of these criticisms, based on the theoretical assumptions of discourse theory discussed earlier. Discourse theory does not assume there is a 'reality' to be discovered behind the 'party line'. As Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) argue:

How interviewees appear to represent reality in specific interviews situations has less to do with how they, or reality, really are (or how they perceive a reality out there); rather, it is about the way they temporarily develop a form of subjectivity, and how they represent reality in relation to the local discursive context created by the interview. (2000, p.193)

In this way, the interview becomes a performance in its own right, but a performance that is accomplished through, and with the discursive resources available (Prichard, 2000). When interpreted as discursive practice, interviews become 'naturally occurring' texts, where 'individual' identities are constituted and expressed (Potter & Wetherell 1987; Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). They are a useful means of exploring the tensions that surround the positioning of respondents within discourses and can provide evidence of how respondents navigate between various subject positions (Prichard, 2000). Since my interest is in not just how the academic's public role is constituted within official discourses, but on the discourses that individual faculty draw on to constitute their identities in relation to their public work, I considered interviews a useful method for constructing the data. It is here that my research departs from Fairclough's (1993) study of the marketisation of UK universities, which is based exclusively on archival material. This privileges official, 'top-down' accounts and provides little insight into how agents reproduce, resist and transform discourses.

Unlike interviews, archival texts are useful for providing historical insight (Hodder, 1994). The archival data used in this research consists of key documents in the formation and development of the business school, in the US as well as the UK. These include the Franks Report (1963), which led to the establishment of the first UK business schools, at London and Manchester, and two US reports published in 1959, one by the Ford Foundation (Gordon & Howell, 1959) and the other by the Carnegie Foundation (Pierson, 1959). The US reports are included because the US experience has been an important reference point for the development of business schools in the UK and also because they represent a way of articulating a role of the business school that is consistent with developments in the UK towards a greater

emphasis on research. Other archival documents used in the analysis include a series of reports, for and by government, on the development of higher education and in particular, the articulation of the academic's public role. These include the recent Lambert Review on Business-University Collaboration (2003) which, while not focusing specifically on business schools, has significant implications for the public role of business school faculty. University and business school annual reports and other official publications (including websites) were also added to the corpus, since they provide additional insights into the ways in which the public role of UK business school faculty is constituted in official discourses.

Having decided to conduct interviews as well as analyse archival material, my next design decision concerned how I would target respondents. I decided to focus on a sub-group of UK business schools, being those 'research-led' rather than 'teaching-led', as reflected by performance on the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), which provides ratings of the quality of research conducted in UK universities and is used to inform funding decisions⁸. I defined 'research-led' as scoring a 4, 5 or 5* on the 2001 RAE⁹. The rating scale used in 2001 is shown in Appendix A. The rationale for this selection was a belief that in research-led schools I would be more likely to find faculty who have a 'significant' public role¹⁰, which represented my target group. This is because many (but not all) of the interactions between faculty and external constituencies are based on research projects (such as dissemination of 'findings'), or 'expertise' gained from research (such as the provision of policy advice for government). Conversely, my belief was that faculty in teaching-led business schools would be less likely to have on-going research projects and therefore would have fewer opportunities to develop a significant public role. Of course, this is not to argue that all academics in research-led schools have a public role and that no academics in teaching-led business schools do – it was simply a question of where I would be likely to find the highest concentration of potential respondents. The implication of focusing only on research-led schools is that I am in no position to draw conclusions

⁸ The first RAE was undertaken in 1986, introducing a formalised assessment process to standardise the information received from existing subject-based committees. Further exercises were held in 1989, 1992, 1996 and most recently in 2001. The RAE is a peer review process: in 2001 research was divided into 68 subject areas or units of assessment and assessment panels were appointed jointly by four funding bodies to examine research in each area. It is up to each institution to decide which faculty members to include in its submission and up to four items of research output, such as books, papers and journals, may be listed for each member of research staff. In addition, the institution must provide information on the amount and sources of research funding, strategies for research development, as well as qualitative information on research performance and measures of esteem (Roberts, 2003).

⁹ Panels score each submission on a 7 point scale according to how much of the work is judged to have reached national or international levels of excellence (see Appendix A)

¹⁰ No attempt was made to provide an operational definition of 'significant'. However, in general, the 'test' was that a faculty member's public work had either been documented in a university publication (such as the RAE submission, annual report, institution website) or was of sufficient profile that colleagues knew about it and could refer me to the person concerned.

about the UK business school sector as a whole. In addition, I cannot make claims about those faculty who do not have a significant public role. Again, as will be discussed in chapter 8, both of these ‘limitations’ could be addressed by further research.

Within the sub-group of UK research-led business schools, I selected six schools as research sites. Table 1 provides a brief description of these schools, based on their score on the 2001 RAE, their geographic location and reliance on external income. The choice of schools reflects a mix of factors, which I considered might influence the nature of, and extent of the public role. One factor is the proportion of resource income from external sources (UK industry, commerce and public corporations)¹¹. I anticipated that in schools which relied heavily on generating research from external sources (rather than on core public funding of teaching and research) there would be a higher proportion of academics who had a significant level of engagement with external constituencies. I also anticipated that the reliance on external funding might raise issues around academic freedom, based on both anecdotal and literature-based evidence that external funding is accompanied by a set of constraints, overt and subtle, on faculty interactions with external groups. Geographic location was another ‘variable’ that I believed might affect the extent and nature of the public work undertaken. For example, I anticipated that a business school located in a major commercial centre in the south-east of England would have a different public work profile than a school based in a rural location in the north-west of England. I expected that faculty in the commercial centre would be more likely to engage in consultancy with commercial organisations, whereas faculty in the rural location would be more likely to have interactions with policymakers on issues such as regional economic development. This ‘sampling’ of business schools is not ‘scientific’, however, as mentioned previously, the discourse of (positivist) science is inconsistent with the philosophical premises of my research and is therefore not a criteria against which my research design should be judged. I did aim to incorporate a range of business schools to enrich the data, but in no way claim that this adds to the ‘validity’ or ‘generalisability’ of my ‘findings’.

¹¹ Research Income data was obtained from the 2001 RAE submissions for Unit of Assessment 43 (Business and Management Studies), available at www.hero.ac.uk/rae

Table 1: Description of the Research Sites

School	Description
A	RAE 4, heavy reliance on external income, midlands location
B	RAE 4, heavy reliance on external income, northern location
C	RAE 5*, low reliance on external income, midlands location
D	RAE 5*, low reliance on external income, north-west location
E	RAE 5*, heavy reliance on external income, south-east location
F	RAE 5, medium reliance on external income, south-west location

My next decision was how to identify and select potential respondents at each school. First, I reviewed the RAE submission for the Business and Management Studies unit of assessment for each of the six universities. In most cases, section RA6 'Evidence of Esteem' included a description of the public work undertaken by particular members of faculty. Next, I would identify 'key informants' within each business school, based on their length of service, and ask them to identify potential respondents. I would then do my own investigations to confirm their public role was significant and if so, they would be added to my list of potential respondents¹². A third method was to ask those respondents who agreed to participate in the study for any faculty they could identify as having a significant public role. Again, I would do my own investigations before adding them to the list of potential respondents. Within each of the six business schools I sought a diversity of respondents on categories of age, gender, specialist field, faculty rank, type of public work and political orientation (see Appendix C for an analysis of the respondents). In terms of political orientation, respondents included both those who identified with the Right of the political spectrum, as well as the Left. My particular interest is the possibilities for a critical public role and I am aware that in much of the literature, 'critical' is synonymous with 'Left'. Given that I define critical as a challenge to the prevailing wisdom and the status quo, it seemed inappropriate to exclude those whose critique is directed from the Right. The type of public work undertaken by respondents also varied considerably, with some mainly doing media work, while others' involvement was primarily public policy oriented, or involved publishing books for a non-academic audience. In relation to specialist fields, all 13 sub-areas of Business and Management Studied identified in the RAE 2001 were represented in the group of

¹² This search involved reading their profile on the university website and personal webpage, a search on www.google.com and a search on the LexisNexis electronic database to locate any appearances in UK national and regional newspapers.

respondents, apart from hospitality management and tourism¹³. Of the 60 respondents, just 12 were female, a proportion that reflects the lower representation of women in these schools generally. In terms of age and faculty rank, there was an ‘over-representation’ of senior faculty in the sample, since senior faculty appear more likely than their younger and/or more junior colleagues to have a significant public role. The reasons for this are explored in more detail in the following chapters and relate to the disincentives for junior faculty in undertaking public work and the time it takes to develop a public role. Despite this ‘bias’ in the sample, a number of junior faculty are included in the group of respondents.

At each of the six research-led business schools, I ended up conducting 10 interviews. The decision to conduct 60 interviews was made after interviewing had begun, a practice consistent with interpretivist approaches, of which discourse theory is one. Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest that data collection should continue until saturation has been reached; that is, new interviews fail to appreciably alter the findings. Phillips and Hardy (2002) suggest that the notion of saturation is elastic – the endpoint is not when you stop finding anything new, but when you have sufficient enough data to make and justify an interesting argument. In my research, both positions were relevant. The more faculty I interviewed, the more I heard similar stories, although the institutional context was different at each of the six business schools. As I reached the last of the 60 interviews, I became more confident that I had an argument to make in regard to the public role of UK faculty and that I had sufficient data to elaborate and justify that argument. At that point, I decided 60 interviews was an appropriate number¹⁴.

Since discourse theory offers little practical guidance for conducting interviews, I looked to the literature on narrative analysis, as both share an interpretivist philosophy. Riessman's (1993) advice is to limit the structure in the interview in order to give participants greater control.

Interviews are conversations in which both participants – teller and listener/questioner develop meaning together, a stance requiring interview practices that give considerable freedom to both. (Riessman, 1993, p.55)

Consistent with this approach, my interviews had little structure, although I did follow Riessman's suggestion of developing an interview guide of broad questions (see appendix B). This gave me the required flexibility to focus on each respondent's unique situation, while providing me with a means of exploring issues of relevance

¹³ The sub-areas are accounting and finance, economics, entrepreneurship and small business, hospitality management and tourism, human resource management, information systems, marketing, occupational and organisational psychology, operational research and management science, organisation analysis and theory of the management of change, public sector management, strategic management, technology and innovation and operations management (HERO, 2001).

¹⁴ Before commencing interviewing at the six schools, I conducted pilot interviews with three faculty from business schools not in the sample group. The pilot resulted in only minor changes to the interview schedule and I therefore decided it was appropriate to add these transcripts to the corpus for analysis (see Appendix C).

for my research project. In conducting the interviews, I was conscious of the way I was positioned in different ways, for example, as a 'student', as a member of 'critical management studies', as a 'foreigner' to the UK context, as a fellow 'academic' and as a 'confidant' with whom unofficial stories could be shared. Following the recommendation of Prichard (2000), I tried wherever possible not to evoke particular discourses and subject positions by keeping my explanation of my research aims and 'hypotheses' to a minimum (until after the completion of the interview) and by asking open-ended questions. I was also conscious of the way in which respondents positioned themselves as 'interviewees'. Statements such as "I hope that was what you were looking for" were not uncommon, which suggests some respondents sought approval for their performance of the respondent role and tried to anticipate what responses I would consider 'valuable'. In these situations, I tried where possible not to enter discussions in 'what I was looking for'. All of these practices are consistent with a reflexive methodology and recognise my own involvement in the construction of the interview texts.

All interviews were conducted at the place of work of the respondents. This was most often their office, however if their office was shared and others were present, a vacant teaching room was used. All interviews were recorded on an audiocassette and respondents were asked prior to commencing the interview if they were comfortable for the interview to be recorded – all were happy to do so. Participants were advised that at any time they could ask for the tape recorder to be turned off, but none made this request. Initial interviews were transcribed verbatim and in full since I was unsure about which sections would be analysed in depth. As the interviews proceeded I was able to paraphrase areas which were obviously not relevant to the research. My next task was to analyse the corpus that I had constructed, and this approach is outlined in the final section of this chapter.

Analysing the Data

As discussed earlier, Laclau, Mouffe and other discourse theorists provide few, if any, guidelines for conducting empirical analysis using the concepts of discourse theory, while secondary authors, such as Howarth have preferred to draw concepts from other poststructuralists, such as Foucault and Derrida, to analyse empirical material. Unquestionably, there is value in drawing on a range of theoretical approaches. However, my research is aimed more at developing, rearticulating and transforming the key concepts of discourse theory, through their 'application' in an empirical setting¹⁵. For example, in the previous chapter I questioned discourse theory's concept of dislocation, suggesting that its incorporation of an extra-discursive realm was not consistent with the framework's dissolution of the distinction between discursive and non-discursive elements. It is issues such as this that I seek to inform through my empirical work. I am conscious that there is a balance to be struck between employing theoretical ideas and being open and sensitive to the empirical data. Alvesson & Deetz (2000) believe that if the balance is lost, research can either become too narrowly focused on surface phenomena and conventional understandings or insensitive to the richness of the empirical material. I have taken my direction from Laclau (1990), who states that the concepts of discourse theory should be regarded as 'open' and therefore able to be adapted and transformed through their

¹⁵ By opting for a sympathetic but open-minded approach to discourse theory, I hope to avoid being labelled a 'Laclone' (Jessop, 1990)

application. In this section, I outline the general approach taken to analysing the data by reintroducing some of the key concepts of discourse theory outlined in chapter 3.

Again, it is worth recalling the research questions and objectives outlined previously. The primary objective is to explore the concept that the business school and the identities of business school academics in relation to their public role are the product of competing discourses that seek to totalise meaning. Related to this are two research questions: How is the business school constituted in discourse? How are identities related to this public role constituted in contemporary UK research-led business schools? These research questions and objectives raise a number of issues for analysing the data. First, their construction indicates that unlike in other forms of discourse analysis there is no distinction made between discursive and non-discursive elements of the social world. Thus, the business school is understood to be discursively constituted, an entity that exists as a material object external to discourse but which has no meaning outside of its constitution in discourse.

Discourse theory has rarely been applied to analysing institutions and organisations such as the business school, but with a little imagination, it becomes a useful framework for conducting organisational analysis. Institutions and organisations are understood as ‘sedimented discourses’ that have become relatively durable, thereby concealing their political origins as products of hegemonic practices (Howarth, 2000). Early on in my research it became clear that the business school has achieved a low level of sedimentation, such that its political origins are easy to detect. This was manifest in the different ways of giving meaning to the business school, evident both in archival material and my interviews with faculty. *Discourse* is defined as a social and political construction that establishes a system of relations between objects and practices, while providing contingent positions with which social actors identify (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Laclau, 1990). This establishment of the relations between objects and practices occurs through *articulation*. In analysing the data, I used the concept of articulation to denote these competing ways of constituting the business school, each of which were attempting to become ‘sedimented’, thereby effecting the (ultimately impossible) fixation of meaning (Laclau, 1990). To analyse the articulations I employed a framework developed by Phillips and Jorgensen (2002). They suggest that each articulation organises social space, organises identity and organises discourses, with the ultimate aim of constructing a stable system of objectivities, identities and meanings that appear as natural, or taken for granted. This organisation takes place through *chains of equivalence* – the bringing together into relationship elements (identities, discourses etc) that were once isolated.

My first task, in analysing the data, was to identify the specific discourses these various articulations of the business school were drawing on. Here, I have chosen to employ discourse theory’s concept of *nodal points*, denoting signs that have a privileged status within an articulation and have the effect of providing a partial fixation of meaning. In this interpretation, discourses are the nodal points of each articulation. A practical problem that emerged was how to draw a boundary around a discourse, thereby making it distinct from other discourses, whilst remaining consistent with the philosophical assumptions of discourse theory, which emphasise the ‘openness of the social’ and the ‘radical contingency of all identity’. I found Du Gay and Salaman’s (1992) notion of enterprise discourse salient in analysing the empirical material, yet I was unsure what was part of enterprise discourse and what

was not. For example, I wondered whether the emphasis given to top-down, autocratic styles of management was part of ‘enterprise discourse’ or if it was a separate, but related ‘managerialist discourse’. To resolve these dilemmas, I have followed the recommendation of Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) to treat ‘discourse’ as an analytical concept, guided by the research aims. This means understanding discourses as objects that the researcher constructs rather than as objects that exist in a delimited form in reality, ready to be identified and mapped. The challenge is then to demonstrate that the boundaries I have drawn are reasonable, based on the empirical evidence.

Given discourse theory’s assumption about the negative constitution of all identity, my interest is not just what meanings particular articulations establish by positioning elements in relationship with one another, but also what meanings are excluded by such articulations. Discourse theory’s concept of *antagonism* is relevant here, with the source of antagonism being a radical ‘otherness’ where every objectivity, identity or meaning exists in an antagonistic relationship to all other objectivities, identities and meanings (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). To explore the notion of antagonism, I looked for ‘points of contestation’ in the empirical material. For example, in the 1963 Franks Report, which led to the establishment of the first UK business schools, Franks refers to the “mutual uneasiness” (p.7) between academia and business, each of which has different ideas of what the mission and objectives of the business school should be.

Having analysed the constituent discourses of the different articulations competing for meaning in the constitution of the business school, my next task was to analyse the identities that were available within each articulation, which I have called *subject positions*¹⁶. For example, in one articulation, business school faculty are positioned as ‘teachers’ and ‘trainers’, while in a competing articulation subject positions of ‘academic’ and ‘scholar’ are available. This understanding of identity does not imply that subjects are ‘spoken for’ by these articulations, because this would underplay agency. Rather, it recognises that there are a number of hegemonic articulations ‘in play’ that are attempting to ‘suture’ social space by fixing the meaning of practices, objects and identities. While these articulations offer a partial fixation of meaning, they are penetrated by a radical contingency that prevents closure or totalisation.

Another aspect of discourse theory I found useful for conceptualising the articulations was the concept of *myth*. Myths have a hegemonic effect of suturing social space through the constitution of a new space of representation (Laclau, 1990. p.61). I have employed myth as an ‘umbrella concept’ to capture the way in which each articulation reconstitutes the business school. Within each articulation, the business school occupies a unique position in its relationship to the social world, which gives the business school a mission that is distinct from competing articulations. For example, one myth constructs the ‘knowledge economy’, within which the business school is a commercial enterprise. In another, the effect is to detach the business school from

¹⁶ Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) use the Lacanian term ‘master signifier’ in relation to identity. My preference for ‘subject position’ reflects my desire to employ the concepts of discourse theory. Also, ‘master signifier’ may be easily confused with discourse theory’s concepts of ‘floating signifier’ and ‘empty signifier’.

society by placing it within the ‘ivory tower’ of the university, positioning faculty as ‘academics’ who have little interaction with the ‘real world’.

Laclau sees myths as emerging through structural *dislocation*, another concept that features prominently in my analysis. Dislocation is the process by which the contingency of social structures becomes evident, as sedimented discourses become reactivated, revealing their political origins. I mentioned at the beginning of this section that the business school is a highly contested signifier. In my analysis, I identify a number of processes that represent dislocations, such as professionalisation, commodification and the epistemological crisis of modernity. In contrast to Laclau’s understanding of dislocation as having an extra-discursive dimension, my approach is to consider these processes as discursive phenomenon. Thus, professionalisation, commodification and the crisis of modernity are analysed through their particular and local representation within competing articulations of the business school. Coming back to the issue of identity, it is through dislocation that agency emerges. Dislocation represents the ‘crisis in the structure’ and forces agents to identify with subject positions that are available within hegemonic articulations. This means that in the dislocated terrain of the contemporary business school, faculty are compelled to identify with one (or more) articulation to secure their work identities.

In sum, the analysis of the archival and interview texts involved identifying distinct articulations that have competed for hegemony over the constitution of the business school. Each hegemonic articulation binds together key signifiers in a chain of equivalence, which invests these key signifiers with meaning. These key signifiers include the division of social space (myths), identities (subject positions) and discourses (nodal points). Within these different articulations, the institution of the business school takes on new meaning – in one articulation it is a vocational/professional school; in others it becomes an academic department and a commercial enterprise. In the next three chapters, I outline and provide empirical support for three articulations that, based on my analysis, have been pivotal in the constitution of the business school.

Conclusion

Discourse theory is yet to make a significant impact on the field of organisation studies. One possible explanation is that it is a highly abstract theoretical approach that is not amenable to empirical study. In conducting my research, I have attempted to develop a method that is consistent with the epistemological assumptions of discourse theory. Its rejection of objective realities and causal explanations in favour of a socially constructed reality implies that reflexivity is critical and I therefore advocate a more ‘confessional’ style of analysis than empirical ‘applications’ of discourse theory have managed to date. In designing the empirical component of the thesis, I have not sought to satisfy criteria such as ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’ as understood within a discourse of positivist science, since these criteria are not appropriate for the philosophical approach of discourse theory. However, I have also endeavoured to avoid accusations of extreme relativism and have therefore outlined criteria against which I wish my research to be judged – sensitivity to the interpretive dimension, critical reflection about the political dimension and the development of theory based on the empirical work.

Discourse theory contains few guidelines or even suggestions for conducting empirical research and while the development of a 'tool-kit' of analysis techniques would not be in keeping with the philosophical premises of discourse theory, I have nevertheless sought to put together a series of concepts that provide insights into the empirical data. The concept of articulation is useful for analysing the struggle for meaning that I see taking place around the signifier of the 'business school'. In the next three chapters, I identify three articulations that are attempting to effect the ultimately impossible fixation of meaning. Each articulation combines discourses and identities in a chain that seeks to construct a stable system of meanings that appear as natural. I argue that no articulation has managed to achieve a high level of sedimentation because they appear on a highly dislocated terrain, characterised by professionalisation, commodification and the epistemological crisis of modernity. This makes available a multiplicity of identities in relation to the public role, which has both negative and positive implications for the possibilities of business school faculty performing a critical public role.

Chapter 5: Three Competing Articulations of the Business School

Introduction

This chapter is the first of three that focus on the analysis of the empirical data. These chapters identify and analyse three articulations (summarised in Table 2) that compete for hegemony in the constitution of the UK research-led business school: the business school as a vocational/professional school, as an academic department and as a commercial enterprise. Each articulation binds together key signifiers in a chain of equivalence, which invests them with meaning. These key signifiers include the division of social space (myths), identities (subject positions) and discourses (nodal points). The central argument of the next three chapters is that since its inception, the UK business school has been a site of contestation between these three competing articulations, each of which has sought to effect a fixation of meaning around its mission, purpose and objectives. Each of these articulations has implications for the public role of business school faculty and in particular, the possibility for critical engagements with external audiences.

Adopting the method for analysing the data outlined in chapter 4, for each articulation I identify its myths, subject positions and nodal points that constitute chains of equivalence. For each articulation I consider its relationship with competing articulations, since, as discussed in chapter 3, an assumption of discourse theory is that identity is negatively constituted; that is, its meaning depends on its relationship to those identities from which it is differentiated. This consideration of the 'Other' reveals points of contestation, or *antagonism* in discourse theory terms, over the constitution of the business school and the public role of faculty. I also examine the social consequences of this division of social space for the public role and consider in depth the implications of each articulation for the critical engagement with non-academic audiences, since this represents a key theme of my research. The analysis in the following three chapters is, by necessity, a simplification of complex realities. There are multiple myths, identities and discourses competing for meaning at any one time. My analysis represents one reading, based on the corpus of archival and interview data that I constructed. I do not claim that my reading is the best or only reading but aim instead to present a convincing account that is sensitive to both continuities and discontinuities and to the possibilities of different interpretations.

My awareness that there was more than one articulation in a struggle to fix the meaning of the business school came from several sources. First, an examination of policy documents and commissioned reports made me aware of different ways of constituting the business school. Second, a number of respondents spoke of the tensions that surround the mission and objectives of the business school – is the first priority teaching, research, to generate revenue or something else? Many faculty blamed higher education policies for 'sending mixed messages' about which roles should be given priority, which created confusion for faculty seeking to win promotion and to develop their careers. Some sought a rational solution to these tensions, looking to government for a clear policy direction. Others were resigned to pursuing competing objectives, believing that was the 'reality' for business schools. It is these tensions that became the focus of my analysis. Consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of my research, my aim was not to search for some rational

explanation for why these tensions existed or how they might be resolved, but to explore how respondents made sense of these tensions in constructing their work identities and to analyse their implications for the performance of a critical public role.

By presenting three articulations sequentially, it might give the impression that each articulation has achieved hegemony before being displaced by the subsequent articulation. That would be a misleading impression. I am wary of claiming that one articulation has superseded another, especially since this is not a longitudinal study. My research comes at one moment in time so I am unable to claim, on the basis of my own research, that 'things are different now'. In any case, my experience in the field was that all three articulations are 'in play', each providing discursive resources and contingent subject positions that faculty can identify with in constructing their identities. I therefore interpret the struggle between competing articulations as an ongoing struggle, manifest in the tensions, disagreements and debates that are characteristic of discussions involving the mission and objectives of the business school. In discourse theory terms, none of the articulations has become so firmly established that its contingency is forgotten and it appears as an objectivity. In this respect, the business school is very much in the realm of the 'political' rather than the 'social', a site of political contestation over its roles and objectives.

Chapter 5 outlines the three articulations of the business school and their constituent myths, subject positions and nodal points, based on their representation within 'official' discourses such as commissioned reports and government policy documents. The first articulation constitutes the business school as a vocational/professional school and business school faculty as vocationally-oriented teachers and trainers. Within this chain of equivalence, the business school is a practical, not an academic, institution. Teaching takes priority over research and developing links with industry becomes a priority, with practitioners having a part to play as teachers. In this articulation, 'relevance' means the training of competent managers and the practical application of knowledge. The second articulation, which constitutes the business school as an academic department, is positioned in an antagonistic relationship with the first articulation. Business school faculty are constituted as academics and scholars, research takes priority over teaching and communication with other academics is valued above communication with audiences outside the academy. In this articulation, to be 'relevant' means breaking new ground through independent scientific research. The third articulation constitutes the business school as a commercial enterprise and a creator of wealth within in a 'knowledge economy'. Business school faculty become entrepreneurs and experts and knowledge becomes a commodity that is commercialised, exploited and disseminated to non-academic audiences. In this third articulation, 'relevance' means developing intellectual property that can generate and stimulate commercial activity, thereby making a contribution to the wealth of the nation. Within each articulation, the public role takes on a different meaning. In the first two, the public role is constituted as an 'out-of-hours' activity, rather than activity that is valued by the institution and is likely to lead towards promotion. In the third articulation the public role becomes a core activity alongside teaching and research. This is reflected in the institutionalisation of a 'third stream' of government funding to fund a range of activities involving engagement with external constituencies.

Chapter 6 draws on my interviews with faculty in six UK research-led business schools and concerns their identification with these three articulations. The theme is one of contradictions and inconsistencies, which reflect the tensions experienced by faculty in their day-to-day activities. I examine a range of practices and consider their implications for the public role, including the strategic direction of business schools, systems for measuring and rewarding performance and recruitment practices. I conclude that it is not possible to construct a coherent story about the nature of, and changes to the public role of faculty within these business schools, which suggests that the business school is located on a highly contested discursive terrain, with all three articulations competing to fix the meaning of objects, practices and identities.

Chapter 7 considers the implications of this contest for performing critical public work, by which I mean work activity that extends beyond the audiences of faculty and students *and* which is critical of received wisdom. The focus is on the third articulation, since this is a relatively recent development. Moves by business schools to assert more control over the public work of faculty raises issues such as censorship and self-censorship, as schools become more conscious of their public profile and their relationship with external stakeholders, especially those in industry and government. While these threats to the performance of a critical public role cannot be ignored, I also present evidence that the commercialisation of the business school might create new opportunities for faculty to engage critically with external audiences. Using discourse theory's concept of dislocation, I examine how commodification and the epistemological crisis of modernity have constructed new subject positions which are compatible with the performance of critical public work. A second, and related, opportunity concerns working within the commercial enterprise articulation to demonstrate the independence of the business school and thereby reasserting the value of a critical public role.

Table 2: Summary of Three Articulations of the Business School

	1	2	3
Business school constituted as...	Vocational/professional school	Academic department	Commercial enterprise
Myth (division of social space)	Management profession	Ivory tower/real world	Knowledge economy
Subject positions (identity)	Teachers, trainers,	Academics, scholars	Entrepreneurs, experts
Nodal points (discourses)	Vocationalism, practice, partnership	Academic respectability, scientific research, independence	Enterprise, partnership
Priority activity is...	Teaching	Research	Public role ('third stream activity')
Knowledge is...	Applied, transmitted	Generated	Disseminated, commercialised, exploited
Relevance means...	Practical application, training competent managers	Breaking new ground through independent research	Commercialising intellectual property
Attitudes towards public role	'Out-of-hours' activity	'Out-of-hours' activity	Core, commercial activity

Articulation 1: Business School as a Vocational/Professional School

Each articulation of the business school takes place within a historical context and involves the interplay of particular social, political and economic conditions. Therefore, in seeking to analyse each articulation, it is important to historicise each constellation of identities and discourses. The 1963 Franks Report led directly to the establishment of the first UK business schools, at London and Manchester. In this report, the business school is constituted as a vocational/professional school and in this section I draw from the report to illustrate the myth, nodal points and subject positions that characterise this first articulation. First however, I provide a brief overview of the events leading up to the commissioning of the report, in order that its context can be understood.

Management education in the UK prior to the 1960s developed in a highly fragmented fashion as a result of conflicting views amongst key stakeholders (industry, the state and universities) about its purpose, form and content. Early industry views towards formalised management education in the universities fluctuated between ambivalence and hostility. According to Whitely et al (1981), prior to the 1960s the prevailing attitude in industry was that formal education had little role to play in the development of a manager.

British managers, like British gentlemen, were born rather than made, and management itself had been seen principally as an art learnt by long years of practical experience in the workplace rather than in the groves of academe. (Whitely et al, 1981, p.31)

The impetus for formalising management education came from the 1945 Labour government, which sought to pursue a strategy of industrial modernisation and regarded the quality of management as central to enhancing productivity. It created the British Institute of Management and appointed Lyndall Urwick as the head of a committee whose task was to investigate how management education could be improved. Urwick travelled to the US and concluded that Britain could not compete with US industry unless it imitated the US practice of systematic management training. Urwick recommended a management studies programme to be run nationally through the technical and commercial colleges. Urwick's proposals were implemented, although by 1959, only 1500 students were under his scheme and the colleges were under-funded and had low prestige (Tiratsoo, 1998). Tiratsoo attributes this to a lack of enthusiasm from Conservative governments of the 1950s for the idea of state sponsored industrial modernisation and the need for formal management education. Whitely et al (1981) argue it was not only government, but industry and the universities, who were dismissive of Urwick's scheme. Industry continued to have a lack of belief in the need for vocational education for management and regarded the technical and commercial colleges with disdain. Universities were also less than enthusiastic about the possibilities. The first post-graduate management course was offered at the Manchester College of Science and Technology (later UMIST) as early as 1926, but by the end of the 1950s few universities were offering such courses. Post-experience courses were more widespread, though these rarely involved examination and certification. Whitely et al argue that the universities, like industry, saw management education as a low-status activity:

Universities traditionally presented themselves as aloof from the sordid world of practical affairs, so that the addition of management subjects to universities' curricula would represent a humbling of their status and a diversion from their historic role as guardians of the nation's intellect; 'training' was not a fitting task for a university. (Whitley et al, 1981, p.40)

More problematic was that management lacked the status of the science. The established professional fields of medicine and law also involved a substantial degree of training, yet unlike management, they had achieved the status of an 'applied science', structured around an identifiable body of knowledge that could be transmitted from academia to practice (Jeffcutt, 2003).

The early 1960s saw a renewed push for formal management education. The first initiative came from the Foundation for Management Education (FME), made up of

Harvard Business School alumni, the chairman of the University Grants Committee (UGC)¹⁷ and several Conservative Party MPs. The FME argued that the American business school system was the way forward for the UK and raised finance from industry to fund new management courses at Bristol, Cambridge and Leeds. Tiratsoo believes the FME's success coincided with increasing concern in government about the poor growth of the UK economy, relative to competing nations. Within this climate, the expansion of management education began to figure prominently as a solution. As the state's enthusiasm for management education grew, universities began to position themselves to take advantage of any opportunities. Manchester expanded its facilities and Cranfield launched a course modelled on the first year of a US business school MBA. So, whereas before there had been not only ambivalence, but resistance to the idea of a UK business school, there was now acknowledgment by the key stakeholders (industry, universities and the state) that business schools, based on the US model, were to become a UK reality. In 1963 the National Economic Development Council (NEDC), a forum established to assess the UK's economic performance, suggested there was a need

for at least one very high level new school or institute on the lines of Harvard Business School or the School of Industrial Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, either as an independent institution or as part of some existing University or College. (NEDC, 1963, p.5-6)

This broad agreement about the need for UK business schools did not, however, extend to an agreement about their role and objectives or issues such as the relationship of business schools to universities, the appropriate length of courses and curriculum. As a way forward, the FME, NEDC and the Federation of British Industries commissioned Lord Franks to provide a viable set of proposals for the future provision of high-level management education. Lord Franks' (1963) report, produced five recommendations:

1. That two Business Schools of high quality be established
2. That each be part of a university but enjoying considerable autonomy as a partnership between the university and business
3. That these Business Schools be situated within major industrial and commercial conurbations
4. That these Business Schools offer courses for both post graduation and post experience students
5. That one Business School be associated jointly with the London School of Economics and Imperial College of the University of London, and the other with Manchester University (Franks, 1963, p.14).

The Franks Report is significant not only because it led directly to the establishment of the first UK business schools, but also because at the time it represented the most comprehensive attempt to articulate the business school's role and objectives. Judging from my interviews with current faculty, this articulation continues to have resonance and it is appropriate therefore that I analyse its composition. Following the methodological approach outlined in the previous chapter, I focus on key signifiers that are bound together in chains of equivalence, including the division of social space

¹⁷ The UGC is the body which, until 1989, distributed Government funds to higher education institutions.

(myths), identities (subject positions) and discourses (nodal points). These constitute management as a profession, the business school as a vocational/professional school and business school faculty as vocationally-oriented teachers and trainers.

The *myth* articulated by Franks is that *management is a profession* and that the business school is a vocational/professional school. He states that management is an “applied, professional, technological” subject such as “law and medicine: and in recent times engineering” (p.7). In the report, he uses the analogy of the surgeon to explain the complexity of management, which justifies the need for formal management education.

Just as nowadays a surgeon has to know many things, possess a range of skills, and be disciplined, exercised and trained in how to apply his knowledge and skills competently in the moment of action: so increasingly the manager of today and tomorrow has quite simply to know a lot more things, to be familiar with a much wider range of skills, know how to apply the knowledge and the skills in a practical and enterprising fashion in bringing different ideas together to form a sensible policy, in making his decisions and in communicating them to those who have to carry them out. (p.4)

In constructing the myth of management as a profession and drawing parallels with medicine, Franks fails to mention other features of professions which management does not share, such as the existence of an association of members that control entry to the profession and there being a prescribed way of entering it through the enforcement of minimum standards. Instead, Franks’ focus is on competence, training and practical application – all of which provide an insight into the role and objectives of the business school.

In this first articulation, the *discourses of practice* and *vocationalism* are nodal points. Nodal points are signs that have a privileged status within a discourse and have the effect of providing a partial fixation of meaning. Early in the report, Franks defines key terms “in order to avoid misunderstandings” (p.3), a recognition that there exist a multiplicity of meanings around the key signifier of the business school.

By “business” I understand both industry and commerce; by “Business School” an institution the primary purpose of which is practical, to increase competence in managers or those who will be managers. (p.3)

The Franks Report constructs a dualism between ‘practical/vocational’ and ‘academic/intellectual’. In theoretical terms this represents an *antagonism*, a radical ‘otherness’ where identity exists in an antagonistic relationship to other identities (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). In the report, ‘academic’ represents ‘the Other’ which is excluded by the discourses of practice and vocationalism. This is most clearly illustrated when Franks states:

these convictions spring from the fact that business management is an intelligent form of human activity, not intellectual nor academic, but practical in nature. (p.4)

The use of words such as ‘fact’ and ‘nature’ suggests the meaning of management is objective and uncontested, a practical activity that is not “intellectual nor academic”. The role of the business school is to apply and transmit knowledge, not to engage in intellectual games. However, as we will see later, this “fact” is neither essential nor universal, but part of one particular discursive articulation that is contested by competing articulations.

In addition to the discourses of practice and vocationalism, the *discourse of partnership* is a nodal point in this first articulation of the business school. If the primary concern is practical application, a partnership is needed between the profession (management) and the professional school (business school) to ensure the effective transmission of knowledge. Franks’ vision was for “frequent two-way traffic” (p.6) between the business school and industry. He anticipated both staff and students making regular visits to industrial plants to advance their applied knowledge and foresaw business leaders being a prominent presence within the business school. This need for partnership meant the business schools must be located in major industrial and commercial conurbations such as Manchester and London. The discourse of partnership is also evident in both the funding and policy making functions of the business school. Franks proposed that over and above fees received from those attending, the costs of operating the business school should be split evenly between the university and industry and the governing body should be composed of half of representatives from the university and half from industry.

So far, I have suggested that the first articulation of the business school constitutes it as a vocational/professional school through a chain of equivalence combining the discourses of practice, vocationalism and partnership. The next task is to examine identities (or subject positions) that are established by this combination of discourses. In discourse theory, identity not only lacks an essence, but its meaning depends on its relationship to those identities from which it is differentiated. This relational view of identity is based on the *constitutive outside*, an externality that blocks the identity of the inside, but yet is a prerequisite for the construction of the inside (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Therefore, as with nodal points, subject positions have no essential meaning in themselves, but are filled with meaning through chains of equivalence.

In the myth of management as a profession, the identities of vocationally-oriented teacher and trainer are subject positions. Franks uses none of these signifiers in the report (preferring instead the more neutral term of ‘faculty’), yet these identities can be inferred from the way in which the training function of the business school is privileged. Franks justifies the creation of business schools on the grounds that ‘on the job’ training is not sufficient to “provide industry and commerce with managers better fitted to foresee and decide well in swiftly-changing situations” (p.4). In examining any articulation, insights can be gained from looking at not only what objectivities, identities and meanings are included, but also those that are excluded. In privileging the identity of ‘teacher’ the identity of ‘researcher’ is marginalised. Where research is mentioned, it is in reference to industry fears that the business school will become too academic.

The university, they fear, will make the School over in its own traditional image. Instead of the School being thoroughly vocational and practical, with courses and programmes designed to help managers to be better at managing,

to increase their general competence, it will become like other departments of a university, concerned with the advancement of knowledge and its communication, turning out scholars and not men better fitted for management. The universities, they believe, are prone to despise applied knowledge and competence. And there is excuse for this belief in the way some professors talk. (p.7)

Franks does recognise the need for research, but he conceives of it narrowly as preparing case studies and other teaching aids. Thus, research is considered part of the teaching function and not a legitimate activity in its own right. Franks states that it is vital to secure industry support for the business school.

It is only in some such way that practical business problems can be studied live, and a wealth of case studies and similar exercises in a British context developed for the purposes of the School. (p.8)

Excluded from this articulation is research that is theoretical rather than applied, as well as research that is driven by curiosity and the pursuit of knowledge 'for its own sake'. In talking about the advantages of the business school remaining autonomous from the university, Franks states that

One, and this is important from the standpoint of business, is that it eliminates the risk of the School being dominated by one faculty or even by one department of the university. It would be disastrous if this happened, because the School would tend to become too theoretical and remote from business. (p.8)

The emphasis on a vocational orientation for faculty, driven by this fear that the business school will become "theoretical and remote", is reinforced by Franks' comments on staffing.

The core of the staff cannot be composed of men whose first allegiance is to the faculties and departments of the universities. Where then will these staff come from? I should expect its members to be recruited from universities and from colleges of advanced technology: some would come from management consultancy and others would be seconded from industry. (p.11-12)

Franks acknowledges that it will be difficult to recruit practitioners from industry to work in the business school, because of the low level of academic salaries.

There will be a difficult problem about the incomes of some of the School's full-time staff. From every academic standpoint it is necessary that the salaries paid in the School should be in line with academic salaries generally. If this were the end of the matter men of the required calibre could not be recruited in a number of subjects. (p.12)

This has implications for the public role of faculty, with Franks suggesting that the problem can be alleviated by faculty supplementing their university salaries "through consultancy fees or perhaps by directorships" (p.12). This is significant in that the public role is seen as primarily an 'out-of-hours' activity that faculty undertake to supplement their income, rather than a core part of the business school's mission. I

will return to this point in examining the other two articulations and also in assessing their consequences for the public role. In considering what is excluded from this articulation of the public role, there is no suggestion that business school faculty have a role to play as scrutinisers of business activity. Again, I will return to this point in subsequent discussions of competing articulations.

In summary, in this first articulation the business school is constituted as a vocational/professional school. The myth of management of a profession is constructed by a chain of equivalence comprising the discourses of practice, vocationalism and partnership, together with the identities of the vocationally-oriented teacher and trainer. In this articulation, management is a practical, rather than academic activity. In the past 'on the job' training for managers was sufficient, however the accelerating pace of technological innovation, combined with the intensification of competition require business schools to train more competent managers and to apply management knowledge to solve industry problems. This, in turn, means recruiting faculty from university departments that have an applied orientation, but also practitioners from industry who have experience in dealing with business problems. Business school faculty have a public role, but it is subsumed within the teaching function. Interacting with industry provides case material for classroom instruction, while consulting and directorship activities provide a means of supplementing low academic salaries, which is essential if practitioners from industry are to be convinced to take up positions in the school. In the next section I argue that this first articulation, represented by the Franks Report, is contested by an articulation that puts research very much at the forefront of the business school's mission. To explore this second articulation, we head across the Atlantic to analyse two reports which were fundamental to the development of US business schools.

Articulation 2: Business School as an Academic Department

In this section, I outline a second articulation of the business school, in which it is constituted as an academic department. I start by analysing two key reports in the history of US business schools; the Ford Foundation report (Gordon & Howell, 1959) and the Carnegie Corporation report (Pierson, 1959). These reports signalled a change of strategic direction for US business schools, from a focus on teaching and practical application towards the development of management as an academic discipline, based on rigorous scientific research. Whereas in the first articulation we have the business school working in partnership with industry, here we have the business school detached from the 'real world' of commerce – an 'ivory tower' where scholars and academics reside. The *myth of the ivory tower/real world* is constructed on a range of nodal points and subject positions. Each of these will be analysed in turn, illustrated by references to the two US reports.

Before I begin the analysis, I must justify this focus on US business schools, when the UK is my chosen context. First, the development of US schools has undoubtedly provided a reference point, if not a catalyst, for the development of UK business schools. The management studies programmes begun at UK technical and commercial colleges in the 1950s were the result of Urwick's studies, which concluded that Britain could not compete with US industry unless it imitated US practice of systematic management training. In addition, it was alumni of Harvard Business School who were the driving force behind the FME, which urged the Conservative government of the early 1960s to model the UK approach to

management education on the US business school system. Franks also acknowledges the influence of the US in his report, stating that “we have a great deal to learn from the successful practices of the leading American Business Schools” (p.4). Finally, there is consensus within the literature that the Ford Foundation and Carnegie Corporation reports resulted in a radical rethink in the direction of US business schools during the 1960s. Pfeffer and Fong (2002) for instance, state

The Gordon and Howell report and funding from the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Council (Pierson, 1959) started business schools on their continuing trajectory to achieve academic respectability and legitimacy on their campuses by becoming social science departments, or perhaps, applied social science departments. (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002, p.79)

In drawing from these US reports, I am not claiming that a strategic change in direction in US schools *caused* a similar change in the strategic direction of UK schools. After all, the theoretical framework adopted in this research is not capable of, nor does it aim towards, providing causal explanations. Rather, my argument is that the US reports *represent* a way of constituting the business school that resonated with my respondents. These reports contest the articulation represented by the Franks Report and I have turned to them in the absence of official UK reports that perform a similar function.

Both the Ford Foundation and Carnegie Corporation reports¹⁸ were a response to the mass expansion in US business schools and both regard this expansion as a threat to academic excellence. Gordon and Howell (1959) state that “business education at the university and college level has grown at a phenomenal rate” (p.v) and yet

what passes as the going standard of acceptability among business schools is embarrassingly low and many schools of business do not even meet these low standards. (Gordon & Howell, 1959, p.6)

As with the Franks Report, the Ford and Carnegie reports concern the appropriate role and objectives of the business school. Pierson (1959) asks “what, then, is the distinctive role of these institutions? Here is the central question which confronts every school” (p.x). Gordon and Howell describe it as a search for the ‘soul’ of the business school, as if some inner essence remained undiscovered.

They seek to clarify their purpose and to find their proper place in the educational world. They search for academic respectability, while most of them continue to engage in unrespectable vocational training. They seek to be professional schools, while expressing doubts themselves that the occupations for which they prepare students can rightfully be called a profession. (Gordon & Howell, 1959, p.4)

¹⁸ Gordon and Howell (1959) note that while there were exchanges of information between the Ford and Carnegie foundations and some division of labour between the two projects, the two studies were conducted independently. Pierson (1959) makes a similar statement.

In the excerpt above, the tension between ‘practical/vocational’ and ‘academic/intellectual’ is evident, as it was in the Franks Report. In sharp contrast to Franks, Pierson sees the study of management as an intellectual activity

In this area, as in any other field, the first obligation of a college or university is to put its work on a challenging intellectual basis. This is the purpose of such institutions, and where it is not fulfilled, their reason for being disappears. (Pierson, 1959, p.33)

Whereas the first articulation combines the discourses of practice and vocationalism, the second is constructed on nodal points of *academic respectability* and *scientific research*. To gain academic respectability, business schools must prioritise research ahead of teaching. In the first articulation, research is subsumed within the teaching function and aimed at generating case material for use in the classroom. In the second articulation, research becomes a core activity in its own right and is assessed according to ‘scientific’ criteria of precision and control. Pierson states that

Implicit in the conception of business education set forth in this study is the prime role which should be accorded research. The need is not for any kind of research, as that rather elastic term is often defined, but for research which meets high scientific standards and is aimed at problems of general significance. (Pierson, 1959, p.xv)

For Gordon and Howell also, the research orientation is critical.

Business educators in increasing numbers are recognising that it is insufficient to transmit and apply present knowledge. It is the function of higher education to advance the state of knowledge as well. A professional school of business that aspires to full academic status must meet this test. (Gordon & Howell, 1959, p.v)

This is not to suggest that US business schools were not producing research prior to 1959, however Gordon and Howell argue that

Little fundamental research has so far come out of the business schools, and the research that is done is more likely to be descriptive of what business is now doing than the sort of pioneering research that provides the basis for what business will be doing ten years from now. (Gordon & Howell, 1959, p.49)

The priority accorded academic respectability and scientific research reflects a belief that if the business school aspires to the status of a professional school, alongside law, medicine and engineering, the generation of new knowledge is paramount. Gordon and Howell do not believe business *is* a profession, since there is no association of members or set of minimum standards that controls entry. However, they believe business can “resemble” (p.73) a profession through more actively pursuing the development of “a systematic body of knowledge of substantial intellectual content” (p.71) in the form of “a set of business sciences” (p.72).

The identities privileged by the articulation of the business school as an academic department are ‘academic’ and ‘scholar’ – identities which are marginalised in the first articulation. Pierson believes that

the faculties of business schools should be made up of broadly educated scholars who are applying general knowledge and scientific methods to important issues in decision making. (Pierson, 1959, p.269)

Gordon & Howell also emphasise scholarship. Scholarship is the “desire and ability to probe deeply and ask searching questions” (p.356).

It greatly enhances the ability of the business school to serve the business community and other segments of society. Scholarship in this sense is what makes a university; without it a business school is not really part of a university community. (Gordon & Howell, 1959, p.356)

Again, the construction of the business school as an academic department is evident here. Whereas the first articulation constitutes the business school as autonomous from the university, this second articulation positions it within the ‘ivory tower’, alongside the more traditional university faculties and departments.

Aligned with the nodal points of academic respectability and scientific research and the subject positions of ‘scholar’ and ‘academic’ is the *discourse of independence*. This represents the ‘Other’ that is excluded from the nodal point of partnership that characterises the vocational/professional school articulation. The discourse of independence is critical in establishing the myth of the division between the ‘ivory tower’ of the business school and the ‘real world’ of industry and commerce. Through its connection in a chain of equivalence with the discourse of scientific research, the business school is constituted as a site of objective, value free knowledge based on rational, logical scientific principles. This articulation provides a new position for faculty to identify with, illustrated by Pierson’s statement that:

Institutions of higher education which prepare for careers in a particular field always court the risk of becoming mere followers of the particular group they serve. In their zeal to please, ie, to be realistic and practical, they may fail to provide any leadership. In the case of business, employers are hardly in need of the practical kind of advice they can derive from their own experience and immediate associates. Business school faculties should strive to break new ground for business, playing the role of informed questioners and constructive critics. This emphasis on independent investigation through formal or informal research calls for faculty members who are ready to challenge widely accepted ideas. (Pierson, 1959, p.278)

The identities of “informed questioners” and “constructive critics” were not readily available in the first articulation and raise interesting questions about the possibility of critical public work and the relevance of academic freedom – issues that will be discussed in the following two chapters.

From the analysis so far, we can construct a chain of equivalence on which the myth of the ivory tower/real world is based. The constitution of the business school as an academic department is established by discourses of academic legitimacy, scientific research and independence. Each of these discourses positions the business school as an ‘ivory tower’ institution, removed from the ‘real world’ of commerce and industry. Within this articulation, business school faculty are positioned as ‘academics’,

'scholars' and as 'constructive critics' of business activity. In the remainder of this section, I consider how it constructs a public role for faculty.

In the first articulation, the public role includes consulting and directorship activities, as these provide a means for former practitioners from industry to supplement poor academic salaries, relative to private sector incomes. In the second articulation, the practice of hiring practitioners is marginalised and the consulting role is viewed with suspicion. Consistent with the privileging of academic respectability, Pierson argues that faculty should hold doctorates, since "it is generally associated with standards of scholarship which business schools should strive to attain" (p.272). In contrast to Franks, Pierson is wary of hiring practitioners from industry onto the faculty of business schools. While acknowledging that practical experience can be an asset in teaching, he identifies a problem not anticipated by Franks.

Most of the larger schools, judging from the campus interviews, have one or two outstanding businessmen-faculty, but many disappointing experiences were also reported. (Pierson, 1959, p.278)

Therefore, for business schools, "it seems doubtful that their principal faculty needs can be much aided from this source" (p.279).

In the first articulation consulting is a legitimate activity for faculty to undertake, since it fosters partnerships with industry and enables faculty to supplement their university salaries. In the second articulation, consulting is identified as a distraction and, if performed excessively, represents an abuse of one's position. Pierson argues that

At many institutions...teaching and research have become pretty much of a side line, while work for industry has become the main focus of the faculty members' interests and means of livelihood. (Pierson, 1959, p.279)

Gordon and Howell are also critical of "the excessive amount of private consulting performed by some faculty members" (p.50). This limits the access that students have to their teachers and is a distraction from research. Pierson believes that limiting consulting to the 'one day a week' rule of thumb is appropriate, but believes the "consulting problem" (p.279) is best resolved through promoting values of scholarship and hiring faculty who share these values.

The ultimate safeguard must lie in the kind of faculty these schools attract and the general direction their programs take...The very conception of the school's central mission as reflected in the views and actions of their deans and leading faculty spokesmen has sometimes invited abuse in this regard. If a school can deal effectively with these causal influences, the consulting problem will pretty largely take care of itself. (Pierson, 1959, p.279)

In summary, the second articulation of the business school constitutes it as an academic department within the 'ivory tower' of the university, mythically detached from the 'real world' of industry and commerce. The articulation is established by a chain of equivalence that combines nodal points of academic respectability, scientific research and independence with subject positions of the academic, the scholar and the constructive, sympathetic critic. As with the first articulation, consulting is regarded

as an ‘out-of-hours’ activity, but unlike the first articulation, it is viewed as a distraction and inconsistent with values of scholarship. Any remaining public role for faculty is largely subsumed within the research function and relates to generating independent, scientific research that provides an objective, constructive critique of industry practices. Accordingly, there is little suggestion that business school faculty have a legitimate role in engaging in public work that is not based on research and/or extends beyond their narrow specialisation. The public role, therefore, is conceived narrowly in both articulations and is largely confined to the ‘out-of-hours’ sphere. It is this that distinguishes the third articulation, which I explore in the following section.

Articulation 3: Business School as a Commercial Enterprise

In outlining the first two articulations, I have drawn on archival material that relates specifically to the business school, in the form of commissioned reports by Franks (1963), Pierson (1959) and Gordon and Howell (1959). In outlining the third articulation, I draw on policy documents that refer more generally to the higher education sector and to universities in particular. These have direct applicability to business schools, but do not focus on them. For instance, the 2003 Lambert Review on Business-University Collaboration recommends more contract research and consulting, both of which are activities that business school faculty regularly engage in. The reason for not using reports that deal specifically with business schools is because there are none – yet. This commercial enterprise articulation is a relatively recent addition to the discursive field of business schools, but since business schools are considered to be one of the primary conduits for business-university collaboration I expect it will not be long before they become the focus of policymakers’ efforts. In the meantime, I believe it is reasonable to draw connections between documents that concern the university in general (rather than business schools per se) to illuminate the issues around commercialisation that confront business schools and their faculty. In this section I follow the format of the previous sections by identifying and analysing the articulation’s myths, nodal points and subject positions and start with a brief description of the context in which this third articulation has developed.

This third articulation is best understood within the context of the political project of the New Right. Its focus of attack is the fiscal ‘crisis’ of the social welfare democratic state that was first activated in the UK during the 1970s as taxation revenues, reduced by slowing economic growth, failed to keep pace with the demand for public services. Within the logic of the New Right, subsequently retained in reconstructed form by New Labour, a tariff – in the form of fees – becomes imaginable and even commended: students are viewed as investors, as well as consumers, in the educational market place. The New Right project also mistrusts the collegial governance of universities, preferring instead a private sector model in which vice-chancellors operate more like CEOs and full-time managers replace rotating heads of departments. As in other established institutions, such as hospitals and schools, it is believed that ‘new public management’, comprising a hybrid of managerial and market disciplines, will successfully deliver the changes required to harness universities directly to the demands of product and labour markets and, ultimately, to the expansion of a capitalist economy.

In this third articulation, the university (and, by implication, the business school) is constituted as a commercial enterprise within *the myth of a knowledge economy*,

wherein the productivity of knowledge is seen as the basis for national competition within a global marketplace. In this myth the university is constituted as a driver of economic growth, not just through preparing the ‘knowledge workers’ of the future, but through commercialising research. In a Department of Trade and Industry review published in 2000, Stephen Byers, then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry said:

In the modern knowledge economy it is not enough to generate research – we also have to make the most of it. To turn ideas into products which can improve our lives. We have already introduced incentives for universities to develop commercial applications for their research. We will now build on this, to give universities a new mission to play an active role in the economy. (Byers, cited in DTI, 2000, p.i)

A distinctive feature of the third articulation is the *discourse of enterprise*. In this discourse, higher education is a business rather than a public service and is part of a competitive marketplace where only the fittest will survive.

Higher education is becoming a global business. Our competitors are looking to sell higher education overseas, into the markets we have traditionally seen as ours. (DfES, 2003, p.13)

For the university, being an enterprise means not only competing with other providers of educational services, but also commercialising their stores of knowledge.

Universities can play a central role as dynamos of growth. But they will only fulfil that mission if they match excellence in research and teaching with innovation and imagination in commercialising research. (DTI, 2000, p.27)

Associated with the nodal point of enterprise is the *discourse of partnership*. This was also a nodal point in the vocational/professional school articulation but in this third articulation it has a different meaning. In the first articulation, partnership referred to practical application and the training of competent managers. In this third articulation, the focus of the partnership between industry and the business school is the commercialisation of intellectual property.

The most dynamic economies have strong universities, which have creative partnerships with business. The government wants more UK universities and businesses to learn from the experience of universities with strong track records of commercial exploitation. (DTI, 1998, p.24)

The value placed on commercial partnerships with industry is reflected by the Labour government’s commissioning of a review of business-university collaboration, led by Richard Lambert. The review, published in December 2003, states

There has also been a marked change of culture in the past decade, with many universities casting off their ivory tower image and playing a much more active role in the regional and national economy. (Lambert, 2003, p.3)

Throughout the report there is a rejection of the ‘ivory tower’ myth that characterises the academic department articulation of the business school. The ‘ivory tower’ represents the ‘Other’ that cannot be accommodated by the discourse of enterprise.

To be 'enterprising', a new approach to university management is required, according to Lambert.

Business is critical of what it sees as the slow-moving, bureaucratic and risk-averse style of university management. However, there have been significant changes for the better in recent years. Many universities have developed strong executive structures to replace management by committee, and have raised the quality of their decision-making and of their governance. (Lambert, 2003, p.6)

Evident here is the mistrust of collegial governance structures that is characteristic of the New Right. Lambert equates collegial and collective forms of management with weakness, in terms of acting slowly and being unwilling to take risks. This is contrasted with the association of high quality, speedy and presumably risky decisions with "strong executive structures". The preference for private sector models of management is again evident when Lambert acknowledges that while universities are "not businesses", they "need to be business-like in the way they manage their affairs" (p.14).

The older universities were, historically, run as communities of scholars. The management and governance arrangements were participatory: senates and councils were large and conservative. In the last ten years, there has been a gradual movement towards a more executive style of management, already common among post-1992 institutions...This approach allows for dynamic management where decisions cannot wait for the next committee meeting. (Lambert, 2003, p.93)

In this third articulation, therefore, scholarship, collegiality and consensus are antithetical to the demands of the knowledge economy, which calls for executive, dynamic and responsive leadership. In the second articulation, freedom is understood within a discourse of independence and means that universities and their faculty have the freedom to be 'academic' – to teach and research free from the constraints of industry. In this third articulation, freedom is understood within the discourse of enterprise and becomes the freedom to be 'entrepreneurial' – to be creative in seeking new ways to generate revenue.

If universities are to become more creative and play their full part in regional and national economies, then ways must be found to give them more room to develop a strategic vision and take entrepreneurial risks. (Lambert, 2003, p.102)

In the Lambert Review, as well as recent government policy documents, freedom is equated with a shift from collegial to more autocratic styles of management. According to a recent DfES policy document, government's vision for higher education is of a sector that "has the freedom to be innovative and entrepreneurial, with strong management and visionary leadership" (DfES, 2003,p.22).

A picture of the chain of equivalence that constitutes the third articulation can now be sketched. The archival material used to represent this articulation relates to the university as a whole, but it does, I argue, constitute the business school in a way that is distinct from the first two articulations. This articulation is constructed on the myth

of the knowledge economy and is established by discourses of enterprise and partnership. These discourses constitute the university (and by implication, the business school) as a commercial enterprise that is managed as if it were a private sector business and that seeks to generate revenue through the exploitation of intellectual property.

The discourse of enterprise, appropriated from the private sector, does however, have its limits when applied to higher education. Lambert wants universities to be competitive and enterprising, but not profit maximising, since this would not be in the best interests of the economy. He is concerned that universities will set too high a price on their intellectual property.

Public funding for basic research, and for the development of technology transfer offices, is intended to benefit the economy as a whole rather than to create new significant sources of revenue for the universities. Even the most successful US universities tend to generate only small amounts of money from their third stream activities, and most acknowledge that their reason for engaging in technology transfer is to serve the public good. (Lambert, 2003, p.4)

Here we can see an understanding of the 'public good' that is different to the second articulation. When universities are constituted as 'ivory towers' they contribute to the public good by being independent, constructive critics of society. When universities are reconstituted as commercial enterprises, this public good function is rearticulated into a more subservient role. Lambert goes as far as to suggest that public funding of universities should be conditional on universities demonstrating their ability to serve the needs of business.

If business demonstrates that there is a clear need for a particular department to receive continued public support, that should be forthcoming...The Review favours a bottom-up approach, by getting the development agencies to finance those departments that can really demonstrate strong demand from business for their research activities. (Lambert, 2003, p.6)

This demand-side approach is far removed from the supply-side approach of the second articulation. It justifies the continued use of public money to fund the university, since this is how universities can provide 'value for money'. Lambert states that although it is difficult to measure the economic returns from academic research

The available evidence suggests the economic and social returns from public funding of university research are attractive, and certainly justify increasing investment in this area. (Lambert, 2003, p.13)

In terms of subject positions, the identities privileged by this third articulation are the 'expert' and the 'entrepreneur'. According to Lambert

A new role model, the entrepreneurial academic, has appeared on many campuses and some of them have become rich as a result of their efforts in consultancy, or by creating and subsequently selling spinout companies. (Lambert, 2003, p.83)

Attitudes towards consulting provide an interesting insight into the differences between this third articulation and the previous two. Like the first articulation, consulting is seen as a legitimate activity for faculty to engage in, as opposed to the second articulation, where it is viewed with suspicion. The difference between the third articulation and the previous articulations is that consulting is no longer seen as ‘out-of-hours’ activity. When the business school is constituted as a vocational/professional school, consulting is seen as a ‘private virtue’ – a means for faculty to supplement poor academic salaries, but not something the business school takes an active interest in promoting. When the business school is constituted as an academic department, consulting becomes a ‘private vice’, since it is incompatible with the values of scholarship and distracts faculty from the core functions of teaching and research. When the university (and, by implication, the business school) is constituted as a commercial enterprise, consulting becomes a legitimate activity alongside teaching and research and a central activity for fulfilling its mission as a wealth creator within a knowledge economy. Lambert believes that “increasing academic consulting activities will improve the links between academics and business” (p.36). Again, what is holding universities back is an ‘ivory tower’ culture, which views consulting with suspicion.

The main barriers to greater consultancy in the UK seem to be the time limits set by individual institutions, the lack of reward structures for academics who bring in extra research income as a result of consultancy, and a general academic culture that does not recognise the value of this kind of work. (Lambert, 2003, p.36)

Consulting is one way that business schools contribute to the ‘knowledge economy’ – it is a legitimate activity for the business school to focus on. It is interesting to note the transition from the ‘out-of-hours’ sphere. Lambert approves of the ‘entrepreneurial academic’ who gets rich through consulting, but also notes, in the excerpt above, that the university benefits if consultancy leads to additional research income and therefore that faculty should be rewarded for such activity. In this third articulation, the public role becomes institutionalised in a way that was not evident in the first two articulations.

This institutionalisation of the public role is reflected in government initiatives to create a permanent third stream of funding and develop a performance measurement system for allocating funding to ‘third stream’ activities. The public role is seen as distinctive in its own right, a ‘third mission’ alongside teaching and research with its own funding stream via the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF)¹⁹. Distinct

¹⁹ HEIF, introduced in 2002, is managed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) on behalf of Office of Science and Technology (OST) and Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The new expanded role for HEIF, announced in 2002, takes over funding previously allocated to other third stream initiatives such as University Challenge, Science Enterprise Challenge and the Higher Education Reach-out to Business and the Community (HEROBC) scheme. Under these initiatives, funding was allocated on a tendering system. According to Molas-Gallart et al (2002), the uncertainty and inefficiency of the tendering system prevented institutions from managing their ‘third stream’ activities on a long-term, strategic basis.

from funding for teaching and research, this ‘third stream’ funding aims to promote the transfer of knowledge from universities to business and the wider community (Lambert, 2003). HEIF’s aim is “building on universities’ potential as drivers of growth in the knowledge economy” (Treasury, 2002, p.71) through supporting work that promotes enterprise in universities and networking between universities and external recipients for the outputs of research. It funds the development of knowledge transfer infrastructure and supports spinout companies through the provision of seed-corn funding. Of the three funding streams (teaching, research and the third stream’), it is the latter which is receiving the largest percentage increases in government support²⁰.

Lambert (2003) provides a list of ‘third stream’ activities that includes networking and outreach activities with business; marketing research and teaching to business; establishing liaison and technology transfer office to co-ordinate consultancy, contract and collaborative research agreements; establishing spin-out companies; providing entrepreneurship training for graduates and providing work placements for students in industry. This narrow conceptualisation of the ‘third stream’ as commercialisation has been contested by a report commissioned by the Russell Group of Universities (Molas-Gallart et al, 2002)²¹. The report states that “the Third Stream is about the interactions between universities and the rest of society” and “there is much more to the relationship between universities and the rest of society than merely commercial activities” (p.iv).

Universities make contributions to government and civil society as well as the private sector, assisting not only with economic performance but also helping to improve quality of life and the effectiveness of public services. Any approach to university Third Stream activities that focuses purely on university commercial activities is likely to miss large and important parts of the picture. (Molas-Gallart et al, 2002, p.iv)

Following its designation as a ‘core’ activity, there are now moves to develop a mechanism for allocating funding for third stream activities to complement the RAE (which determines levels of core research funding) and student numbers (which

²⁰ Government’s investment in HEIF is increasing to £80 million in 2004-5 and to £90 million in 2005. Investment in all knowledge transfer programmes will increase by 84% over the period 2002-3 to 2005-6, compared to a 38% increase in research spending and a 26% per cent increase for teaching. However, actual investment in knowledge transfer remains small in comparison to research and teaching, accounting for just 1.15% of total spending on higher education in 2006, compared to 27% for research and 50% for teaching (Department for Education and Skills, 2003).

²¹ The Russell Group is an association of 19 major research-led UK universities. Formed in 1994 at a meeting convened in the Hotel Russell, London, the group is composed of the Vice-Chancellors/Principals of the member universities. The group’s purpose is to represent the views of their institutions and to commission reports to support their case. More information is available at www.russellgroup.ac.uk

determines core funding for teaching)²². According to Christopher Padfield, head of the Russell Group's committee investigating the third stream, government agencies are increasingly concerned to get "value-for-money" from their investment in higher education.

Until now it has been tacitly understood that public funding of universities delivered beneficial impacts to society without the need for either deconstruction or specific action. That simple world has all but vanished. (Padfield, 2003, p.5)

The Russell Group's report anticipates this and sets out its preferred system of indicators for 'third stream' activities. The report notes that

Many universities are seeking to gather information on their Third Stream activities so as to ensure their effective management, and to underpin their funding bids. (Molas-Gallart et al, 2002, p.iii)

The report puts forward

A structured group of indicators and metrics that can be used, both to assist university officials to monitor and manage Third Stream activities, and provide a set of metrics that will aid government in the distribution of Third Stream funding. (Molas-Gallart et al, 2002, p.2)

However, the report acknowledges there is little enthusiasm in UK universities for a new measurement system. The SPRU report also proposes a funding allocation process for third stream activities. Universities would be required to submit a four-year strategic plan for third stream activity together with data on a range of agreed performance indicators to a Third Stream panel. Funding would then be allocated on a formula basis. The report envisages the panel publishing a 'good practice' guide for universities to follow.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented three articulations of business school – a vocational/professional school, an academic department and a commercial enterprise. Each articulation binds together key signifiers in a chain of equivalence and seeks to construct a stable system of objectivities, identities and meanings that appear as natural, or inevitable. By identifying three competing articulations, I have suggested that none has succeeded in establishing a stable system of meanings, to the extent that our understanding of what the business school 'is' becomes common sense or taken-for-granted. The first articulation constitutes the business school as a vocational/professional school and faculty as vocationally-oriented teachers and trainers. The second articulation constitutes the business school as an academic department and faculty as academics and scholars. The third articulation constitutes the business school as a commercial enterprise and faculty as entrepreneurs and experts. Within each articulation the public role takes on a different meaning. In the

²² The Teaching Quality Assessment is a set of performance indicators that attempt to measure the quality of teaching, but it does not directly impact core funding for teaching activities (Molas-Gallart et al, 2002)

first articulation it is largely subsumed within the teaching function with research defined narrowly as the generation of case material for teaching. Consulting is seen as an ‘out-of-hours’ activity, being a way for faculty to generate private income. In the second articulation, consulting is also regarded as an ‘out-of-hours’ activity, but it is viewed as antithetical to scholarship. Any other public role for faculty is largely subsumed within the research function and relates to generating scientific research that can be used to provide constructive criticism of industry practices. The third articulation is distinctive for constituting the public role as a core activity alongside teaching and research. Consulting, for example, becomes one way that business schools can fulfil their mission as wealth creators within a knowledge economy. The institutionalisation of the public role is reflected in government initiatives to establish a ‘third stream’ of core funding, which aims to ‘transfer knowledge’ between the university and external constituencies.

In several respects, the third articulation of the business school is a direct attack on the professionalisation of the university. If we apply the policy direction contained in the Lambert review and other policy documents reviewed in this section, a new role for the business school is constructed – the dissemination and commercial exploitation of knowledge. Research remains important, but it is no longer valued as an end in itself. In the third articulation it is a means to an end, the end being economic growth and prosperity. Along with creating a new mission, there is also a challenge to the management and governance structures of the ‘ivory tower’. In the commercial enterprise articulation, the collegial, bureaucratic, ‘management by committee’ style of old is incompatible with a commercially focused university, where more autocratic, executive styles are needed for institutions to be able to respond to a dynamic, rapidly changing environment. Finally, there is an attack on the ‘professional’ identities of business school faculty, with there being no place for ‘scholars’ who reside in the ‘ivory tower’, mythically detached from the ‘real world’ of industry. In the commercial enterprise articulation of the business school, the ‘entrepreneur’, who sells expertise to the market, becomes the role model.

The three competing constructions of the business school outlined in this chapter have been drawn from archival material, consisting of government policy papers and commissioned reports. These are ‘official’ accounts of the business school and not accounts of the day-to-day experiences of faculty within UK business schools. My task in this chapter has merely been to put these three articulations ‘on the table’, rather than to suggest how they are manifest in practice or which is dominant within the contemporary business school environment. That will be the focus of the following two chapters, where I draw on my interviews with faculty at six research-led UK business schools.

Chapter 6 – Constituting Practices and Identities

Introduction

The theme of this chapter is one of tensions, contradictions and inconsistencies. Before entering the field, I imagined the empirical chapters would be a coherent story of the nature of, changes to, the public role of UK business school faculty. I left the field surprised by the different stories I had been told and the obvious contradictions between these stories. These contradictions and inconsistencies presented a real challenge in drafting these empirical chapters. Throughout the process it felt as if I was trying to complete a jigsaw puzzle that was unsolvable. Assembling the initial pieces would be easy, but as I got closer to the end I realised that not all the pieces were going to fit. I then decided to redraft the chapters, assembling the pieces differently but still becoming frustrated as I neared the end and discovered that not all the pieces would fit. I considered discarding some of the pieces, but decided this would not do justice to the research. I eventually came to the realisation that not all the pieces need to fit and it is this discovery that most accurately characterises my experience in the field. This chapter, therefore, is developed around the theme of tension, contradiction and inconsistency. Having said that, I attempt to present the analysis in a manner that is intelligible.

The chapter analyses my respondents' identification with the three articulations of the business school introduced in Chapter 5. Each articulation is associated with practices for directing, funding, measuring and regulating the activities of faculty and in this chapter I analyse these practices and consider the implications for the public role. By public role I mean work activity by faculty that extends outside the university into the public arena, such as appearances in the media, authorship of articles in newspapers and books in the popular press, membership of committees or advisory groups related to public policy and organisation of conferences which aim to engage with a non-academic audience. The dominant theme from the interviews was the tensions between competing objectives that business school faculty experience in their day-day-to-day activities. On the one hand, faculty at all levels feel under pressure to satisfy the requirements of the RAE. At some institutions, this has prompted a reconsideration of the school's strategic direction, away from practical application through teaching towards academic scholarship through research. On the other hand, faculty also feel under pressure to have more interaction with audiences in industry and government. This public role represents an underdeveloped revenue stream as well as a means for demonstrating that the business school is 'relevant' to society. This encourages business schools to develop practices for measuring, rewarding and controlling these 'third stream' activities. In making sense of these different practices and processes of identification associated with the public role, I draw on the framework introduced in the previous chapter of three competing articulations of the business school.

This chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, I discuss the RAE and its implications for the strategic direction of business schools. For most respondents, the RAE represents and reinforces the 'ivory tower' myth in the way that it prioritises communication with 'academics' ahead of interactions with the 'real world'. Given the financial rewards on offer for a high ranking on the RAE, many faculty believe there is no option but to 'play the RAE game'. I illustrate this by examining the case

of one school which is attempting to transform itself from a 'vocational/professional school' into an 'academic department'. While the RAE in its present form is generally understood as reinforcing the 'ivory tower' construction, I suggest it can be both resisted and transformed through identification with competing articulations. For example, I examine how the RAE is resisted by faculty who continue to identify with the first articulation in constructing their work identities and also consider the argument that schools must develop their public profile to secure a high ranking on the RAE. I conclude that the RAE is one contemporary manifestation of the on-going struggle between competing articulations of the business school. Its meaning is not fixed and its implications for business schools are not uniform.

In the second section, I consider business school practices for measuring and rewarding performance and consider their implications for the public role. The overall impression is that these practices represent and reinforce the academic department articulation, with faculty attributing this to the current design of the RAE and its emphasis on journal publication. Consequently, there is little incentive for faculty to develop a significant public role, especially junior faculty who are yet to develop a research track record. My fieldwork found evidence that both supported and contradicted this prevailing view. At one business school the concept of 'balanced excellence', which incorporates the public role, has given way in recent years to a greater emphasis on journal publication. At other schools however, performance measurement systems are being redesigned to recognise the public role. This institutionalisation of the public role reflects identification with the commercial enterprise articulation of the business school.

In the third section, I consider recruitment practices and their implications for the public role. Again, the data is inconsistent and contradictory, illustrating the contest between competing articulations of the business school. Consistent with the academic department articulation, many respondents report that business schools are reluctant to hire people without a publication record, because of the risk of them compromising the school's performance on the RAE. However, another aspect of recruitment practice is the growth of research centres, which undertake contract research for external clients. This development is consistent with the commercial enterprise articulation of the business school. In these centres, faculty prioritise engagement with external constituencies and therefore have little time to publish in academic journals. The overall picture is the emergence of a split between high-status RAE contributing faculty in the 'ivory tower' model and low-status contract researchers who are expected to generate revenue and demonstrate the 'relevance' of their institutions.

In the final section, I focus on issues of identity, in particular faculty identification with the public role. In keeping with the theme of the chapter, the evidence is contradictory. Business schools are seeking to increase their profile to demonstrate their 'relevance' and to attract external sponsors, evident in the establishment of press offices and the employment of public relations specialists to proactively manage external relations. Faculty are positioned as 'experts' but respondents report tensions around this subject position. Some identify with a discourse of science, which positions them as impartial experts who resist involvement in politics, while others see their public work as a political intervention. Another tension around the subject position of 'expert' concerns those faculty who appear regularly in the media as

‘experts’, but who are often criticised by colleagues for simplifying and devaluing their discipline. Again, this is illustrative of the contest between competing articulations of the business school. In the academic department articulation media work is a threat to professional identity, whereas in the commercial enterprise articulation it becomes one of the ways business schools can raise their profile and demonstrate their ‘relevance’.

Playing the RAE Game

One of the biggest surprises I encountered in the field was the extent to which discussion of the RAE dominated the interviews. Perhaps this was because I was unfamiliar with the UK context when I began the empirical work, perhaps it was because I failed to think through the likely responses to my research questions. Whatever the reasons, I discovered that at most research-led schools the RAE occupies the mind of faculty at all levels of seniority. For senior faculty involved in setting the strategic direction of their institution, decisions must be taken about what objectives to pursue and how to allocate resources in the pursuit of these objectives. The case of School A provides a vivid illustration of the impact of the RAE on the strategic direction of UK research-led business schools. School A has a long-standing reputation as being ‘relevant to practice’, but this vocational/professional school model is perceived by senior faculty to be out of step with the requirements of the RAE. A6²³, a long-time member of the faculty summed it up.

At some other business schools you would find that the audience they seek to communicate with is other academics primarily. So there wouldn’t be any points to be gained by spending a lot of time with practitioners. I’m not saying that’s a bad thing, but to me it leads to a very inwardly focused, narrow view of life. And so students who might sign up on their programmes may not get the full benefit. They’re getting access, presumably, to some intellectual firepower but a business school is more than that, or should be. The (School A) model has always been very industry focused. We’ve always had to make our living in the marketplace.

In the passage above, A6 contrasts two conceptions of the business school. The first is the academic department conception, which requires “intellectual firepower” and communicating with “academics”, but is “inwardly focused” and “narrow”. This is contrasted with the “industry focused”, vocational-professional school conception. For A6, an orientation towards industry and the “marketplace” is incompatible with the RAE.

The RAE has obviously changed it because unfortunately, at least in the way I look at it, the things they assess are not necessarily the things where we’ve been putting, at least in the past, a lot of emphasis. Clearly the RAE is much more in line with the model of business school where academics talk to other academics, so the only things that are included, or given any real weight in the RAE, are academic papers.

²³ The number ‘6’ means this respondent was the sixth person I interviewed at School A. The ordering of the interviews undertaken within each institution carries no significance. (See Appendix C for a full list of respondents)

A5 is a vehement critic of the RAE but believes the school had no choice but to ‘play the RAE game’ and place a greater emphasis on publication in academic journals.

The RAE has caused more damage to British business schools than any other single factor. It has created much more research but it has badly debased the quality of it... I think we’ve got to play the game. It’s not a game I believe in, don’t get me wrong.

The RAE ‘game’ has to be played because of the financial rewards on offer, as A10, another long-time member of School A’s faculty, explains.

Whether you like it or not, you either opt out and become a non-entity or you opt in and you play the game to the degree that you have to. We do not aspire to be a 5*. We’ll be at least a 5 and you have to learn to play the game. It’s a wicked, wicked game that has to be played. If you play the game you can be largely irrelevant but you get big chunks of money coming in.

Here again we see the association of the RAE with the academic department articulation. For A10, there is a stark choice – to gain a high RAE ranking and be financially secure, or to be ‘relevant’. The decision to place a greater emphasis on the RAE has divided faculty at School A. Senior faculty I interviewed support the shift, on the grounds that the ‘RAE game must be played’, but other faculty held opposing views. A8 is one who resisted the change.

I’m against the whole thing. I don’t think we should have joined. I think we had the option not to join. I’m being quite honest with you, I think (School A) has not been terribly clever in the way it has organised its research and stuff. We are very practical, which isn’t what the RAE is about, so their whole style doesn’t suit us.

A8’s resistance is manifest in his identification with the vocational/professional school articulation of the business school and correspondingly, his refusal to identify with the academic department articulation. He accepts the subject position of ‘teacher’, but rejects the identities of ‘academic’ and ‘scholar’, which are privileged in the academic department articulation. For him, accounting is an art – not an ‘ivory tower’ science.

I’m a teacher, I’m not really an academic. I’m not a publisher of scholarly articles... Academic is a pejorative word to me. I think it implies not practical. Accounting is a very practical art, so some of our economist friends and finance friends who think they’re dealing in a science, I think they’re kidding themselves. And most of what I would call the academics, who write the scholarly articles, which I’m not very keen on and I don’t do, partly because I wasn’t trained to so I can’t. Like a lot of accounting teachers I’ve got a professional qualification not a PhD. Quite unusual now. And I don’t value the output, I think it’s rubbish. And it’s written for about a dozen people to read. Well I think that’s pathetic, so academic is something I don’t want to be.

The interview with A8 was interesting for several reasons. First, it demonstrates that not all business faculty see themselves as ‘academics’, something I assumed before

entering the field. This enabled me to reflect on my own processes of identification as a business school student and prospective member of faculty. The topic of my research is the 'academic's public role', reflecting my assumption that the business school is an academic institution and that faculty are 'academics'. In discourse theory terms, this academic department articulation had, for me, gained a degree of 'sedimentation', in that it appeared as natural and uncontested. In talking with A8 and several others, I recognised that not everyone shares this assumption, especially long-serving faculty. A6 said that

There's a lot of people who maybe joined (School A) 10 years ago, they see themselves first and foremost as teachers, not necessarily as researchers. So there is a sort of sea change here in the school and that's a process that's going to take time. And obviously in making that change we don't want to throw out the things that have made (School A) what it is. And that's not going to be an easy path to follow.

Also interesting is the way in which A8 resists the shift towards a greater emphasis on the RAE through identifying with subject positions that are available within a competing articulation. It demonstrates that agents are not simply 'determined' or 'captured' by one particular discourse but that agency is created through identification within a field of discursivity that contains multiple discourses and identities. We might reasonably conclude that the academic department articulation is prominent at School A, but there are other articulations of the business school that offer different positions for faculty to occupy. In discourse theory terms, the academic department articulation cannot totalise the field of discursivity, since there is always a 'surplus' of meaning that cannot be accommodated by it.

While the shift in strategic direction at School A is attributed specifically to the RAE, my research indicates that the RAE is a UK manifestation of a more general, international shift within business schools towards a greater emphasis on scholarly publication. The case of School E supports this observation, because while it has also acted to place a greater emphasis on research, respondents at the school do not attribute this shift to the RAE. E8, a professor, stated that:

(School E) has been in a transition process. Historically it was a teaching institution...In the last 10 years it has become much more theory oriented. I think in that sense there is a significant connection with practice but at the same time the main driving force has been, and is becoming, more and more theory and contribution to theory.

As with School A, this transition has involved a movement away from the vocational/professional school model of the business school, towards the academic department model. However, faculty I spoke with did not attribute this to the RAE. E5's view was representative:

The RAE means nothing to us. We get money from it but we, I mean this is terribly arrogant, but we're just so far above that level. Anybody who cannot be nominated to the RAE should have been fired years ago. It's just not an issue. We go through the hoops and everything else but if there was any question of us getting anything less than a 5* it was be a major failure of our HR policies. So no, it's not a big thing.

It is important to note that School E is in a different position to the other schools I visited. It is ranked one of the world's top business schools and competes in a global market against other top-ranked US and European schools. Its faculty are largely recruited from the US and the salaries they receive are far higher than that paid to faculty at all other UK business schools. The case of school E demonstrates that identification with the articulation of the business school as an academic department runs far deeper than the current design of the RAE. I interpret it as merely one manifestation of the on-going struggle between competing articulations of the business school.

From the story presented so far, it seems reasonable to conclude that the RAE represents and reinforces the academic department articulation by rewarding publication in leading academic journals rather than interactions with audiences outside the business school. I did however, hear a different interpretation of the RAE, which suggests its meaning is not fixed and its implications for business schools are not uniform. At School F several respondents attributed their school's lower than expected RAE ranking to a lack of public profile – not a lack of quality journal publications. F1 said:

We're convinced here that image and profile makes a difference in the RAE. And if people from other business schools see people from (School F) on the television and in quality newspapers, that just helps to create a climate, a perception that this is an interesting place where good work is being done.

He went on to add:

The university as a whole is very poor at courting the media and I would include the business school in that. We're not very media aware as an institution... Having a media relations person is something that many of us would like to see.

The low public profile of School F came was no surprise to me, given the difficulty I had in locating the school on my first visit. After walking around in circles for some time, I walked into an unmarked building to ask for directions to the school. "You're standing in it" was the reply of the receptionist! More surprising was F1's interpretation of what was needed to achieve a high ranking, a view that was shared by several other faculty I interviewed. This suggests that it would be misleading to view the RAE as an objective, totalised 'structure' that 'determines' the actions of business school faculty. The RAE is generally understood as an 'ivory-tower' construction, but as the case of School F suggests, it is open to alternative interpretations.

Measuring and Rewarding Performance

The story I have constructed so far is of UK research-led business schools constituted as academic departments in the way they prioritise research and its dissemination to the academic community via journals. In this section, I focus on practices for measuring and rewarding faculty performance and consider their implications for the public role. In general, faculty I interviewed believe the 'publish or perish' attitude that prevails within their business schools marginalises the public role, because if you do not publish you will 'perish' – and if you do publish, it is that which will get you

promoted, rather than your external work. This was not a universal view, however, and at two of the schools I visited the range of performance indicators has been expanded to recognise and reward the public role.

The pressure to ‘publish or perish’ is felt most acutely by junior faculty, who are under pressure to develop a journal publication track record, in order to satisfy the requirements of the RAE. Consequently, there is little time available for them to undertake external work. This phenomenon might explain the low representation of junior faculty amongst my respondents, with only 9 of the 60 respondents having a faculty rank below that of senior lecturer (see Appendix C). E2 explains that while School E does not actively discourage such work, junior faculty simply do not have time to do it.

If you’re young, getting publications in A journals is a full-time job. The rates of rejection are such that you’ve got to be producing 5 a year and that’s incredibly time consuming. So the young faculty at (School E) work ferociously hard. It would be ridiculous for them to do any of this external stuff. They just don’t have the time.

Even if there is time to undertake public work, it is unlikely to attract the same institutional rewards as scholarly publications. D1 is a young lecturer in the field of entrepreneurship who is heavily engaged in ‘outreach’.

The biggest problem that I have is that I’ve excelled enormously well in this area in terms of linkage with local businesses but it’s not something that will help me get onto my senior lectureship. And that’s my biggest major annoyance at the moment, in order to do these things I’ve sacrificed my research output and in doing that I’ve made it more difficult for myself to get senior lectureship.

In the articulation of the business school as a commercial enterprise, D1 represents a role model of the ‘entrepreneurial academic’ which the Lambert Review refers to. D1 was a key figure behind the award of nearly £2 million in public funding to set up a new institute at the business school, has been active in policy discussion at a regional and national level, developed a business-to-business networking event with local business and makes regular appearances in the media. This is work he has enjoyed doing, but sees it coming at a cost to his chances of promotion.

B3 has had more success in combining a significant public role with a successful academic publishing career, but acknowledges the difficulties of achieving in both “spheres”.

If I wanted to be a true academic I could probably do a lot more than I could do now because you straddle the two spheres and I know that does affect my output academically in terms of quality. So in one sense you’ve got to be driven by public conviction because if you were driven by self-interest you wouldn’t do it

Public work is, therefore, seen by many junior faculty as a sacrifice – something they enjoy doing and they believe is worthwhile, but which is not seen as especially valuable by their institutions. This interpretation is reinforced by the case of School

E, where the institutional rewards for engaging with external constituencies have been reduced. According to E5, 10 years ago the institution initiated a system of 'balanced excellence', which comprised five criteria: teaching, research, citizenship, administration and external visibility.

Of the five categories the highest weighted were research and teaching but the others were there and they were important. Over the last 5-8 years we have decided to stress the research and that has become such a dominant criteria that the notion of balanced excellence has fallen away. Teaching still matters but only in the sense that you're not going to get anywhere if you can't teach, no matter what.

One reason for abandoning the notion of balanced excellence was the difficulty in measuring the impact of external work.

Part of it is that is relatively easy to assess teaching and research and it is really hard to assess the other three: administration, citizenship and external visibility. What do you say? Somebody has lunch everyday with the chairman of British Airways. So fucking what? How do you measure external visibility? We don't have a way of polling the external community to say is this guy making an impact on your life. It's just not possible. You do in academic work. You can look at papers, you can get letters from important people. You can count citations. All that is measurable in terms of impact. Impact on external visibility and citizenship is very hard to measure. What's good citizenship? Where do you draw the line between an asshole and an awkward but independent minded guy? Who knows? So part of it is the falling away of unmeasurables. Part of it that there is a clear feeling that faculty should be top of the research pole. This debate still resonates and there are still opinions about whether the faculty are too academic. But that's where we are at the moment.

The disappearance of the notion of 'balanced excellence' at School E suggests that the public of role of faculty is becoming increasingly marginalised within UK research-led business schools. However, the experience at two other schools contradicts this conclusion. Whereas School E has narrowed its range of performance indicators, schools C and D have moved in the opposite direction by developing new indicators that incorporate external work. C2, a professor, explains:

We've changed the model at (School C) over the last few years. We certainly were narrowly measured. I'm on the sub-committee that assesses every member of staff each year and we used to just look at their publications and we'd score them on a one to five scale. It's only in the last year or two where we've said that's not good enough. In the past teaching had an influence, so if you're bad on research but a great teacher we would go easy on you. It would be a mitigating factor. But now we're looking for four things: publications, teaching, inputs (which is funding). There's also a measure now, less well defined, which we call impact. What impact is your research having and that's really pushing the public end. We're saying 'it's not good enough just doing research, you need to have some impact'.

Media appearances is one measure of impact and School C has a press office that records the number of press mentions, as C2 explains.

The more publicity the better. You get ticks in boxes for being mentioned and we actually count the number of times (School C) is mentioned in the Financial Times and we compare that with all the other schools. So the more the better please.

A similar policy change has been made at School D, where 'enterprise' has become the fourth promotion criterion alongside teaching, research and administration. 'Enterprise' resonates with the commercial articulation of the business school, which (hegemonically) fixes faculty as 'entrepreneurs'. D4 said

Enterprise includes things like what you would call the public role. And that is apparently now a criteria that is considered one of the factors that is considered when you go forward for promotion.

However, despite this formal recognition, she believes that developing an active public role is no substitute for publications.

It only helps if you've still got that research. It's not an either or. They expect it to be an add-on. They think it is great and would love you to do more of it, but that's on top of research, rather than instead of research.

In sum, there is contradictory evidence on this issue of formal recognition and reward of public work. School E has become more focused on research by discarding the concept of 'balanced excellence' in evaluating faculty. Schools C and D have moved in the opposite direction by developing new performance indicators, although it would be misleading to suggest that the public role ranks anywhere near research in what is considered valuable. Junior faculty tend to believe that publication in journals is still all that matters. Perhaps this is because moves to attribute greater value to the public role are recent, and junior faculty are yet to feel their impact. In weighing up the evidence, it does appear that business schools are taking more of an interest in the public work undertaken by faculty, even if that work is yet to accrue significant institutional rewards. Even at School E, which claims not to reward such work, the first thing I encountered when I walked into the reception was a board of 'Faculty in the Press'. Such work might not be rewarded (yet), but it certainly seemed to be one way the school could demonstrate its 'relevance'. This trend towards a greater awareness of the public role is consistent with the commercial enterprise articulation of the business school.

Recruitment Practices

In this section, I consider recruitment practices at the six research-led business schools I visited and consider their implications for the public role. Again, my experience in the field was one of confusion and contradiction. On the one hand, many respondents suggested that because of the value placed on journal publication business schools are reluctant to hire people who do not already have a proven publication track record. This would suggest that the academic department articulation has had a hegemonic effect on recruitment practices. However, I also interviewed a number of faculty who work in research centres that are considered part of the business school but often sit outside the department structure of the school. Several of these faculty either had no established publication record or were no longer seeking one. These respondents tended to identify with the commercial enterprise articulation in describing their work. I left the field with the impression that business

schools want to be both ‘academic departments’ *and* ‘commercial enterprises’ and their recruitment practices reflect and reinforce these constructions.

D9 believes the RAE has forced business schools to be conservative in their recruitment of new faculty. One appointments panel he was on had to choose between a consultant who had written a number of “thoughtful” books for practitioners and a “professional academic who have been in the system for years”. The academic was chosen because of his more comprehensive research agenda, which made it more likely he would be producing RAE output in a shorter time. This case made me reflect on the Franks Report, which imagined a role for practitioners in business schools, alongside faculty from more established university departments. Franks anticipated practitioners would make good teachers, but according to E5, this is rarely the case

Every once and a while there is a feeling that all these academics are too ivory-tower and suddenly lots of tired businessmen turn up on the faculty and that last for about a month. It turns out that a) these guys can’t talk, b) they’re arrogant, c) they’re not at all receptive and then they go.

The issue of competence in the classroom, does however, seem secondary to research competence, measured by the ability to publish in leading academic journals. B2, a senior academic, stated that:

It’s extremely difficult for people who have done business to come in and study business and turn out a respectable RAE performance in a faculty like this. It’s extremely hard to do and I know very few people who have succeeded in doing it.

E1 is an exception, having spent 30 years in industry before entering academia 14 years ago. Although having succeeded in developing a publication record, he acknowledges that he underestimated the enormity of the challenge.

There is a straightforward and quite tough regime that if you don’t get published in the A journals then your contract does not get extended....When I came in I thought it was easy. They all said it was difficult, going on impossible. And I said nonsense, nonsense. And as I look back on it now I was very lucky and they were more or less right that it is very difficult. It really is. And it’s not the school being difficult. It’s the way you have to convert your way of thinking, way of working, everything else, is difficult. And the only reason I attempted it is that I didn’t realise how difficult it was.

F8 is a professionally qualified accountant and worked in the profession before entering academia. He believes his experience is the exception now, with most junior faculty recruited into accounting departments coming straight through the university system of undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral study.

In RAE terms they’re less risky to hire. They’ve learnt research methods, they’ve got material in their PhD to publish so they will hit the ground running. If you come from industry it’s difficult to learn how to publish and some people never do.

D3 told me a similar story and believes this is one reason why interactions between accounting departments and the accounting profession have declined.

When I started nearly everybody who was an accounting academic had gone through a route of having worked as a professional accountant and then come back into academia. And now it's becoming very rare. So that brings its own set of connections, because you bring them in with you. And that has diminished.

D3 believes the notion of 'service to the profession' is not as strong as it once was.

There's always been a bit of noblesse oblige about it, because a lot of it is unpaid. So I think there is more of a struggle with those kind of connections now.

In many ways therefore, current recruitment practices of business reflect and reinforce the academic department articulation, which marginalises the public role. Prospective faculty understand that recruitment largely depends on the ability to publish in academic journals, just as junior faculty understand that to progress up the academic career ladder, time is better spent on academic publications. However, the picture is complicated by the growth of research centres within business schools – a manifestation of the commercial enterprise articulation. These centres tend to rely for funding on sponsors from industry, government and the charity sector, rather than core research funding via the RAE or grants from UK research councils. While money from the research councils is generally regarded as the 'gold-standard' in funding, it is also more competitive and the amounts awarded tend to be small compared with sponsored research. Therefore, contract research is a potentially significant revenue stream for business schools and research centres can also demonstrate that the institution is and engaged and 'relevant'.

Those respondents I interviewed who work within research centres experience difficulties in balancing the demands to produce academic publications with the demands to interact with audiences outside the academy. F5 is employed within a self-financing research centre. He is expected to publish in academic journals, but more important is generating revenue through contract research, much of which is not suitable for publication in academic journals. Another priority is promoting the centre in the public realm, primarily through media work, which is also unlikely to have spin-offs into academic publications.

There is definitely a tension between these three things that we have to do. There is an element of jack-of-all-trades in it, in that we need to make the money, publish in good journals and interact with the local scene. If my salary was covered I would spend my time doing academic work of a quality which could go into better journals more regularly but my academic research has to come after I've paid for myself.

F5 would like to develop a career within the business school but recognises that without academic publications it will be difficult for him to move out of the research centre into one of the school's departments.

It took me a couple of months to get to grips with academic life and after that I realised that one would not progress unless one had academic publications. At the end of the day you can talk all you like about bringing in money and interacting with the local groups but if you haven't got numbers on the board in terms of high quality publications then you're not going to be promoted. So I realised that at an early stage. So now I'm trying to tick all the boxes but it is awfully difficult because there are only so many hours in the day.

F5 is a role model of the 'entrepreneurial academic' constituted by the articulation of the business school as a commercial enterprise. He has his own consultancy business that generates potential clients for contract research, is providing bespoke research that benefits commercial organisations which lack decided R&D departments and is generating additional revenue for the business school through these 'third stream' activities. Far from feeling like a role model as envisaged by Lambert, he feels like a "second class citizen" within the school and "not a proper academic", because he is yet to develop a track record in academic journal publications. F5 also reports that others in the centre feel marginalised by other faculty, who perceive the centre as having limited RAE potential and being a 'bolt-on' to generate revenue and to satisfy government demands for greater linkages with external constituencies.

F2 is a full-time researcher within another of School F's self-funding research centres, employed on a three-year contract with renewal dependent on his ability to generate revenue for the school. F2 has chosen not to write for an academic audience because the centre's mission is to have an impact on practitioners, who he says do not read academic journals.

Our entire bias starts with a client orientation and that means we have therefore geared our activities towards that practitioner/user community, either industry or policy. What that means in practice is that we deliberately started to emphasise some things and deemphasise others. I stopped writing academic publications...our client base would not regard that sort of work as providing legitimation or accreditation for what we do. And it wouldn't bring us to their notice. So we wanted to put work into the sort of journals that they would read in a way that they would value. So from that point on we very much started to focus on writing for these practitioner journals and we got quite successful at it.

Like F2, F5 feels marginalised by the lecturing faculty within the school

Once we get out the door here our status shoots up. Come back here and we're nobody, just dogsbody contract researchers. Go out the door and we're industry experts worth a fortune.

Funding from the research councils is seen as the 'blue-chip' research money for business schools. However, the amounts received from the research councils are usually smaller than what can be generated through contract research, which creates a tension within business schools concerning whether to focus on quantity or quality of funding. In an environment where funding is tight and contract research represents a relatively untapped source, it is not surprising that business schools are wanting both. They want to be both 'academic departments' *and* commercial enterprises, which my research indicates creates a split between high-status, RAE-contributing faculty and low-status contract researchers. For the former, it is difficult to find the time to

develop an active public role, because of the demands of journal publication. For the latter, there are numerous opportunities to perform public work, but this leaves little time for academic work, which reduces their chances of promotion. This has implications for the possibilities of performing critical public work, which will be discussed in Chapter 7. First however, I consider in more depth respondents' identification with the public role.

Identification with the Public Role

There is considerable evidence from my research that business schools are thinking more strategically about the public role. Previously, it seems that public role activity has proceeded in a haphazard fashion, being co-ordinated at the individual rather than school level. Now however, business schools are under pressure to generate additional revenue and to demonstrate their 'relevance' and have become more proactive about encouraging and managing the public role. It is still considered secondary to the research function, but my research suggests it has become institutionalised as a core function in its own right.

At School D, several respondents told me there had been a concerted effort to raise the profile of the school, because while it achieved 5* in the last RAE, it did not have the profile to match other 5* business schools. D9 explained:

In an increasingly market-driven age, you have to be positioned in the market as you wish to be seen. And if you wish to be seen as a high-quality institution you have to be a swagger institution, so you've got to go around punching your weight.

The school recently employed a public relations consultant, which plays both a proactive and reactive role. The proactive role involves sending out press releases, while the reactive role involves responding to media enquiries and referring journalists on to academics with expertise in a relevant area.

A6 describes how School A has also become more proactive in managing the relationship that faculty have with the media:

The school has its own marketing and communications strategy and we employ professionals to help implement that. And we draw upon academics to provide the source materials, so to speak, for that. So, it's not left to individuals off their own bat to improve (School A's) media presence, we have a strategy to do that. We then draw upon academics for the material that we need.

Some schools have also developed media centres with TV and radio studios to encourage faculty to do media work and some also offer faculty formal media training.

It is not only the business schools that are recognising the importance of communicating with non-academic audiences. The research councils, such as the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), are becoming increasingly concerned with dissemination to non-academics. E4, who heads a research programme funded by the ESRC said that:

When I started this programme I went and had media training, paid for by them, because they understand that the way they get more research funds out of parliament is if parliament thinks that social science is important. How do they know social science is important? Because they see it in the press, or on television. We are competing as social scientists with the opera and hospitals and other things for money and we've got to convince society of our value and one way of doing that is the research, the other thing is making sure it's known what we do.

One of the ways business schools are making themselves more accessible and attractive to external audiences is to market their faculty as 'experts'. The 'expert', recall, is one of the subject positions available within the commercial articulation of the business school. Identification with this subject position is vividly illustrated by an examination of business school websites. At School C, the only way to access a list of faculty is through a link headed 'The Experts'. The biography for each faculty member provides a list of *both* their research interests and their 'expertise', with the latter including consultancy experience, representation on public bodies and other external connections. This demonstrates how in the commercial enterprise articulation the notion of 'expertise' is differentiated from research, becoming a legitimate entity in its own right, unlike in the academic department articulation where expertise is subsumed within the research function. The website of School A shares similar features to that of School C. A's website however, is more focused on the external user. The searchable database of faculty biographies begins with the introduction:

Looking for someone with expertise in a particular area? Use the freetext search to identify faculty with that expertise in their biography.

The subject position of the 'expert' has more of a commercial orientation than 'academic', since 'expert' implies faculty have 'expertise' that can be sold through consultancy and other paid services. However, the potential for revenue generation is not the only incentive for schools to position their faculty as 'experts'. The media is always on the look out for comment from faculty on topical issues and this is one way business schools can demonstrate their 'relevance'. The 'Find an Expert' style of faculty biographies makes it easy for journalists to locate a relevant 'expert'.

Although business schools are encouraging faculty to 'go public' it was evident from my interviews that media work remains a contested issue. Some respondents were resistant, believing it had the potential to devalue the 'academic profession', while others who are active in the media said they regularly received criticism from faculty colleagues. D4 appears regularly in the press, but has few publications in academic journals. She said most colleagues regard her work with "absolute disdain".

Why aren't you writing academic papers? Why waste your time on this? And almost a sense of it's sort of showing off a bit. And maybe it is. Maybe I'm just a drama queen. But I just see it as providing a service. It's part of what I do.

D4 was not alone in being subjected to criticism by colleagues for working regularly with the media. This surprised me because the criticism was coming from other respondents who themselves had a significant public role, even if this might not have involved media work. I therefore expected they would be more sympathetic to

colleagues who sacrificed time that could be spent on research to engage with a wider public. A7 has an active role with the practitioner community, but is critical of colleagues who proactively develop a media profile.

It's a personal thing again. I don't want to. I think anybody who does do it is probably looking for something selfish. I mean some people here do it. It is to do with ego and I would argue that it's a reflection of a slight inadequacy somewhere for somebody to want to cultivate a media profile.

Even among those who do regularly appear on radio and television, and in the newspapers, there is a perception that media-active faculty are not 'proper academics'. C7, who appears regularly on radio, was critical of one particularly high profile UK business school faculty member.

(X) is forever opening his gob about things, often on things he knows nothing about whatsoever. As a psychologist I don't like him going on television talking about this kind of stuff because he makes it sound very basic, easy kind of stuff.

The same person was described by B8 as a 'media-tart'.

There are media-tarts in the UK. The one that generates most hatred is (X). (X) is an academic with a high public profile who prostitutes his expertise to anyone who is willing to let his voice be heard.

I interpret this tension around media work as another manifestation of the contest between competing articulations of the business school. In the academic department articulation, faculty who interact with the wider public, a constituency beyond practitioners and policymakers, threaten the 'professional' identity of business school academics by offering simplistic explanations of their research fields. By contrast, in the commercial enterprise articulation this becomes one of the ways business schools can raise their profile and demonstrate their 'relevance'.

Another indicator of the struggle between competing articulations concerns the 'appropriate' position for faculty to occupy as 'experts'. Should they restrict their public work to dissemination of their research? Should they present themselves as dispassionate and objective, or should they adopt a more political approach and adopt advocacy roles? In the previous chapter I noted how the second articulation draws on a discourse of scientific research. The public role for faculty is largely subsumed within the research function and relates to generating independent, scientific research. Accordingly, there is little suggestion that business schools have a legitimate role in engaging in public work that is not based on research and/or extends beyond their narrow specialisation. In the third articulation, the public role becomes a core activity alongside teaching and research. Faculty are positioned as 'experts', which suggests a wider role than the dissemination of research results. This creates a tension for faculty in constructing their identities. Some respondents believed the distinction between science and politics was critical in defining the appropriate role for faculty to occupy in their public work. A5 said that:

There is a definite role that academics should get into debate but from an academic perspective, not from a political one. Politics is a personal thing.

F9 interacts regularly with the union movement. For him, it was critical that external audiences regarded him as independent

I want to be seen as independent. In my stance towards them I act very much as an academic, so if I go and talk to a union audience or whatever I have a notion of the academic role, as a public academic, in that my role is to set the scene, I always present research evidence in a rather dispassionate kind of way.... So I act as a very traditional academic. I'm sympathetic to the movement and its objectives, but that's the persona I adopt in interacting with them.

A1 was typical of many respondents in being reluctant to comment in public if she did not have academic research to support her comments.

My criteria is 'do I have, as an academic, academic research that could inform what I'm about to say?' And if I don't have any, then my comments are about as valid as anybody else's.

In constructing their identities in relation to the public role A5, F9 and A1 draw on the academic department articulation. This is the "traditional academic" – independent, dispassionate and whose contribution is scientific, not political and is based on research. In this articulation 'academics' are urged to avoid engagement in politics. To do so risks confusing and compromising the confidence of the public in scientists producing and disseminating unbiased, factual, value-free knowledge. Unless this division is respected, knowledge claims made in the name of science become suspect as its findings are understood to be susceptible to corruption by extra-scientific influences. Any temptation to meddle in public life by blurring the boundary between the provision of factual information and the expression of opinionated views must be resisted. The challenge for academics, then, is to do everything in their power to resist the political intrusion of values and politics into the sphere of science.

However, not all respondents identified with the subject position of the impartial expert who only comments from the basis of research. B7 believed it was important to 'set the agenda' on issues of public concern, which sometimes meant providing comment that was not based on research evidence.

The vast majority of what I comment on is very pertinent to what we're doing. But also, we've got to set agendas as well as respond to them so that means you've got to take things a step further. You've got to speculate. You've got to ask questions that don't have answers to them. Otherwise, what are you doing as academics? You're just following someone else's lead, keeping your head down and making very safe remarks that don't answer much more than the bleeding obvious.

Identification with the subject position of 'expert' is particularly interesting because it demonstrates there are multiple subject positions that are available for faculty to occupy and supports my suggestion of a contest between competing articulations. In the next chapter, I develop this idea further by returning to discourse theory's concept of dislocation. I argue that the field of discursivity on which the business school is constituted has become dislocated, thereby reactivating social space and providing

new positions for faculty to identify with. This is potentially liberating for faculty seeking to develop an active and critical public role.

Conclusion

The theme of this chapter has been the tensions, contradictions and inconsistencies that business school faculty experience in their day-to-day activities. From my interviews with faculty at six research-led UK business schools it was not possible to construct a coherent story about the nature of, and changes to, the public role. By examining the strategic objectives of business schools, performance measurement and recruitment practices, and faculty identification with the public role I expected to be able to identify clear patterns and trends. Instead, I returned from the field with a much more confusing picture, which reflects the tensions around competing objectives for the business school. In general, the RAE is seen to marginalise the public role, because of its bias towards scholarship rather than practical application or commercial activity. The RAE prioritises research and communication with other academics, and correspondingly, attributes less value to time spent engaging with non-academic audiences, whether it be practitioners, government or the wider public. Since public work tends not to attract significant institutional rewards, there is little incentive for faculty, especially since time spent engaging with non-academics is time that could otherwise be spent on academic publications. However, there is also evidence that business schools are becoming more proactive in seeking to measure, reward and ultimately control external work undertaken by faculty. Some schools have introduced performance indicators to recognise the public role, while most are putting greater efforts into building their public profile through the use of press offices and public relations consultants.

Overall, my impression is not of one articulation achieving complete dominance over others, but of these articulations existing side by side, and even overlapping in places, with points of antagonism that are manifest in the tensions and contradictions experienced by faculty in these schools. One illustration of these tensions is the split between high-status RAE-contributing faculty whose first priority is scholarly publication and low-status contract researchers who are employed to generate external revenue and ensure the business school is 'relevant' to external stakeholders. This suggests that business schools have characteristics of both an 'academic department' and a 'commercial enterprise'. Another illustration is the way in which faculty identify with the subject position of 'expert'. Some identify with a discourse of science, which positions them as impartial experts who resist involvement in politics, while others see their public work as a political intervention. This suggests that the business school and the identities of business school faculty are constituted on a highly contested and dislocated terrain, with several articulations engaged in a struggle to fix the meaning of practices and identities. In the following chapter, I consider the implications of this for the possibilities of faculty performing a critical public role. The constitution of the business school as a commercial enterprise and business school faculty as 'entrepreneurs' and 'experts' has some negative implications for academic freedom but represents a dislocation of the discursive field that also presents opportunities for new forms of critical public work.

Chapter 7 – Assessing the Possibilities for a Critical Public Role

Introduction

This is the third of three chapters that focus on the analysis of the empirical data. All three chapters draw on the theoretical assumption of discourse theory that objects, practices and identities have no meaning outside their discursive constitution. Viewed in this way, the constitution of the business school becomes a contest between competing discursive formations, which attempt to fix the meaning of key signifiers. Before providing an overview of this third chapter, it seems appropriate to briefly summarise what has been covered in the first two empirical chapters.

Chapter 5 outlined three articulations that have competed for hegemony in the articulation of the business school and analysed their representation in commissioned reports and government policy documents. The first articulation constitutes the business school as a vocational/professional school and business school faculty as vocationally-oriented teachers and trainers. The second articulation constitutes the business school as an academic department and business school faculty as academics and scholars, while the third articulation constitutes the business school as a commercial enterprise and faculty as entrepreneurs and experts. While these archival sources provide valuable insights into how the signifier of the business school can be filled with different meanings, they provide little insight into the day-to-day activities of faculty in contemporary settings. Therefore, in chapter 6, I drew on my interviews with 60 faculty in six research-led UK business schools to examine their identification with these different articulations. I concluded that the discursive terrain is highly contested, with faculty experiencing a range of tensions and contradictions in relation to the public role. In different ways, business schools are vocational/professional schools, academic departments and commercial enterprises and at various points there are antagonisms, which highlight the contingency of practices (such as recruitment, and measuring and rewarding performance) and of identities (such as the subject position of the ‘expert’).

Chapter 6 considered the public role generally, whereas the aim of this chapter is to focus on the notion of the *critical* public role, by which I mean work activity that extends beyond the audiences of faculty and students *and* which is critical of received wisdom, whether it be industry practices, government policies or the like. There are strong associations here with the concept of academic freedom, which is legally protected through its incorporation in UK statute. However, my interest is not the legal status of academic freedom, but how it is enacted in the day-to-day activities of UK business school faculty. In this chapter, the focus will be on the commercial enterprise articulation of the business school, since this is a relatively recent development and its effects are the subject of on-going debate and investigation within the literature. However, focusing exclusively on the third articulation would be inappropriate, since the other articulations have their own implications for the development of a critical public role.

This chapter is divided into two parts. In part one, I examine two threats to business school faculty performing a critical public role: censorship and self-censorship. Consistent with the pessimistic tone of the literature, I provide evidence of threats to

faculty's ability to speak out on the issues of the day. As the public role becomes institutionalised as a core activity alongside teaching and research, business schools are incentivised to think strategically about their 'third mission' and they become more conscious of their public profile. This can lead to censorship of faculty whose critical public work is perceived to tarnish the public image of the school and to threaten its relationship with external constituencies, such as industry and government sponsors. Censorship can also occur when external sponsors seek to exert their influence on the work undertaken by faculty, not just in terms of setting the research agenda, but also by influencing how the research is conducted and how findings are disseminated. While some instances of censorship were reported by faculty, there is no indication of widespread, overt ideological control in the six business schools I visited. However, faculty did report a high incidence of self-censorship in the performance of their public role, meaning they avoided potentially controversial work that might upset either the business school or key external stakeholders. While academic freedom has legal status, respondents believed it was usually not worth the fight that would be involved to assert their right to speak out.

While these threats to the critical public role cannot be ignored, there is also cause for optimism that is not present in the literature. In the second part of the chapter, I consider opportunities for the performance of a critical public role in commercialised UK research-led business schools, based on the theoretical insights of discourse theory and the interview data. The dislocation of the field of discursivity on which the business school is constituted makes available a number of subject positions that are compatible with the performance of critical public work. Faculty can construct critical identities by enacting discourses within an articulation and across competing articulations. Available subject positions include the 'entrepreneurial critic', 'campaigner' and 'activist'. A second, and related, opportunity concerns working within the commercial enterprise articulation to reassert the value of a critical public role for universities. I argue that the identity of the critic can be represented within the commercial enterprise articulation, through a rearticulation of the nodal point of independence. As a result, independence becomes something that is demonstrated *through* public work and it becomes a commodity that is 'sold' in external interactions, such as consultancy. It also becomes valuable in the engagements that faculty have with the media, by highlighting the distinctiveness of the business school as a source of social criticism and therefore helping to demonstrate its 'relevance'. I conclude the chapter by suggesting that the contested discursive terrain of the contemporary UK research-led business school provides opportunities for faculty to be critical *and* engaged with external audiences.

Threats to Critical Engagement

To date, I have argued that the articulation of the business school as a commercial enterprise is distinct from the other two articulations by constituting the public role as a core activity alongside teaching and research. In the vocational/professional school articulation, which positions faculty as teachers and trainers, any institutionalised public role is largely subsumed within the teaching function, with interactions with non-academic audiences driven by the need to obtain case material for classroom instruction. Faculty are encouraged to perform consulting and directorship activities 'out-of-hours' to supplement low academic salaries, which is essential if practitioners from industry are to be convinced to take up positions in the school. However, there is no sense that the business school, as an institution, has a legitimate democratic

function as a source of social criticism, whether it be through faculty involvement in the policy process or through more public fora, such as commentary in the media. In the academic department articulation, the public role is largely subsumed within the research function and relates to generating independent, scientific research that provides an objective, constructive critique of industry practices. Accordingly, there is little suggestion that business school faculty have a legitimate role in engaging in public work that is not based on research and/or extends beyond their narrow specialisation. As with the first articulation, consulting is regarded as an ‘out-of-hours’ activity, but unlike the first articulation, it is viewed as a distraction and inconsistent with values of scholarship.

In both articulations, therefore, the public role is considered an ‘out-of-hours’ activity – there are few, if any, institutional rewards for such work and business school management take little or no interest in seeking to manage it. The exception is consulting activity in the second articulation, which, as mentioned above, is viewed with suspicion. Most business schools make some attempt to monitor the amount of consulting done by faculty and impose some limit, such as 50 days a year. In the first two articulations, business schools’ lack of interest in managing the public role gives faculty who do wish to develop a public role significant degrees of freedom over the form and content of those engagements. In the second articulation, for instance, faculty who interact with political parties and lobby groups, or who speak out on political issues in the public arena, might be considered by colleagues to be ‘unprofessional’ for not presenting themselves as independent and objective scientific researchers. However, such activity is considered part of the academic’s ‘private life’, largely existing outside the sphere of control of the employer. In the commercial enterprise articulation, public work takes on new meaning and its institutionalisation as a ‘third stream’ activity alters these dynamics. As discussed in the previous chapter, business schools are becoming increasingly interested in measuring and controlling this public work activity. This is partly due to schools becoming more conscious of their public profile, in order to demonstrate their relevance to stakeholders and to strengthen relationships with potential external funders. It may also be due to the establishment of the ‘third stream’ as a permanent stream of funding to be allocated on the basis of performance indicators, although this is still in the development phase and is yet to have a significant impact. In this first part of the chapter, I consider the implications of this institutionalisation of the public role for the possibilities for critical public work. In my interviews with faculty, two main threats were highlighted – censorship and self-censorship – and these will be considered in turn.

Censorship and Self-Censorship

A prerequisite for the performance of an effective critical public role by university faculty is academic freedom. As mentioned in chapter 2, UK universities have relied mainly on tradition and university autonomy to safeguard academic freedom. However, since 1988 it has been enshrined in legislation. The Education Reform Act defines academic freedom as:

The freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions. (Education Reform Act 1988, cited in Savage, 2000, p.29)

The literature on academic freedom is generally pessimistic about its future in a university context that is increasingly professionalised and commodified and where the faith in concepts such as ‘truth’ and ‘facts’ have been undermined by the crisis of modernity. Consistent with this pessimism, my interviews provide evidence that academic freedom is under threat in the contemporary UK research-led business school. With schools becoming more proactive in managing their public ‘brand’, faculty whose public work is not consistent with the brand run the risk of censure by school management.

Business schools are particularly sensitive when faculty are critical of their institution in public. A10, part of the management team at School A, argues that in these instances, business schools are justified in seeking to control their faculty’s public work, because of the potential damage to the school’s reputation.

The last thing you ever want is anybody standing on a public platform saying I think (School A) is crap. You don’t mind if it’s justified, sensible, modest criticism because we all have to be self-critical, but we’ve had people in this place who in public forums have stood up and criticised in a very adverse way what we do. Now we know the principle of the university is academic freedom, but you cannot have that. We’re a business as well.

This passage is notable for A10’s identification with the discourse of enterprise, one of the discourses in the commercial articulation of the business school. In chapter 5, I noted how Lambert (2003) believes that while universities are “not businesses”, they “need to be business-like in the way they manage their affairs” (p.14), which meant developing “strong executive structures” (p.6). The increasing attention given to branding and public image by business schools is another ‘business-like’ activity and from A10’s perspective, this justifies putting conditions on the ‘right’ to academic freedom. This demand for loyalty, of course, contravenes the freedom of faculty to put forward controversial views without fear of losing their jobs and in particular, jeopardises the position of potential ‘whistleblowers’.

In addition to faculty criticising their institutions, business school management are sensitive to faculty whose critical views are perceived to bring embarrassment to the school. A11, another senior faculty member involved in managing School A, said he would intervene if faculty were damaging the school’s brand. I asked him to explain what this meant in practice:

I would just say ‘I forbid you to do it’. And they have a choice then. If I give them a direct instruction and they disobey it then I will fire them. That would be gross....it would have to be quite serious before they did that. It would have to be the equivalent of gross misconduct, but I would certainly do it. In the same way that one of our professors got turfed out before Christmas because he just opened his big gob and it was the second time he had done it. He had done one down at the BAM conference, objecting to a moment’s silence to the 9/11 people, because why for them and why not for everybody and he just interrupted at the wrong time and he caused shame and scandal to the School so he got his formal written warning. And the next time he opened his big mouth he got kicked out. There’s a point beyond which freedom becomes disloyalty and ultimately I see that as one of my

responsibilities to make that judgement and defend that judgement, sorry, enforce it.

Again, there is a suggestion that business schools are entitled to loyalty from faculty and the 'right' to academic freedom must be balanced against this 'responsibility'. In this situation, to be 'disloyal' is to damage the business school's reputation, by bringing embarrassment to the school. I then asked A10 whether public criticism of the school by faculty had implications for the school's brand.

Sure it does. I don't mind people having...I don't mind (A3). (A3)'s actually quite good. I mean a lot of people hate (A3). I get hate mail from farmers about (A3). I get hate mail from some of my neighbours about (A3), but as long as he is logical and clear and not damaging our brand then in my judgement, and it is ultimately my judgement, then I would defend his right to express his opinion. As long as he is logical, coherent, systematic and defensible in what he does. As long as he is not rude, or stupid or gratuitously offensive or immoral in any way, I'm quite happy with that. Because I think people forget after a while. They just remember (School A). He's got to be professional and he is. Now, whether you agree with his opinions or not, is another matter. But as long as he is not stupid.

A3 has a high public profile and regularly appears in the media to put forward controversial views on UK agricultural policy. A10 defends the freedom of A3 to speak out on the basis of his comments being logical, clear and coherent, implying that the faculty member who objected to the minute's silence for the victims of 9/11 met none of these criteria. A3 himself acknowledges that School A's management have never sought to temper his criticism of government's handling of agricultural policy, but believes this is because his views are acceptable to the school.

I think if I said something publicly that was damaging to (School A) I think they would come down on me like a tonne of bricks. But after all, the message I'm putting out is hardly inconsistent with a business school that would like to be associated with an efficient and effective industry. And that's all that I'm ever arguing for actually.

This suggests that faculty can be subjected to ideological control of their public work if their views are considered 'inappropriate' for someone employed within a business school. Further evidence emerged during my interviews at School D which, as discussed in Chapter 6, has recently been making a concerted effort to raise its public profile. This story, which I heard from three respondents, does not concern an external engagement, but demonstrates how sensitive business schools can be towards perceived threats to their brand. The story was that a faculty member was involved in establishing an 'anti-capitalism' discussion group at the University. When the head of the school became aware of this, she ordered him to withdraw from the group, because she considered it was not appropriate for a business school to be associated with anti-capitalism. In addition, I was told she was concerned about the possibility of upsetting potential sponsors of a new research centre at the school²⁴.

²⁴Both the head of the school and the faculty member concerned declined my request for an interview.

So far, the cases of censorship described in this chapter have involved business school management acting to curb the activities of faculty who engage in what are considered to be controversial activities, for fear of damaging the standing of the institution. Another area where academic freedom is threatened concerns interactions with external sponsors of the business school. As discussed in the last chapter, business schools are becoming increasingly 'entrepreneurial' in turning to external funders to supplement their core funding from the public purse. This can be through direct grants or the sale of research and other consultancy activities, and the clients can include commercial organisations, charities and other not-for-profit organisations, and governmental departments. Through these partnerships business school faculty are positioned as 'insiders' in the business and policy worlds. This contrasts with their positioning in the academic department articulation as 'outsiders' who conduct objective, independent, scientific research.

This repositioning raises concerns about the academic freedom of faculty engaged in external work. The fear is that business schools, by entering into 'partnership' with industry and government sponsors, lose their independence and their capacity for critique. F2 is part of a research centre which is funded primarily by industry and says they work hard to retain their independence.

We receive a lot of money from the industry but that doesn't mean to say that we simply support the industry. Most of our money comes from industry but that doesn't mean we will simply support the industry line. In fact quite recently we've found ourselves on the wrong side of that fence and we simply have to be very clear about why we've taken the position and how we can support it.

This 'wrong side of the fence' incident occurred when F2 was invited to present a paper at an industry conference. He drafted a paper that was highly critical of a firm that he had previously provided consultancy services to. The company was a significant funder of his university and when it became aware of the criticism, it approached the head of School F and threatened to withdraw its funding unless the criticism was removed. F2 stood his ground, the funding was not withdrawn, but he has not been asked to work for the firm again.

When those moments come you have to be prepared to stand your ground. You have to be clear what your role is and my role is to bring an independent analysis. If it doesn't coincide with their interests, that's unfortunate but that's life.

The head of School F acknowledged there were potential conflicts of interest involved with external funding:

I wouldn't say we're in the business of selling our soul. We are keen to get money but for worthwhile things and we're not interested solely in money. Then again, if the amounts were big enough we would be, if one is honest about it.

It is not just money from commercial enterprises that carries potential conflicts of interest. There has been an explosion of government-sponsored contract research

under recent Labour governments because of their commitment to ‘evidence based policy’, as F1 explains:

Prior to 1997 there was very little money for the type of work that I do. The Labour government’s concern with evidence-based policy-making has been a bonanza, for us in particular here and I think for the UK academic community in general.

In external sponsored policy work, it is expected that faculty will not have complete freedom over the research topic. However, a more contentious issue is what constitutes appropriate intervention by the sponsor concerning how the research should be conducted. F1 is part of a research centre that has a large contract with a government department and states that while he must be responsive to the department’s research interest, this does not mean that he is forced to be ‘unscientific’.

The government department comes up with a topic, so we’re not free to do any research that we want, whereas with the research council, unless it’s part of a programme, we decide what we want to research. The monitoring from ESRC is very lax; with a government department we put in an annual progress report which is taken much more seriously by the government than the equivalent would be with the ESRC. Government departments get excited from time to time about particular topics and so there can be short-term pressure to push forward on one part of the work because they want an answer to what they see is a particularly pressing political issue. So to keep the government department sweet, we need to be responsive to them. I don’t think there is any pressure to be unscientific. It’s more about time-scales and priorities rather than cutting corners.

However, F6, a junior member of faculty involved in one of these projects, provided a different picture, believing censorship had taken place. In one incident, pressure had been applied on the researchers by the government department to change the way they selected their sample for study, in order that the results would cast government’s policy in a more favourable light. She was disappointed that senior faculty involved with the project had not taken a firmer stand.

It’s the junior staff who say ‘we shouldn’t be doing this’ and it’s the professors who are least reluctant because the head of our unit, he is entirely funded by the project. Will he go in and say “I’m not happy” when it’s his salary at stake?

Aside from the issue of censorship in ‘evidence-based policy’ work is the issue of how policymakers use the research. In theory, the discourse of ‘evidence-based policy’ gives faculty a far greater influence over the policy-making process as they conduct the research, present it to policymakers, who then formulate policy based on the evidence. F1 believes academics are deluding themselves if they believe that is how it works in practice.

I think the business we’re in is largely legitimation. We’re not under any illusions that policy is, in any genuine sense, evidence-based. It’s evidence informed, but policy can never be evidence-based because political judgement has to be exercised. Information feeds into the political process.

What happens once it gets in there and what use is made of it is entirely out of our hands.

Therefore, while faculty have a greater role to play in the policy process as a result of the shift towards ‘evidence-based policy’, it does not necessarily follow that their influence is any greater than faculty who choose to remain ‘outside’ the policy process.

It is impossible to generalise about the level of censorship and threats to academic freedom across the six schools that I visited. While I got the impression that School A was less tolerant of faculty whose views were considered inappropriate, at School E no such control was evident, at least not as far as senior faculty were concerned. E1 is an interesting case because he produced a report for a right-wing think-tank that gained significant media coverage because of its recommendation to abolish the UK research councils, which are a major source of funding for School E. E1 was surprised there had been no negative feedback from school management, but he would not advise junior faculty to go public with such a controversial opinion.

It’s not the thing I would advise any academic to do unless, like me, you are 67.

Why?

Because it’s a threatening thing to do. Academics like me publishing a paper like mine saying that research funds should be cut is not exactly going to go down well with the academic authorities.

Could that have any comeback on you at an individual level?

I think it might if I was younger, but I don’t see how it is going to have any comeback on me because I’m 67. I think it’s very bad that academics are not as free to say what they should say if they are not well enough advanced that they can please themselves.

Overall, while a few anecdotes of censorship did emerge, it would be misleading to claim that I found evidence of widespread censorship in the six business schools I visited. However, a more subtle and perhaps more significant factor is the self-censorship that faculty engage in when performing their public role. In an environment where the trend towards fixed-term contracts has undermined job security, there is awareness amongst some faculty that critical public work has the potential to damage their career prospects, if such work is likely to be considered inappropriate for a business school that increasingly seeks to foster partnerships with industry and government. In this environment, faculty are more likely to consider the likely reaction from school management before speaking out. A5 described it as an “implied sanction”.

There was more job security in the past for academics, it meant they could be like a bishop I suppose, and they could be guaranteed to have the freedom of speech to say what they like...some people have got tenure I suppose, but most institutions can put faculty under some pressure, if you like, to inhibit their careers or whatever if their views don’t seem appropriate... There’s sort of an implied sanction to people now that there once wasn’t.

C7 says that while the school has never tried to exert any ‘ideological control’ over his public engagements, in undertaking public work he thinks about what would be inappropriate, as far as the business school is concerned. For example, he has an

interest in how terrorist groups organise themselves, but has shied away from commenting in public

There is a certain amount of self-censorship. I would be pretty stupid to go on television and start singing the praises of terrorists, for example. I know a case can be made to say they organise themselves well, they have good leaders, there's a lot to be learnt from it. And you could do quite a good piece on that. But the chances of being misunderstood are fairly high, of upsetting the hand that feeds you. It's too risky.

To conclude, the institutionalisation of the public role as a 'third mission' alongside teaching and research has some negative implications for academic freedom and the possibilities for critical engagement with external constituencies. With schools becoming more proactive in managing their public 'brand', faculty whose public work is not considered to be consistent with the desired image run the risk of censure by school management. There is less job security than in the past and junior faculty, in particular, are aware that the institution can inhibit their careers if they get offside. While most academics I spoke to hope their right to speak out would be defended, few, if any, would want the fight and therefore would not engage in activity that would be likely to upset management. Censorship by external sponsors is another issue that arises when business schools are constituted as commercial enterprises. Sponsors, whether they be from the commercial, government or not-for-profit sectors might try to influence both the research topic and the way the research is conducted, which creates a dilemma for business schools. They value the additional funding, but in some situations it comes at the cost of academic freedom.

This pessimistic account is consistent with the tone of the literature on academic freedom and the commercialisation of higher education. The commercial enterprise articulation, constructed on nodal points of engagement and partnership, marginalises the subject position of the 'detached' critic who has the freedom to comment on the 'real world' from within the 'ivory tower'. However, in the second half of this chapter I argue the outlook for academic freedom and the possibilities of critical public work are not uniformly negative. The threats to critical engagement do not disappear, but there are opportunities for critical public work in the increasingly commercialised UK research-led business school.

Opportunities for Critical Engagement

In chapter 2, I noted that the issues of professionalisation, commodification and the crisis of modernity reflect increasing uncertainty about the legitimacy and viability of a critical public role, as reflected in the debates around academic freedom. The professionalisation of knowledge is blamed for academics abandoning their social role as critical intellectuals, with institutional factors encouraging academics to write for other academics rather than the public. For UK research-led business schools, this is reflected in the RAE and the way it encourages business schools to reorient their work away from external engagement towards academic scholarship. The commodification of knowledge has provoked expressions of concern that the pressure to attract funding compromises the ability of faculty to speak out on controversial issues, for fear of offending external sponsors. The evidence of censorship and self-censorship presented earlier in the chapter supports that conclusion. The third threat to academic freedom identified in chapter 2 comes from the crisis of modernist science, which is said to have undermined academic authority by encouraging

relativism and demonstrating the value-laden nature of facts. This is reflected in the tensions that faculty experience around the ‘scientific’ and ‘political’ aspects of their work.

From the analysis presented so far, it seems reasonable to conclude that professionalisation, commodification and the crisis of modernity threaten the ability of faculty to undertake critical public work. However, the assumption of that analysis (and the assumption of much of the literature on academic freedom) is to equate the critical public role with the identity of the independent and impartial critic who operates free from constraint within the ‘ivory tower’. In this section I suggest there are other subject positions that facilitate a critical public role – subject positions that are made available by the dislocations of commodification and the epistemological crisis of modernity. This undermines the ‘sedimented’ subject position of the independent and impartial ‘ivory tower’ critic, but makes available new positions for faculty to occupy, such as the ‘entrepreneurial critic’, ‘campaigner’ and ‘activist’. I then argue that not only is it possible for faculty to perform a critical public role within the commercialised context of the contemporary UK business school, but that commercialisation could actually foster such activity, since, with the institutionalisation of the public role there will be more rewards on offer for undertaking public work, including critical public work. In addition, the ability to provide critical perspectives on issues of business and management provides business schools with a competitive advantage over its non-university based competitors and is one way business schools can demonstrate their ‘relevance’.

Before returning to an analysis of the empirical material, it is worth recalling discourse theory’s concept of *dislocation*. Laclau (1990) argues that modern societies are becoming increasingly dislocated through processes such as commodification and bureaucratisation. Dislocation is the process by which the contingency of identity becomes evident. The congenital failure of the ‘structure’ to confer identity on social actors ‘compels’ the subject to act in order to restore or affirm a recognisable sense of identity that is simultaneously a necessity for social interaction and an impossibility for it, since no identity ever succeeds in suturing the openness of the social. In chapter 3, I argued that Laclau’s understanding of dislocation as an extra-discursive phenomenon is not consistent with the assumption of discourse theory that all objects are constituted within discourse. On the basis of this critique, I proposed that commodification be understood as a discursive phenomenon, whose meaning is contingent, depending on the specific combination of elements engaged in the struggle for hegemony. Consistent with this thinking, the third articulation of the business school commodifies the public role, but this articulation is seen as ultimately contingent and subject to transformation. The commercial enterprise articulation has dislocated the field of discursivity in which the business school is constituted, but commodification is not interpreted as a generative mechanism that somehow lies outside discourse.

The epistemological crisis of modern science can be interpreted as another dislocation of the field of discursivity. In the academic department articulation, the discourse of scientific research represents a nodal point. Within this articulation, faculty are positioned as ‘academics’ and ‘scholars’ who conduct scientific investigations to produce objective, value-free knowledge. ‘Academics’ are urged to avoid engagement in politics because to do so risks compromising the confidence of the

public in science and thereby undermining the status of the academy. In the last chapter, I suggested the subject position of the ‘impartial expert’ is not the only meaning of ‘expert’ and that some respondents are more than willing to acknowledge the political aspects of their work. The critique of positivist science, therefore, represents a dislocation, in that it provides new subject positions for faculty to occupy.

Commercialising the Critical Public Role

One of the themes to emerge from the empirical analysis is that of business schools becoming more proactive in seeking to measure, reward and ultimately control external work undertaken by faculty. To date, I have considered only the negative implications of this development – censorship by business school management and external sponsors and self-censorship by faculty themselves. There is, however, another side that offers hope that a critical public role can be fostered within the commercialised business school. In the academic department articulation, the public role is largely regarded as an ‘out-of-hours’ activity and therefore few institutional rewards accrue to faculty who develop a significant public role. In the commercial enterprise articulation, management seek not only to measure and manage this activity, but also to reward it, because of the value it creates in terms of profile for the school and the potential to attract external sponsors. While practices such as the RAE have encouraged faculty to neglect their public role, there is now the possibility that this competing articulation might stimulate critical public work by offering faculty the chance to develop their careers as ‘experts’ who communicate with a wider audience, rather than ‘scholars’ who seek only to communicate with other ‘academics’. More importantly, there are opportunities for faculty to adopt a critical orientation in their public work and for this to be rewarded by business schools.

G1’s²⁵ career has not followed a traditional ‘academic’ trajectory. She does not write articles for publication in academic journals, preferring instead to write for a public audience. She is the author of a best-selling book, which is highly critical of political and corporate elites, appears regularly in the mainstream press and speaks frequently to activists, trade unions, government bodies and business executives. G1 holds a prestigious fellowship at a leading UK university and has received several offers of academic posts from other top, research-led institutions. G1 has chosen not to seek peer recognition by getting published in specialist academic journals. Her main motivation is to communicate with a non-academic audience.

I don’t feel that I’m dealing with rarefied issues that should only be discussed in ivory towers. I think that they have very real implications. The things that I’m interested in affect everyone. And that being so, I want to get to a public. I want them to become things that people speak about on the tube or in a boardroom, so that’s why I intentionally reach out to different constituencies.

She acknowledges that turning her back on a ‘traditional’ academic career was a risky decision.

²⁵ G1 was interviewed as part of the ‘pilot’ study.

Traditionally, the path I'm on would have been thought of as career suicide. I've now got a visiting fellowship at a premier UK University, which is an incredibly prestigious fellowship. Prior recipients of it have been male, 60 year-old professors, so it hasn't seemed to harm my career in that respect. I have been asked to apply for, but I'm not, pretty senior posts at blue-chip institutions. Even though I'm not really doing the right thing, because I'm not publishing. Whenever people gave advice about what you should do if you want an academic career, nobody ever suggested that you go down the road that I've kind of gone down. It was all about publish in X journal and Y journal and then you really have to pay your dues.

G1 does not identify with the subject position of 'scholar' associated with the academic department articulation, but has been able to develop a career within the business school on the basis of her critical public work. This I argue, is made possible by the dislocation of the social space created by the commercial enterprise articulation, which challenges the traditional meaning of an 'academic career'. Its emphasis on dissemination to non-academic audiences has provided her with opportunities that were less readily available in the academic department articulation, which places greater emphasis on communication with other academics, ostensibly through peer-reviewed academic journals. Interestingly, G1 constructs her identity by reference to the discourse of enterprise, which is part of the commercial enterprise articulation.

I trade off the security, which is hard, because I'm not going with the traditional academic route. I'm trading off going for tenured jobs because I actually at the moment don't want to commit to the time investment that I would have to do for that kind of a post. So I'm definitely trading off security, so it might not appeal to everyone. Traditional academia, once you've got your tenured position, you're there. You never really need to worry how I'm going to earn money. It's much more entrepreneurial what I'm doing.

The position of the 'entrepreneurial critic' is not privileged in 'official discourses' that represent the commercial enterprise articulation. However, the experience of G1 suggests that it can be accommodated within this articulation. G1's work is valued by prestigious institutions because it gives them publicity and provides a clear demonstration of their distinctive quality as locales of academic freedom and uninhibited research. As G1 comments

I think the academic institution just want to see their name in the papers. They want all the press quotes they're getting, they want the fact that the Department and the University is flagged within the article that I wrote. And it's within the tradition of academia to have dissent and dissenters...There have been times when I have thought 'gosh, what if they...how is the business school going to feel about this?' But I've really only had support from the top, so I think they can afford to have a few Chomskys and a few dissidents and it does show they are a more well-rounded institution.

Much of the literature on the contemporary university unequivocally argues that the commodification of higher education operates to reduce academic freedom and social criticism. In contrast, G1's identification with the subject position of 'critic' suggests

that these changes have actually facilitated her career development. From the perspective of the institutions that are courting G1, and the university where she currently holds a fellowship, encouraging faculty to participate in public debate is not inconsistent with a competitive strategy intended to attract more students and funding. In a competitive context, it is important to have members of the institution in the public gaze, thereby reinforcing the presence of the brand. And, of course, if their contribution is controversial, it is more likely to attract the media. There are dangers in drawing conclusions from the experience of G1, since none of the other respondents have been able to completely resist the pressures for publication within research-led business schools. However, it is plausible to argue that as the public role becomes more established as a legitimate activity for faculty to perform, alongside teaching and research, there are new opportunities for developing a critical public role.

The implication from G1's experience is the 'independence' of the business school can become a commodity that is 'sold' in external engagements. A second illustration of this is the sale of consulting work undertaken by business school faculty. In consulting, an activity encouraged by the commercial enterprise articulation, the independence of faculty and their capacity for critique becomes a selling point for the business school. Lambert (2003), in his review of university-industry collaboration, is keen to increase the level of consultancy, because of the revenue it brings to universities and because it can foster research collaboration between the university and industry. As with contract research, however, there are potential conflicts of interest to negotiate and there are fears that the privileging of the 'expert' marginalises the identity of the 'critic', since it is presumed that faculty will be reluctant to speak out in fear of offending their paymasters. My research suggests the subject positions of the 'expert' and 'critic' are not mutually exclusive.

A4 is regularly engaged in consulting activity in the form of executive development. Consistent with the discourses that form the commercial enterprise articulation, he describes his work in an entrepreneurial, 'business-like' way that is the antithesis of an academic approach. School A is heavily reliant on industry income, which A4 says forces him to be market-oriented.

On all of our activities we have to meet market demands. And everybody here equally runs their own business. So for me, gaining money, gaining revenue, dealing with client needs, meeting client needs, doing research, having that research positioned so that it adds value to them, running a budget, having the academic community as only one particular stakeholder group has been my life for as long as I've known it. So I can't even identify with the research community. I don't even know what it is. I've got no idea. My responsibilities to the academic audience, as far as I can see, don't exist. So I have no identity with them, the academic audience.

Interestingly, however, while rejecting the identity of 'academic', A4 does identify with the role of 'critic'. He sees himself as having two sets of responsibilities. The first is to whoever is funding the consultancy.

As soon as you've taken somebody's money to provide a service, you'd better make absolutely sure that you are providing a service that adds value.

So you have to know something about those individuals, their context, where they're coming from.

The second set of responsibilities comes from being part of the university.

The second area of responsibility is that you are a university. And as a university, despite the fact that you are financially, potentially financially constrained by clients, you do have to stand above that and offer an opinion in terms of what's happening. One of the critical issues right now is in terms of governance. The whole stakeholder, shareholder governance thing, which we've partly seen acted out in this dumb war with Iraq. But there you basically do need to stand up and begin to talk about sustainability and you do have to be able to challenge shareholder views and their impact on society.

Here we see that A4 identifies with the role of critic, but not in the 'ivory tower' articulation of the term. A4 is 'engaged' rather than 'detached', and suggests that not only is critique compatible with consultancy, but it becomes a competitive advantage for business schools over other providers of consulting services. Similarly, B1, a marketing professor, is active in consultancy with companies and non-profit organisations and believes being 'critical' is a competitive advantage.

Companies are becoming increasingly sceptical of consultants because they often offer a packaged solution, so in areas where the problem is non-standard that's not enough. They also want people who are going to look in more depth without an axe to grind and without a pre-formulated answer, which is precisely what being critical offers. The willingness to be critical is what some companies want.

The experiences of G1 and A4 demonstrate that the identity of the critic can be represented within the articulation of the business school as a commercial enterprise. In theoretical terms, it involves the rearticulation of the nodal point 'independence' in a new chain of equivalence that at once constitutes and subverts the commercial enterprise articulation. In this new chain of equivalence, the signifier 'independence' is invested with a different meaning. Independence no longer means living a detached existence inside the 'ivory tower', free from the corrupting influences of industry and government connections. In this transformed articulation that commodifies the public role, independence and engagement are compatible and in some respects, independence is demonstrated *through* engagement. Independence is commodified – it becomes an object that gives business schools a competitive advantage over competitors and demonstrates the relevance of the institution, therefore justifying its continued support from the public fund.

Constituting Critical Identities

In chapter 2, I discussed how the epistemological crisis of modernity undermines traditional conceptions of academic freedom. Modernist science asserts its access to the truth, separating rational and logical thought from mere contemplation and its organisation requires an institution (the university), autonomous and independent from society, which can validate its authority. The academic department articulation reflects and reinforces this privileging of science and the separation of the 'ivory tower' from the 'real world' of industry and commerce. Within this articulation,

faculty are positioned as ‘academics’ and ‘scholars’ who conduct scientific investigations to produce objective, value-free knowledge. ‘Academics’ are urged to avoid engagement in politics because to do so risks compromising the confidence of the public in science and thereby undermining the status of the academy. Subsequent postmodern critiques have undermined the claim that modernist science allows unfettered access to ‘truth’ and ‘reality’. This has dislocated the discursive terrain upon which faculty construct their work identities and, as with the commercialisation of the public role, makes available new subject positions for faculty to occupy in undertaking critical public work.

In chapter 6, I examined tensions around the subject position of the ‘expert’, one of the identities available within the commercial enterprise articulation. Some respondents identified with a positivist interpretation of the ‘expert’ by presenting themselves as objective and impartial observers in their interactions with external audiences. Others, however, drew on the critique of modernist science to construct an identity that incorporates the political elements of their work. Faculty, therefore, are not ‘forced’ to position themselves as the ‘value-free expert’. The crisis of modernity is a dislocation that creates new subject positions that facilitate the performance of a critical public role. A1 says it is naïve to believe that academic research can ever be value-free and is happy to acknowledge her value orientation when she engages with external constituencies.

I would say, and that probably goes for all aspects of my work, not just my external work, that it is incumbent upon academics, just like anybody else, to make it clear what moral or ethical viewpoints they are coming from and to make them explicit and transparent to everybody around them. So if you take my area again, which is HRM, there are loads of people who write in papers or make speeches and their entire argument is based upon particular assumptions. So some might come from an assumption that human resources are there to be exploited in the interests of economic advantage and there are others, equally, at the other end of the spectrum, who will make an assumption that actually the role of human resources is to provide well-being in the workplace. Now, my problem is when people don’t make those assumptions explicit from the word go and indeed build a whole theory around what they’re doing, to which they give some kind of academic legitimacy when in fact they started from a very personal viewpoint. And, sometimes that personal viewpoint is so taken for granted that they can’t even see there is a problem.

In the literature on academic freedom and the democratic role of intellectuals, the crisis of modernist science is presented as undermining the legitimacy of faculty’s critical public work and especially the classical role of the ‘public intellectual’, who is the bearer of universal values. Certainly, this signifier had little resonance in my interviews, since respondents tended to reject the notion that they had privileged access to the ‘truth’. However, while there was little identification with the subject position of the ‘public intellectual’, respondents did identify with other ‘critical’ subject positions in describing their public work. G1 distances herself from the identity of the ‘value-free’ expert and celebrates the political nature of her public work.

My work is political and I will normally end a speech with policy recommendations. I do see my personal agenda as an activist agenda but I

think there's a history of academics who were also political. I think my work falls in line with the old kind of political economy realm rather than economics or management as they are today, so yes, it is political. Definitely my aim is to change the way people think or act.

A1 identifies with the subject position 'expert' but not the position of the 'value-free expert'. She acknowledges her research has a political agenda and is comfortable with adopting an advocacy role in her public work. A1 compares her research with a US-based organisation that performs similar work.

They are highly critical of researchers who they say, sort of take advocacy roles. And I understand. In America what they've said is that they are seen as the key experts of data and statistics and research on corporate women in America and it's very important not to go further and adopt advocacy roles, because companies wouldn't use them, because they feel they would be biased. And I've told them that we take a completely different view. I mean we are campaigners for change as well.

The positions of 'activist' and 'campaigner' can be accommodated within the commercial enterprise articulation because they demonstrate the 'relevance' of the business school. In official reports that represent this articulation, such as the Lambert Review (2003), 'relevance' means engaging in partnership with firms and government agencies to exploit knowledge and stimulate economic growth. However, my research suggests that it is possible to transform this hegemonic meaning of relevance to incorporate a critical public role for faculty. 'Relevance' can also mean demonstrating that the business school, by being part of a university, has a distinctive role to play in providing social commentary on the major economic, social and political issues of the day. I am not suggesting that business schools will be proactive in rewarding faculty who are critical of the status quo. My argument is merely that they can be accommodated within the discursive articulation of the business school as a commercial enterprise because it demonstrates that the school is 'relevant'. Accordingly, there might be more opportunities for faculty who wish to pursue this kind of career, since dissemination to non-academic audiences is increasingly valued by business schools.

Conclusion

In the business school as a vocational/professional school, the public role of academics is based around consulting and other professional activities, but the role of the business school academic as a 'critic' does not appear. In the second articulation, in which the business school is constituted as an academic department, there is a conceptual space for critical engagement with external constituencies, constructed around nodal points of independence and detachment, which constitute the business school as an 'ivory tower' institution, removed from the 'real world'. However, in both of these articulations, the academic's public role is constituted as a private virtue (or vice), rather than as something that is valued by the institution and is likely to lead towards promotion.

In the commercial enterprise articulation of the business school, which has begun to dominate official, policy discourses on higher education, there are both threats to, and opportunities for, critical engagement with non-academic audiences. The threats come from attempts by business school management to measure and control public

work, in order to attract funding from ‘third stream’ activities, and from an increased sensitivity regarding the public profile of the school, which can lead to censorship of controversial faculty and self-censorship by faculty concerned about potential repercussions. In contrast to the pessimism of the literature on the commodification of higher education, I have suggested there are new possibilities for critical public work as a result of the institutionalisation of the public role as a core activity alongside teaching and research. In making this argument, my intention is not to ignore the threats to academic freedom, but to suggest that there are also opportunities that have come about by a dislocation of the discursive terrain upon which business schools are constituted.

In theoretical terms, the commercialisation of higher education and the epistemological crisis of modernity represent dislocations of identity, which are understood discursively as a breakdown of social objectivity that stems from the failure of the structure to constitute itself fully. This facilitates an exploration of how critical intellectual identities and practices can be accommodated, and indeed fostered, within the articulation of the commercial enterprise. In terms of identity, this is *not* the detached figure of the ‘critic’ who barks out commentary from within the confines of the ivory tower. It is *not* the ‘public intellectual’ who ranges broadly outside his/her specialist area and whose views hold a privileged position within society. Rather, it is the ‘entrepreneurial critic’, the ‘activist’ and the ‘campaigner’, who work within a specialisation and who work in entrepreneurial ways to locate outlets for their critique; who interact with networks of journalists, like-minded university faculty, politicians and think-tanks, and who claim independence in association with his/her position in the university but do not hide behind the façade of objectivity. In the next (and final) chapter, I elaborate further on this position of the critical intellectual who engages with the wider public.

Chapter 8: The Contribution of Discourse Theory to a Rearticulation of the Public Role of Academics

Introduction

Throughout this thesis I have engaged in a number of debates, such as the role and mission of the business school, the future of academic freedom and the role of intellectuals in society. I have also considered a range of theoretical approaches for understanding the social world, including discourse theory, Foucauldian studies and critical discourse analysis, and I have attempted to develop a coherent methodology and method for conducting empirical research. All of these endeavours have taken place within discrete parts of the thesis. The challenge for this chapter is to bring them all together and to present a coherent overview of what I have achieved, what I have not achieved and therefore, what possibilities exist for future research.

This chapter is divided into four sections, each of which forms part of the story of this thesis. In the first section, I assess the contribution of discourse theory to the field of organisation studies, from which, until very recently, it has been absent. Discourse theory has much to contribute to our understanding of organisational processes by providing a novel perspective on the issue of structure and agency. However, its conceptualisation of structure and agency incorporates an extra-discursive dimension that appears inconsistent with the dissolution of the distinction between the discursive and non-discursive, which characterises discourse theory's unique ontology. I illustrate this critique by referring to commodification and suggest a way forward that conceives of commodification as a discursive phenomenon.

The second section examines the contribution of discourse theory to a theorisation of the academic's public role. I suggest that discourse theory can make two valuable contributions to the literature on the social role of intellectuals, which is itself useful for thinking about the academic's public role. Its first contribution is to provide a means for deconstructing modernist conceptions of the intellectual, which rely on deterministic grand narratives and the assumption of sovereign agents. Its second contribution is to provide its own conceptualisation of the academic's public role, which is located in the middle ground between modern and postmodern approaches. Drawing on discourse theory's concept of 'radical and plural democracy', I suggest that faculty have an important role to play as 'critical and engaged experts' who expand the scope of public debate.

In the third section, I consider the possibilities for critical and engaged public work within contemporary UK research-led business schools and reconsider three threats to academic freedom that are prominent within the literature – professionalisation, commodification and the crisis of modernity. There is considerable evidence from my investigations to confirm these threats, but there is also contradictory evidence that provides some cause for optimism. The traditional defence of academic freedom as the pursuit of objective, scientific 'truth' has been weakened by the critique of modernity, but I argue that academic freedom can continue to be defended, on the basis that a critical academy, which puts forward critique from a range of values-based positions, serves an important democratic function and is therefore worthy of protection.

In the final section, I return to the debate on the role and mission of the business school, which I introduced at the beginning of the thesis. Stakeholders seem to agree that business schools need to be ‘relevant’, but there is no agreement about what relevance means. In reviewing key debates about Mode 2 research and the impact of critical management studies, I put forward a view of relevance that positions business schools as critical *and* engaged, positions which tend to be presented within these debates as mutually exclusive. I argue this is one way business schools can build a competitive advantage and secure their future as part of a postmodern higher education landscape. I conclude by considering some possibilities for future research, both within the UK and in international contexts.

As a last word before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that the conclusions made in this chapter are made tentatively. There is a balance to be struck between drawing conclusions from my research and being aware that the debates I have entered have long and complex histories. At the very least, I hope that I have done sufficient justice to these debates and that my conclusions are substantive enough to warrant serious consideration and to stimulate further reflection and investigation.

Discourse Theory and Organisational Analysis

The discourse theory developed by Laclau, Mouffe and other contributors such as Žižek is yet to make a significant impact in organisation studies, despite receiving increasing application in the social sciences. One of the contributions of my research has been to assess its suitability to investigating processes of identification within organisations. While this research represents only a starting point, I believe there is sufficient potential to warrant further consideration. In particular, the contribution of discourse theory to the structure-agency problem is promising. Discourse theory counters a tendency of other discourse approaches to present individuals as passive recipients of discourses of change, reacting to new forms of organisation and management that are imposed from above, but it does so without reverting to an absolute voluntarism which privileges agency. In this section, I revisit discourse theory’s position on structure and agency, drawing on my empirical work to illuminate its distinctiveness. I then suggest that more work is needed on the concept of dislocation, which is used to highlight the contingency of both agents and structures. Laclau (1990) theorises dislocatory processes such as commodification as extra-discursive phenomena, which is not consistent with discourse theory’s premise that all objects are constituted discursively. Finally, I argue that while discourse theory is amenable to the study of institutions and organisations, more needs to be done to account for the stability and durability of discursive structures.

Discourse theory is based on a distinctive ontology that distinguishes it from other, more established discourse-based approaches within organisation studies, such as critical discourse analysis and Foucauldian approaches. This distinctive position is illustrated by the framing of my first research question: ‘how is the business school constituted in discourse?’ This question is consistent with the premise that “every object is constituted as an object of discourse” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.108). This is not an idealist claim that extra-discursive reality does not exist, as critics of discourse theory, such as Geras (1987) have claimed. Instead, it dissolves the distinction between being (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology) by claiming that while objects have an existence external to discourse, our knowledge, or understanding of them, depends on the structuring of a discursive field. The business

school, including its buildings, facilities and programmes of study, exists external to discourse, but our understanding of what the business school 'is' – its distinctive identity – is rendered discursively.

This philosophical premise is a departure from critical realism, which asserts that the extra-discursive world has a causal impact and therefore meaning in and of itself outside its constitution in discourse. Critical realists, such as Bhaskar, draw an ontological distinction between preconstituted social structures, which agents inherit from the past, and current social interaction, which takes place in the context of these structures. Social structures, therefore, assume an ontological autonomy and exert a 'causal influence' over the actions of agents, conditioning and shaping, but not determining these actions. This objectification of social structure makes it difficult to explain how agents interact and 'make a difference' to preconstituted social structures that they encounter in social interactions. Discourse theory makes a useful contribution to thinking about how this dualism of agency and structure can be overcome, by arguing that while agents are constituted as subjects within discursive structures, these 'structures' are inherently contingent. Through this manoeuvre, the illusion of the sovereign agent and determining structure is deconstructed.

Discourse theory's conception of 'structure' problematises the idea of structural determination by denying the existence of a preconstituted, totalised structure. Hegemonic projects operate to structure a field of meaning, thereby temporarily fixing the identities of objects and practices in particular ways. For example, within the articulation of the business school as an academic department, the business school becomes an 'ivory tower' within the university and faculty are (hegemonically) fixed as scholars who only talk to other scholars and pursue independent, scientific research. While these articulations offer a partial fixation of meaning, they are penetrated by a radical contingency that prevents closure or totalisation. Discursive fields are characterised by a 'surplus of meaning' that can never be exhausted by any discourse, since each discourse invokes its other in a relation of dependence and antagonism. For example, the identity of the 'scholar' who resides within the 'ivory tower' excludes the identity of the 'entrepreneur' who works in partnership with external audiences to commercialise knowledge. Regardless of how 'sedimented' the academic department articulation becomes, our understanding of what the business school 'is' remains open to 'reactivation', which highlights the institution's political origins. This 'undecidability' of the structure becomes evident in moments of dislocation, such as the commodification of new spheres of social life and the epistemological crisis of modernity. This produces new and antagonistic identities, which induces an identity crisis for the subject and 'compels' the subject to act in order to restore or affirm a recognisable sense of identity. Subjectivation is therefore conceived of as the attempt to fill the empty space of the lack through identification with projects that struggle to achieve hegemony in the field of meaning.

In my research, the contested terrain of the business school is represented by three articulations that compete to fix its meaning. Each articulation is 'in play', meaning there are multiple positions for faculty to occupy. For example, some respondents rejected the identity of 'academic', preferring instead to identify with the articulation of a business school as a vocational/professional school, which positions them as 'teachers'. Others who regard 'academic' as a pejorative term identified with the 'entrepreneur' identity, which is available within the commercial enterprise

articulation. Through these processes of identification, agents are able to resist hegemonic projects. There is also evidence that agents are able to transform these projects by enacting discourses across articulations to construct their identities. In chapter 7, for example, I described how one respondent constructed her identity as an 'entrepreneurial critic', enacting discourses of enterprise, specialised expertise and the tradition of the university as a site of social criticism and dissent. For her, entrepreneurship is not just about commercialising knowledge, but also about taking risks to develop an academic career that would have traditionally been regarded as 'career suicide' and being creative in finding outlets for her work beyond the academy.

Through these processes of identification the contingency of discursive structures becomes evident. The subject is not simply determined by pre-given structures, nor does it constitute these structures. Through processes of articulation and hegemonisation, 'agents' and 'structures' both create and, at the same time, are created. In contrast to critical realism, which asserts that structures are preconstituted and therefore implies that structure is external to agency, discourse theory sees 'structure' and 'agency' fused into a single process, whereby structuring exists in the discursive practices that reproduce or transform it. In this way, discourse theory avoids both structural determinism and agential voluntarism.

While discourse theory provides a novel reconfiguring of structure and agency, I am less satisfied with its understanding of *dislocation*. Dislocation is an important concept because it accounts for the contingency of structures as well as processes of identification by subjects. Laclau (1990) argues that modern societies are becoming increasingly dislocated, illustrated by processes such as commodification, bureaucratisation and globalisation. In contrast to the pessimism of the Frankfurt School, which sees commodification as a manifestation of capitalism's internal logic that inevitably creates regimented societies, Laclau argues that

Commodification, bureaucratization, and the increasing dominance of scientific and technological planning over the division of labour should not necessarily be resisted. Rather, one should work within these processes so as to develop the prospects they create for a non-capitalist alternative. (Laclau, 1990, p.55-56)

Laclau asserts that the dislocation generated by commodification creates new possibilities for social transformation by provoking acts of resistance and forcing actors to "reinvent their own social forms" (p.52) through identification with hegemonic projects. Thus, dislocation has a "liberating effect" (p.53) by reactivating sedimented practices and identities. On this point, I am in agreement with Laclau and my research provides evidence to support his optimism. My analysis of the public role of UK business school faculty suggests that critics of the 'McDonaldisation' of higher education should broaden, and perhaps shift, their focus from an emphasis on protecting critical intellectual activity *from* commodification to its protection *through* commodification. Business school faculty need only look at other spheres of cultural life for guidance, such as situations where tourism is manipulated to serve the economic interests of indigenous peoples, in order to recognise how, despite its serious limitations and shortcomings, the skilful use of commodification can operate to affirm as well reconstitute cultural identity. I am not implying that working within commodification is the only way to develop critical public work. I have attempted,

however, to show that there *are* compelling reasons why critical voices can and do gain attention in ways that can augment rather than deplete the legitimacy of academics.

My difficulty with Laclau's understanding of dislocation is his retention of an extra-discursive dimension. As Howarth (2000) has noted, "Laclau uses the concept to introduce an 'extra-discursive' dynamism into his conception of society" (p.111).

Laclau (1990) states that dislocation is "generated by a phenomenon such as commodification" (p.52) and argues that contemporary struggles should "start from the reality of the commodification phenomenon and attempt to control it socially" (p.52). He also states that

our analysis keeps within the field of Marxism and attempts to reinforce what has been one of its virtues: the full acceptance of the transformations entailed by capitalism and the construction of an alternative project that is *based on* the ground created by those transformations, not on *opposition to* them. (Laclau, 1990, p.55-56, emphasis in original)

This acceptance of the "ground" created by "the transformations entailed by capitalism" seems at odds with discourse theory's philosophical premise that all objects are constituted within discourse, which dissolves the distinction between the discursive and non-discursive elements of the social world. It is also at odds with discourse theory's anti-foundationalist stance, in which 'grounds' are replaced by 'horizons' that are constructed through political argument. To be clear, Laclau does not suggest that capitalism is a self-regulating totality that generates particular effects, but he does create the impression that commodification is an inevitable transformation of capitalism and therefore that it has a structural logic that operates outside 'discourse'. A more consistent approach would be to regard commodification and other processes of dislocation as discursive phenomena – contingent processes, the meaning of which depend on their articulation within particular, localised contexts. Therefore, rather than conceiving of commodification as a seemingly inevitable and irreversible transformation of capitalism, it becomes a myth that emerges through (rather than prior to) structural dislocation and which sutures that dislocated space through the constitution of a new space of representation. It is this conception of commodification that informed my empirical analysis. In the articulation of the commercial enterprise, the public role becomes a commodity. Rather than seeing the commodification phenomenon as *the* reality (as Laclau does) it becomes *one* reality, constructed by *one* articulation competing for hegemony on a discursive terrain. This articulation might succeed in suturing the discursive field, to the extent that it *appears* as stable and durable, but it remains radically undecidable, along with all other discursive structures. The terrain of contemporary higher education does appear increasingly commodified, but its hegemonic position remains contingent. Such a conception, I argue, provides an even more optimistic vision than Laclau himself allows and is compatible with the anti-foundationalism of discourse theory's philosophical premises.

Discourse theory has been criticised by several commentators for being unsuitable for the study of institutions and organisations, because of its preoccupation with identity and its underplaying of 'structure' (Best & Kellner, 1991; Boccock, 1986; Jessop, 1982; 1990). The issue is how to conceptualise institutions and organisations without

falling into a realist position which regards them as extra-discursive phenomena that exert a causal impact on the discursive realm. My research takes up Torfing's (1990) suggestion that institutions and organisations are analysed as open-ended discursive formations, the product of hegemonic struggles. In this way, organisations such as the business school are conceived of as 'sedimented' discursive structures that are open to reactivation from competing articulations in the field of discursivity. Thus, sedimentation accounts for the durability and stability of discursive structures, whereas reactivation highlights their ultimate contingency. I have argued that the business school has achieved a low level of sedimentation because there is very little that is taken-for-granted in our understanding of what the business school 'is'. However, I acknowledge that other institutions, such as 'the state' appear more durable and stable and that further theorisation is needed to account for the 'fixity' of discursive structures.

Another contribution I have endeavoured to make to discourse theory concerns methodology and method. Laclau and Mouffe have tended to ignore methodological issues and while secondary authors have attempted to fill the gap, many empirical 'applications' of discourse theory adopt a voice and perspective that is inconsistent with its philosophical premises. Discourse theory's rejection of objective realities and causal explanations in favour of assumptions of a socially organised reality implies that reflexivity is critical, yet the seminal texts display an almost complete failure to acknowledge this aspect, with analysis presented as if it was objective analysis of the social world. In writing the empirical chapters I adopted a more 'confessional style', which I believe is more consistent with the epistemological assumptions of discourse theory and is particularly appropriate when the researcher is part of the culture under study, as I am.

There are many reasons *not* to bother with discourse theory as a framework for studying organisational processes and related issues of identity. Being positioned in political philosophy, it presupposes extensive knowledge of Marxism, which was unfamiliar ground for me when I began my research. It comes with a new and complex vocabulary, which demands a significant investment of energy just to come to grips with its central claims, and there is little in the way of methodological principles or guidelines for conducting empirical work. In addition, other critical approaches such as critical discourse analysis and Foucauldian studies are already well established within organisation studies. Despite these challenges, I believe that discourse theory does offer something different. It provides a novel rearticulation of structure and agency – issues that have long preoccupied researchers in organisation studies. The understanding of dislocation remains problematic and the theorisation of the durability of discursive structures warrants further investigation, but these are tasks worth pursuing. In the next section, I propose that discourse theory can also contribute to conceptions of the role of intellectuals in society, which has relevance for this research in providing an understanding of the academic's public role.

Discourse Theory and the Role of Intellectuals

In Chapter 2, I introduced the literature on the role of intellectuals in society because it provides a useful lens through which we can view the academic's public role. I located different conceptions on a continuum of modernism and postmodernism, with modernist approaches focusing on the role of science in legitimating academics' knowledge and postmodern approaches deconstructing this position to claim that

intellectuals have lost their authority as bearers of objective, scientific knowledge. In this section, I suggest discourse theory can contribute to a theorisation of the relationship between intellectuals and society in two ways. First, it provides a theoretical framework for deconstructing modernist positions, which are grounded in grand narratives such as positivist science and Marx's historical materialism. Second, it provides a horizon on which a new position for intellectuals can be constructed – a position that occupies a middle ground between the extremes of modernism and postmodernism and represents a rethinking, rather than abandonment of the modernist conception of the intellectual. This position, the 'critical and engaged expert' can fulfil an important role in discourse theory's 'radical and plural democracy'.

Deconstructing the Role of Intellectuals

Discourse theory draws upon structuralist, poststructuralist and psychoanalytic traditions to elaborate an approach that highlights the contingency of identity, thereby deconstructing the Marxist assumption that identity is determined by the part played out in the relations of production. Laclau and Mouffe (1985), for example, argue that classical Marxism's privileging of a class identity cannot account for the emergence of new social movements, which do not appear to be organised around a class-consciousness. This critique can also be deployed to deconstruct modernist conceptions of the social role of intellectuals that privilege a structural location within the relations of production. Gramsci, for instance, believed that every class "creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function" (1971, p.5). The role of the intellectual is to secure hegemony for the dominant class, or any class that seeks to replace it. Gramsci does go beyond the concept of class in developing a theory of hegemony, yet retains a foundationalist position by assuming that class remains a single unifying principle. Mannheim is another who develops his position on intellectuals on a class foundation. Despite positing that intellectuals are a "relatively classless stratum" (1991, p.137) and therefore 'freely-floating', Mannheim observes that in history intellectuals have always attached themselves to one class or another, since people from these classes are not capable of theorising their own position. Konrad and Szelenyi (1979) and Gouldner (1979) also refer to a structural location, arguing that intellectuals have become a 'new class' in themselves, pretending to carry out the historical mission of the working class, but instead establishing their own class domination over the working class. This is not to suggest that these theorists conceive of the role of intellectuals as being determined by their part in the relations of production. However, discourse theory provides a way of thinking about the role of intellectuals that does not rely on the concept of class, by seeing the identity of the intellectual as the product of a hegemonic struggle between competing political projects.

Discourse theory also enables us to deconstruct the idea of the sovereign individual with preconstituted interests, which is evident in Weber's conception of the 'value-free expert'. For Weber, the vocational mission of the scientist is limited to providing value-free technical expertise that enables people to make informed choices between alternative courses of action. Weber (1989) contends that those who embrace science as a vocation are "engaged in science for science's sake" (1989, p.13). Scientists are constituted as value-free experts, heroically pursuing a project of progressive knowledge production within a specialised field of inquiry, totally unresponsive to questions of values, or the commercial exploitation of their work. Weber sees agents

as motivated by preconstituted interests, such as vocation. From the perspective of discourse theory, the identity of the value-free specialist is seen as a contingent identity ‘thrown up’ by a (positivist) project of progressive knowledge production.

Viewed from the perspective of discourse theory, modernist conceptions of the role of the intellectuals in society are seen as contingent, political constructions that involve subjectivity, hegemony and the exercise of power. Does this mean however, that we can no longer advocate any positive role for intellectuals? Can discourse theory form the basis of a progressive politics and if so, what is the role of intellectuals? In the remainder of this section I suggest that the insights of discourse theory do not inevitably lead to political nihilism, by using the concept of ‘radical and plural democracy’ to articulate a positive role for the intellectual.

Constructing the Critical and Engaged Expert

In chapter 3, I suggested that discourse theory is distinct from other discourse approaches in its preoccupation with articulating a new political direction for left politics. Far from neglecting the difficult political questions, the impetus for Laclau and Mouffe was very much political – a desire to reformulate the left-wing project in a way that connects the struggle of the working class and the struggle of new social movements. The concept of a *radical and plural democracy* is the nodal point of their political theory and it can be used to construct a positive role for academics as engaged critics who extend the boundaries of public debate.

Laclau and Mouffe’s project of a radical and plural democracy attempts to bridge the divide between modernism and postmodernism, by defending the political content of the Enlightenment, such as justice, equality and freedom, whilst abandoning its epistemological foundations of the sovereign individual and reason. While democracy is the distinctive feature of modernity, postmodern thinking has recognised “the impossibility of any foundation or final legitimation that is constitutive of the very advent of the democratic form of society and thus of modernity itself” (Mouffe, 1989, p.34). Despite rejecting the foundations of modernity, Laclau and Mouffe believe this does not lead to political nihilism. Universality is an impossibility, but it is because of this impossibility that a particular hegemonic articulation assumes the role of symbolising the absent universality. The universal is an empty place that competing political struggles attempt to fill with meaning. In this context, the Enlightenment is read as one hegemonic articulation that competes to represent the universality of the social order, a ‘horizon’ that is constructed through political argument. Far from ending up in a “relativist gloom” (Geras, 1987, p.67), this asserts the importance of continued political struggle, to defend positions from competing articulations that seek to transform and undermine them.

A radical and plural democracy is, therefore, the site of struggle between competing hegemonic articulations, where each seeks to fill the empty place of the universal, yet ultimately fails to do so. Laclau and Mouffe’s position is distinct from Habermas (1987), for whom ‘communicative action’ is the basis of a model of the public sphere which is oriented towards mutual understanding and common action. Both Laclau and Mouffe and Habermas highlight the importance of taking multiple perspectives into account, but discourse theory’s concept of antagonism precludes the possibility of any rational consensus, as envisaged by Habermas, on the basis that in a rational

consensus relations of power will have disappeared – an impossibility since relations of power are constitutive of the social. Mouffe argues that Habermas, by theorising the possibility of a rational consensus, inadvertently undermines the democratic pluralist process. In Western democratic societies, this is leading to a consensus model where political parties from the Left and Right are congregating in the centre of the political spectrum, which reduces the opportunity for people to identify with alternative positions and contributes to disinterest and passivity in politics.

It's important to realise that it's not by proposing a model of deliberative democracy and saying people should sit together and discuss and try to understand an argument that we are going to put a real participatory level in politics. I think that in order to have a vibrant democratic life, we need to have a real struggle against different positions. (Laclau & Mouffe, 1999, p.25)

The project of radical and plural democracy is therefore about multiplicity, conflict and participation. I suggest that we can use it to rethink the role of intellectuals in society, and more specifically, to rethink the public role of academics. In a radical and plural democracy, the function of intellectuals would be to articulate positions that challenge received wisdom and by doing so, widens the scope of democratic debate. This process of articulation would take place through active engagement with social movements engaged in political struggle. Intellectuals in a radical and plural democracy would appeal to values, but would recognise these values as social constructs that are the result of political struggle, rather than essential entities whose form and meaning is fixed for all time.

It is tempting to construct a label for this conception of the 'intellectual', since almost everyone engaged in the debate about the role of intellectuals does so. While it can be argued that faculty perform the function of intellectuals, the signifier 'intellectual' had little resonance with my respondents, so it would seem inappropriate to use the term in my rearticulation of the public role of academics. The term I prefer is 'critical and engaged expert'. 'Critical' implies that academics recognise as one of their primary roles the articulation of positions that challenge conventional ideas and received wisdom. Along with Mills, I see value in academics being 'unconstructive', in that it assists in creating an environment where prevailing ideas and attitudes can be scrutinised. In this way, being 'unconstructive', through offering critique, becomes 'constructive' for a healthy democracy. 'Engaged' implies that academics interact not only with students and other academics, but with audiences outside the university, such as businesses, government, think-tanks, political parties and journalists. I have resisted using the term 'public', because of the baggage that accompanies the term 'public intellectual'. Consistent with Foucault, I reject the notion of the 'universal' or 'public' intellectual who is spatially represented as outside, which supposedly permits objectivity and an ability to see things in their true form. However, I would not go as far as Foucault in suggesting that academics have no privileged position from which to participate in political life. I would also not go as far as Bauman, whose 'interpreter' forgoes all legislative ambitions and becomes a mediator of communication. The 'critical and engaged expert' is privileged in the sense of having the time and other resources to contemplate and scrutinise social life that others outside the university do not possess. However, it does not follow that the knowledge they produce is objective and value-free. The 'critical and engaged expert' acknowledges that they speak from a particular value orientation and they do

not claim to speak ‘the truth’. Their role is a political one – to secure hegemony for values such as justice, freedom and equality that construct a horizon for social transformation.

Consistent with the philosophical premises of discourse theory, my construction of the ‘critical and engaged expert’ can be located somewhere between the modernist positions of Weber and Mills and the postmodern positions of Bauman and Foucault. The insights of postmodernism are useful for deconstructing the modern conception of the intellectual, but they go too far by abandoning the notion of a politicised role for university faculty connected to a coherent political project. Faculty can appeal to concepts such as justice, fairness and rights, but in the knowledge that these concepts are the product of political struggle, rather than essential, natural entities whose meaning is secure for all time. They can continue to ‘legislate’ but without the claims to universality inherent in modernist conceptions of the intellectual. The concept of ‘radical and plural democracy’ is a ‘horizon’ that can guide political activity by academics without an appeal to foundations. Far from breeding nihilism and ‘anti-politics’, the insights of discourse theory demonstrate the primacy of politics and the vital role that faculty can play as a force for social change. In the next section, I assess the possibilities for the ‘critical and engaged expert’ in the contemporary context of higher education.

Assessing the Possibilities for the Critical and Engaged Expert

At various points in this thesis I have suggested that the university has an important position in society as a source of social criticism, a positioning that contributes to the healthy functioning of a democratic political system. This democratic function is embodied in the concept of academic freedom, which provides university faculty with the freedom within the law to challenge received wisdom and put forward controversial ideas, without fear of jeopardising their jobs. In examining the literature on academic freedom I identified three main threats to this privilege; the professionalisation of knowledge, which encourages faculty to *neglect* their critical public role; the commodification of knowledge, which serves to *devalue* this role, and the critique of modern science, which *undermines* the public role, by challenging the foundations on which critical public work has traditionally been based. In this section, I reconsider this literature by assessing the possibilities for critical and engaged public work in contemporary UK research-led business schools. I conclude that academic freedom, as traditionally conceived, is indeed threatened by professionalisation, commodification and the critique of modernity. However there is also cause for some optimism regarding possibilities for change.

Jacoby (1987) has highlighted how institutional factors encourage academics to write for other academics rather than the public. In the professionalised university, academics neglect their critical public role in favour of developing their careers as experts within a specialist domain and academic freedom becomes merely the freedom to be academic. In the context of research-led UK business schools, there is much evidence to support this conclusion. The pressure on faculty to ‘publish or perish’ is driven by the institutional demands of the RAE and the career aspirations of faculty. In its present form, the RAE rewards communication with academics rather than those outside the ‘ivory tower’; it also tends to reward communication within a disciplinary specialisation, rather than across disciplines. Given the financial and reputational advantages accrued by excellent performance on the RAE, business

schools who wish to be considered among the elite UK business schools are encouraged to 'play the RAE game' whether they like it or not. This means recruiting faculty who have established research records, or, in the case of junior faculty, have at least demonstrated the potential to publish in top journals. Those who prioritise dissemination of their ideas to audiences outside the academy are disadvantaged in this environment. Business school faculty, especially those at junior levels, blame the RAE for preventing them from developing a more active public role. Securing the publications in quality journals necessary for submission into the RAE has to be the first priority, and that leaves little time, they say, for communicating with a wider public. This could be interpreted as a convenient excuse for not having to engage, since four publications in six years should leave time for other activities. However, given that my respondents already had a significant public role, they have all demonstrated a willingness to communicate with non-academic audiences. Clearly, the issue of promotion must also be taken into consideration. In the professionalised environment of top UK business schools, promotion is driven primarily by journal publication and while many respondents appear committed to an active public role, many are also committed to their careers and to the financial advantages and status that come with promotion. In this context, devoting time and energy to developing an active public role comes to be regarded as a sacrifice. It is reasonable to conclude therefore, that while academic freedom remains a legal privilege, the opportunities which it presents for critical public work are somewhat neglected by academics in UK research-led business schools.

While my research produces considerable evidence to support the professionalisation thesis put forward by Jacoby, it also provides some cause for optimism about the possibilities for change. The discourse-based theoretical approach highlights how the taken-for-granted meaning of 'professionalism' as communication with other academics within a specialised audience is itself open to contestation from competing articulations of the business school. My identification of an articulation that constitutes the business school as a commercial enterprise suggests that business schools are thinking more strategically about the public role and at some schools the greater priority given to these activities is reflected in the development of new performance indicators. Jacoby's professionalisation thesis assumes that career advantages accrue to those who retreat into the 'ivory tower', and while it could be argued this articulation remains hegemonic, it is being contested. Of course, the institutionalisation of the public role carries its own threats to the possibilities for critical public work, so I am not suggesting that the identity of the 'critical and engaged expert' will become a hegemonic subject position within the commercial enterprise articulation. My point is simply that our understanding of professionalisation and its consequences for critical public work is contingent and the product of a political struggle between competing discursive formations. Should public work accrue greater institutional rewards, there is at least a possibility that academic freedom may be seen by faculty as more relevant to their situation.

The second threat to academic freedom identified in the literature comes from the commodification of knowledge. As 'knowledge' is perceived to be more critical to the economy, greater value is placed on academic work that has some realisable commercial value. In addition, faculty are urged to become more 'customer facing' to attract funding from sources other than the public sector. The fear is that faculty will be reluctant to use their academic freedom to speak out on issues for fear of

discrediting themselves and their institutions and in doing so damage the chances of securing external funding. My research provides considerable evidence that academic freedom is threatened by an increasingly commercialised model of the business school. A few stories of explicit censorship of faculty by business school management did emerge in the interviews, yet it would be wrong to claim this is widespread. More common and, I would argue, more corrosive of academic freedom, is self-censorship by individual faculty. In an environment where autocratic management styles are replacing more collegial approaches and where short-term contracts are becoming more prevalent, there is concern amongst faculty, especially junior faculty, that any assertion of their legal entitlement to academic freedom might put them offside with their institutions, which are increasingly sensitive about how they are perceived by stakeholders. If there is a risk that speaking out publicly might inhibit your career, there is added incentive to keep quiet.

Again, while there is cause to be pessimistic about the possibilities for critical public work in commercialised business schools, some contradictory evidence did emerge. The literature on commodification assumes that the exchange (or market) value of technical work activity, which reproduces and legitimates the dominant order, is greater than critical activity, which challenges the status quo and therefore, that critical intellectual activity will be devalued and marginalised. As my analysis has demonstrated, this is not necessarily the case, since in an environment where 'independence' becomes commodified, there are opportunities for business schools to market themselves as 'critical' and by doing so, to differentiate themselves from the competition, especially those non-university based competitors. In an environment where universities are anxious to raise their profile, the position of the critical and engaged expert might be encouraged, especially when speaking out against the *status quo* is widely viewed as a strong indicator of the institution's open-mindedness and its refusal to be bowed by political pressures to silence such critics. In this environment, academic freedom might not become devalued, as the literature on commodification assumes. I acknowledge this is an optimistic conclusion and is likely to be the exception rather than the norm. However, the point remains that critical intellectual practices and identities can be accommodated and even fostered within a commodified higher education context.

The third threat to academic freedom identified in the literature comes from the critique of modernist science, which undermines academic freedom by challenging the knowledge claims upon which critical work is based. Academic freedom has traditionally been defended on the grounds that academics have privileged access to objective knowledge, secured through scientific inquiry. It follows that academics have an important role in challenging prejudice and misconception, wherever it appears, but especially when propagated by those in positions of authority. The postmodern critique has weakened the authority of academics by challenging the monopolistic truth claims of modernist science and in doing so, it has weakened the defence of academic freedom. As with the other threats to academic freedom identified in this section, my research provides evidence that confirms these fears. Amongst my respondents, there was little identification with the identity of the 'intellectual' whose authority to comment on matters of public controversy is legitimated by supposedly objective knowledge, which 'non-intellectuals' have no such access to. If anything, business school faculty are experiencing a crisis of confidence in their authority as 'legislators'. Faculty are reluctant to comment on

matters outside their specialisation, believing that on these issues they have no more authority than the ‘man on the street’. However, they are more assertive about their authority as ‘experts’ and appear willing to participate in public debate in their specialist area without claiming that their authority is based on objective knowledge. They might be reluctant to engage in areas perceived to be outside their expertise, but this does not imply they must become value-free technical experts. Many respondents are aware of the political nature of their research and want to use their position as ‘experts’ to ‘make a difference’ in society.

The issue is whether academic freedom can, or should, continue to be defended in an environment characterised by professionalisation, commodification and an undermining of the university as a site of ‘truth’ production. Certainly, the epistemological justification for academic freedom, as being the pursuit of truth, has been undermined by the critique of positivism. However, it does not follow that the university loses its distinctive democratic role as a source of social criticism. Academic freedom can continue to be defended on democratic grounds on the basis that it is desirable to have a plurality of perspectives, based on competing value orientations, engaging with the major issues of the day. Academics may not have privileged access to the truth, but they do occupy a privileged position in being able to investigate and contemplate issues in depth and by being subjected to critical scrutiny by peers. In a democratic society that purports to defend values of pluralism and free speech, academic freedom can also be defended.

The Business School – Critical and Engaged?

I began this thesis by identifying the different interests that have led me on this research journey, including the democratic function of the university, the public role of academics, as well as postmodern ways of theorising the social world. To knit these interests together I used the debate about the mission and objectives of the business school. I began the first chapter by providing a brief overview of the debate and it therefore seems appropriate to conclude the final chapter by returning to this discussion, to place my work in context and to suggest avenues for further study. In this final section, I suggest that while ‘critique’ and ‘engagement’ tend to be promoted as an either/or in academic debates about the ‘relevance’ of business schools, my research highlights possibilities for business schools to gain a competitive advantage by positioning themselves as critical *and* engaged.

The focus of the academic literature on business schools has been the concept of ‘relevance’. There is agreement from all sides that business schools need to be relevant, in order to justify continued funding from the state and to repel the competitive threat posed by non-university providers of management education, such as corporate universities and private training establishments. However, there is no agreement about what relevance means and to whom business schools should be relevant. These are issues that are not going to magically disappear. The history of the UK business school is a history of struggle between competing objectives. It is difficult, if not impossible for business schools to deliver on academic excellence, usefulness to industry and wealth creation, but if history is any guide, these are tensions that business schools will continue to have to deal with. There are also signs that the ‘relevance’ debate is becoming more urgent. Whatever the successes of the past, in terms of expanding enrolments or revenue generation, there are signs that the ‘golden days’ for business schools may be over. More questions are being raised

about the value of an MBA, the competency of business school graduates and the usefulness of knowledge generated by faculty, so the 'relevance' debate is one that business schools cannot afford to ignore.

Without wanting to paint an overly simplistic picture, the 'relevance' debate has become polarised around the nodal points of 'critical' and 'engaged'. This can be illustrated by returning to two branches of the relevance debate that I referred to in the opening chapter: the Mode 2 agenda and the case of critical management studies (CMS). Those who advocate a Mode 2 agenda downplay any democratic function for the business school and imply that faculty should pursue the issues and problems identified by business as most relevant to their needs. This position has infuriated those who argue that defining relevance so narrowly will compromise the business school's distinctive qualities of independence and disinterestedness. Faculty, they argue, must be free to pursue diverse agendas, even if this is not considered by external stakeholders to be relevant at the time. The case of CMS arouses equally strong emotions. Here the accusation is that despite being well positioned to develop a critical public role, critical management scholars have become obsessed with achieving academic credibility. It is argued that while important contributions to the literature have been made, academic credibility has become an end in itself, to the extent that critical management scholars have distanced themselves from management practice and have ceased to be relevant. The counter argument is that the message of the critical scholars is not a message either corporate organisations or government are prepared to listen to, let alone pay for, and that if faculty are pushed further to satisfy these stakeholders, there is a risk that the business school's critical capabilities will be lost. Here we can see the dangers of polarising the debate – in both the Mode 2 and CMS discussions, the implication is that business schools can be engaged, or critical, but not both. Mode 2 is perceived as promoting engagement at the expense of critique, whilst CMS is accused of pursuing critique at the expense of engagement. My research has attempted to add a fresh perspective on the issue of relevance by considering the possibilities for business school faculty to be both critical *and* engaged. That it is possible to do both is, of course, not a novel insight, but I have endeavoured to investigate closely the factors that encourage and constrain such activity in contemporary UK research-led business schools.

Business schools must demonstrate their 'relevance' in order to secure their futures, but 'relevance' does not have to mean the pursuit of a narrow commercialisation agenda where the business school becomes the 'servant' of industry, propagating a strictly managerialist view of the world. In the current discursive terrain, relevance does require having some form of engagement with audiences outside the academy. This engagement can be critical of management practice, but it must engage with practice through some form of public work. The success of critical management scholars in gaining a foothold in UK business schools demonstrates there is a legitimate role for scholarship that asks difficult questions about organisation and management. As Grey and Willmott (2002) acknowledge, the next challenge for critical management academics is to be more proactive in engaging that critique with organisations outside the university. This need not be restricted to consulting with organisations, as external work is often narrowly conceived. After all, the message of the critical management scholars is not a message that many commercial organisations would readily understand or be prepared to pay for. Involvement with the public policy process is another form of engagement and in an environment where

the discourse of 'evidence-based policy' is dominant, there are multiple opportunities for business school faculty. The problem here is the same however, since the 'evidence' produced by critical management academics might not be the evidence that government wishes to hear. There are, however, other forms of engagement that demonstrate relevance, such as the preparation of case studies, work with NGOs, think-tanks, unions and political parties. There is also the popular media and the internet, which offer a range of opportunities for academics to reach a wider public. The debate in the popular press about the complicity of business schools in recent corporate scandals indicates that the role of 'watchdog' and 'scrutiniser' of business activity is one the public might be expecting business school faculty to accept. As I have argued previously, adopting this position is one way that business schools can demonstrate their distinctiveness and their relevance. It is also one way schools can attempt to secure a competitive advantage and in doing so, secure their future.

Engaging with the wider public is not simply a matter of finding the time, though this in itself poses significant challenges in an environment where the RAE and university promotions are geared around publication in academic journals. As my research highlights, it is also a matter of skill. Distilling complex ideas and theories into a form that can be successfully communicated to a lay audience requires particular skills, and these are skills that are often not given priority in the 'ivory tower'. It is ironic that I employed Laclau and Mouffe's work so heavily in my research, when they are cited for exemplifying the tendency of postmodern thinkers on the Left to communicate in a way that only a small band of like-minded academics can understand (Epstein, 1990). I cannot argue with this, given the frustrations that I experienced in trying to come to grips with their work. The skill of translating the insights from postmodern approaches into a language that audiences outside the academy can understand remains a significant challenge to the development of critical and engaged public work, but it is a challenge worth pursuing in my view.

It would be unwise to draw too many conclusions from my research. As I have stated previously, the research design does not pretend to be 'scientific', making any claims to validity, reliability and generalisability inherently problematic. Nevertheless, I do believe there is sufficient of interest here to warrant further study. Time and financial constraints meant the research was restricted to the UK context but clearly, it would be interesting to investigate the experiences of faculty from other jurisdictions, in particular the US. I expect there would be similarities in the issues that constrain and facilitate the public role of faculty, especially concerning the pressures associated with professionalisation and commodification. I also expect there would be differences, since US business schools have developed within an environment of philanthropy that has never existed in the UK. In the UK it is strongly held that state funding is a prerequisite for an autonomous and independent university to exist, so it would be interesting to see how issues around autonomy and independence are played out in the US context. There is also evidence to suggest that US universities are more likely to celebrate their 'intellectuals' and to encourage and reward them for engaging in public work (Furedi, 2001). Another jurisdiction worthy of study would be France, because of the tradition of the public intellectual that has developed there. Business school faculty in the UK seem reluctant to participate in public debate that concerns matters outside their narrow specialisation and it would be interesting to see if this differs in France and if so, how faculty justify this wider public role.

Within the UK context, there are more avenues to explore than has been possible in this thesis. Resource constraints meant that my focus was research-led business schools, but perhaps the issues that facilitate and or constrain the public role are different for schools that are teaching, rather than research-led. The RAE was cited as a significant deterrent on public work by many respondents in this study, however, in teaching-led institutions, which do not prioritise performance on the RAE, I would expect its restraining significance would be less. It would also be interesting to investigate the extent to which faculty in these institutions identify with the notion of a democratic public role, or whether this is an elitist conception confined to research-led business schools. Another avenue would be to interview faculty who do not have a significant public role, to investigate if, and how, their motivations and attitudes towards the public role differ from those who were the focus of this study.

I began this thesis by asking whether business schools have a role that extends beyond their economic function as wealth creators. I hope that my research demonstrates business schools can also serve a valuable democratic function as scrutinisers of business activity. This wider, more questioning public role is marginalised in prevailing conceptions of an increasingly commercialised business school, but there is evidence that the identity of a critical and engaged business school (and business school faculty) can accommodate a number of the requirements commended by advocates of Mode 2 knowledge without compromising the ‘independence’ that lies at the heart of the university’s traditional *raison d’être*.

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Appendices

Appendix A: RAE Rating Scale 2001

Appendix B: Interview Schedule

Appendix C: Analysis of Respondents

Appendix A: RAE Rating Scale 2001

5*	Quality that equates to attainable levels of international excellence in more than half of the research activity submitted and attainable levels of national excellence in the remainder.
5	Quality that equates to attainable levels of international excellence in up to half of the research activity submitted and to attainable levels of national excellence in virtually all of the remainder.
4	Quality that equates to attainable levels of national excellence in virtually all of the research activity submitted, showing some evidence of international excellence.
3a	Quality that equates to attainable levels of national excellence in over two-thirds of the research activity submitted, possibly showing evidence of international excellence.
3b	Quality that equates to attainable levels of national excellence in more than half of the research activity submitted.
2	Quality that equates to attainable levels of national excellence in up to half of the research activity submitted.
1	Quality that equates to attainable levels of national excellence in none, or virtually none, of the research activity submitted.

Source: Higher Education and Research Opportunities in the UK (HERO)

Appendix B: Interview Schedule

(These open-ended questions were part of an unstructured interview format and were used as guidelines only).

Your Public Role

- How would you describe it?
- What does it involve?
- What were your motivations for getting involved?
- How much did career considerations influence the nature and extent of your involvement?
- What networks did you form within the business school? Outside the business school? Which were more valuable?
- Who acted as a constraint on your involvement? How they constrain you? What was the attitude of business school management?

Your Other Roles

- How important is your public role relative to your other roles? What other roles do you identify with?
- Do you see your public role as distinct from your other roles? To what extent are they similar? To what extent are they different?

Your Views on the Public Role

- What responsibilities do you consider business school academics to have to the public? Do you think your thinking on this is different from other academics? From university management? From the state?
- Do you believe business school academics should restrict their interactions with the public to those areas where they possess specialist expertise? Why/why not?
- Do you consider it important (or even possible) that academics be impartial when performing their public role? Why/why not?
- Do you think there are changes that have (or are) taking place in higher education that affect the nature of the public role or the ability of business school academics to perform it? What are those changes?

Appendix C: Analysis of Respondents

<u>Analysis of Respondents: Schools A and B</u>											
ID#	Rank	Gender	Subject Area ⁱ	Policy ⁱⁱ	Type of Public Role Activity					Popular ^{vii} Books	Other ^{viii}
					Practice ⁱⁱⁱ	Media ^{iv}	Think ^v Tank	Conf. ^{vi}			
A1	Professor	F	HRM						x		x
A2	Professor	M	Management		x	x					
A3	Snr Lecturer	M	Economics	x		x			x		
A4	Professor	M	HRM	x	x	x					
A5	Professor	M	Strategic Management		x	x					
A6	Professor	M	Marketing		x	x					
A7	Professor	F	Organisation Analysis		x	x			x		
A8	Professor	M	Accounting and Finance			x	x				
A9	Professor	M	Operations Management		x	x			x		
A10	Professor	M	Marketing		x	x			x		
B1	Professor	M	Marketing		x						x
B2	Professor	M	Marketing	x	x	x					
B3	Reader	M	HRM	x		x	x		x	x	x
B4	Professor	M	Entrepreneurship	x	x	x			x		
B5	Professor	F	Marketing	x	x						
B6	Professor	M	Marketing	x							
B7	Professor	M	Marketing	x	x	x			x		
B8	Professor	M	HRM	x	x	x	x		x		x
B9	Professor	M	Strategy		x					x	
B10	Professor	M	HRM	x	x						

Analysis of Respondents: Schools C and D

ID#	Rank	Gender	Subject Area	Type of Public Role Activity					Popular Books	Other
				Policy	Practice	Media	Think Tank	Conf.		
C1	Professor	M	Strategic Management	x	x	x		x		
C2	Professor	M	Operations Management	x	x	x		x		
C3	Lecturer	F	Organisation analysis		x					
C4	Professor	M	Strategic Management		x					
C5	Professor	M	Accounting and Finance	x						
C6	Professor	M	Strategic Management	x	x	x		x		
C7	Snr Lecturer	M	Occupational Psychology		x	x				
C8	Professor	F	Organisation Analysis		x					
C9	Lecturer	M	Strategic Management		x	x				
C10	Professor	M	Operations Management	x						
D1	Lecturer	M	Entrepreneurship	x	x	x		x	x	
D2	Professor	M	Marketing		x	x				
D3	Professor	M	Accounting and Finance	x	x					
D4	Lecturer	F	Marketing		x	x				
D5	Unit Director	F	Entrepreneurship		x					
D6	Professor	M	Strategic Management	x	x					
D7	Professor	F	Entrepreneurship	x	x			x	x	
D8	Professor	M	Strategic Management	x	x			x	x	
D9	Professor	M	Information Systems		x					
D10	Professor	M	Marketing	x	x	x				

Analysis of Respondents: Schools E and F

ID#	Rank	Gender	Subject Area	Type of Public Role Activity						
				Policy	Practice	Media	Think Tank	Conf.	Popular Books	Other
E1	Professor	M	Marketing	x	x	x	x	x	x	
E2	Professor	F	HRM		x	x		x	x	
E3	Professor	M	Economics	x	x	x				
E4	Professor	M	Economics	x	x					
E5	Professor	M	Economics	x		x				
E6	Professor	M	Organisation Analysis		x	x				
E7	Adjunct AP	M	Strategic Management		x	x				
E8	Professor	M	Strategic Management		x	x		x		
E9	Assoc Prof	M	Economics	x	x					
E10	Researcher	F	Economics	x	x	x	x	x		
F1	Professor	M	Public Sector Management	x		x		x		
F2	Researcher	M	Economics		x	x		x		
F3	Professor	M	Strategic Management	x	x	x		x	x	
F4	Professor	M	Strategic Management	x	x	x				
F5	Researcher	M	Economics	x	x	x				
F6	Lecturer	F	Public Sector Management	x	x					
F7	Lecturer	F	Marketing	x	x					
F8	Professor	M	Accounting and Finance						x	x
F9	Professor	M	HRM	x	x		x	x		
F10	Professor	M	Economics							

Analysis of Respondents: Pilot Interviews

ID#	Rank	Gender	Subject Area	Type of Public Role Activity						
				Policy	Practice	Media	Think Tank	Conf.	Popular Books	Other
G1	Researcher	F	Organisation Analysis	x	x	x		x	x	x
G2	Professor	M	HRM	x		x				
G3	Professor	M	Economics	x		x				

ⁱ Respondents were categorised using the 13 sub-areas of Business and Management Studies identified in the RAE 2001.

(<http://www.hero.ac.uk/rae/overview/>)

ⁱⁱ ‘Policy’ is any public policy related work at local, regional, national or supra-national level.

ⁱⁱⁱ ‘Practice’ includes interaction with for-profit organisations, often on a consulting basis.

^{iv} ‘Media’ includes newspapers, radio, television, magazines and the Internet.

^v ‘Think-tanks’ are organisations that conduct research and issue reports, often on matters of public policy.

^{vi} ‘Conferences’ refers to the organisation of, or involvement in, conferences that seek to engage with external audiences, such as practitioners and policymakers.

^{vii} ‘Popular books’ refers to the authoring of books targeted at a non-specialist audience.

^{viii} ‘Other’ includes external work that does not come under any other category, including work with political parties, unions and other not-for-profit organisations.