The UK Doctorate: Policy, Power and Professionals in the Neoliberal University

Paul Edward Roberts

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:

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Summary

Nature and scope of enquiry

This thesis explores the lived experiences of eight Graduate School Managers, drawing on the time they spent fulfilling the role in eleven UK Universities. It aims to answer through an analysis of power and affect the following questions:

- How can we evaluate Graduate School Managers as neo-liberal subjects?

- What power do Graduate School Managers possess to get others to do or not do things?

- What is the affective formation Graduate School Managers make of their own roles?

- What do Graduate School Managers believe needs to be done differently?

The conceptual framework for the study builds on a growing body of critical higher education studies on the impact of neoliberal reason on UK Universities. I draw on a Foucauldian theoretical framework, such as his description of capillary power and his conception that discourses are 'practices that form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972:49). This is augmented by other poststructuralist writers such as Brown (2015) and Butler (2005, 2006) and affect theorists (Ahmed, 2004 & Wetherell, 2012).

Contribution to knowledge and practice

My contribution to knowledge lies 'not in the hope of proving anything, but rather in the hope of learning something' (Flyvbjerg, 2006:224). There are currently more 'non-academic' staff or professional services staff employed by UK Universities (the UK's Higher Education Statistics Agency, for the academic year 2018-19 recorded 222,885 non-academic staff and 217,065 academic staff) and yet there remains a silence about their experiences. They appear to escape being the object of study, which in doctoral education is invariably either the student or the supervisor. By focusing on Graduate

School Managers' lived experiences, I aim to contribute to a breaking of the silence about the experiences of non-academic staff members within the neoliberal UK University.

The interviews with eight Graduate School Managers provided a number of specific recommendations for practice:

- Institutions need to be aware of gendered roles and the appropriate professional development and support.

- University executives should pay greater consideration to doctoral researchers, who make up just over 4% of the student population in the UK. Doctoral education should be *appropriately* included in institutional plans and not ignored.

- Support for the affective lives of all participants in the neoliberal university should be provided.

Method

The thesis is based on interviews with eight individuals who had served as Graduate School Managers in eleven different institutions (eight Pre-1992 institutions and three Post-1992 institutions). All interviews were transcribed and analysed through close reading and thematic analysis.

Principal arguments in this thesis are that:

- The political economy of neoliberalism in the late capitalist economy has been installed via material, discursive and affective means.
- Discussions about the neoliberal university tend to focus on the 'macro-processes' and attention should be paid to the micro level of lived experiences
- Discourse has affect and the affective lives of all groups of staff in the neoliberal university should be researched.
- By highlighting the affective economy of neoliberalism, a reverse discourse to the dominant narratives of neoliberalism can be created.

Conclusions

Graduate School Managers should not be simply dismissed as agents of neoliberalism, nor as one homogenised category of analysis. My main findings were that:

- Policy provides a valuable lens through which to evaluate Graduate School Managers as neo-liberal subjects. Their experience of policy changes was: steeped in affect; laden with values and creative potential; yet also constraining/disciplining.

- Power was most evident through Graduate School Managers interaction with policy.

- The affective formation described by Graduate School Managers included gains that were both emotional and material alongside substantive losses of time to reflect and feelings of security/certainty.

- Despite identifying many of the negative features recognised in the literature on neoliberalism in higher education, Graduate School Managers beliefs on what should be done differently were more incremental than revolutionary. They could all be accommodated within the neoliberal university.

Acknowledgements

Being a slow researcher does have an effect on others and there are a number of individuals whom I would like to acknowledge.

I am exceptionally grateful to the eight Graduate School Managers who kindly agreed to participate in this study and gave up their valuable time to be interviewed. Their narratives form the basis of this thesis.

Furthermore, I wish to thank my main supervisor, Professor Louise Morley, for her provision of incredible opportunities during my doctoral journey, tremendous perseverance, and stimulating conversations! There is a very interesting line between supervision and therapy and I am so grateful for the time she has invested in me over many years! I'd also like to thank my second supervisor, Dr Barbara Crossouard, for her incredible patience whilst awaiting my final draft! Crossouard (2010) demonstrated how the doctoral learning experience has a powerful impact on individuals' views of themselves during their doctoral studies and with these two kind and inspiring supervisors I have been very blessed.

There are so many colleagues and friends to thank, especially the friends I have made in the Centre for Higher Education and Equity Research. These include: Professor John Pryor whose early encouragement was so vital, Daniel Leyton with whom I walked the streets of Seville discussing resistance and revolution, Yasser Kosbar who accompanied me on an epic train journey through rural Japan, and both Emily Danvers and Charlotte Morris who have still to recover from my karaoke rendition of 'Boom! Shake the Room' by DJ Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince. There are many others, my colleagues on mental health research (Clio, Cassie, Laura, Jeremey and Sophie) and within the Research & Enterprise Division. However, it would be most remiss if I did not thank Dr Ian Carter in particular whose steadfast support made this journey possible.

Yet the process of the doctorate is not without problems. Skeggs (2010) noted, women's labour (in its many permutations: care, parenting, domestic, affective) has been central to the reproduction of capital, but that it has been made invisible, surplus and naturalised, and is not counted in theories of value. My wife's labour (Finch, 1983) has facilitated all that I have achieved, and I am deeply indebted to her. It is remarkable we are still married and the affective resonance of doctoral education on partners, and its ability to provoke discomfort and relational friction should surely be the subject of further research! There

are only so many times you can say, 'I'm sorry I wasn't listening' or claim that the worried frown on your face was trigger by a deep angst over the congruence of your ontological and epistemological positioning and not what was actually happening around you! Thank you, Amanda and to my three wonderful children (Naomi, Immy and Alex) who have sustained me through this.

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Chapter 1

A slow art: hybridity and international perspectives

It is important to understand the researcher's own position as part of considering the research itself. Whilst I often find it embarrassing to talk about myself, since I am coming from a constructivist epistemology wherein, "the inquirer and the subject of the inquiry are interlocked in such a way that the findings of an investigation are the literal creation of the inquiry process" (Koch, 1999:26), I feel it is required for any readers of this thesis. I will explore my 'interlocked' position further later on in the thesis, but I wanted to start with a brief biography.

On 7th February 2011, I was appointed as the Assistant Director of the Doctoral School at the University of Sussex, 'the administrative lead on the further development of the Doctoral School'. By the 20th September 2012 I was enrolled on the University's Doctor of Education (EdD) programme. This was far from a well-constructed career development plan but driven by a desire to develop an understanding of what was happening within my professional context. It only became a reality due to agreement by a very supportive spouse and the discovery of a staff fee waiver policy! Despite the sponsorship of my institution, there were no requirements with respect to the process or the outcomes of the research. My interest was to study the situated actions, cultural practices and everyday rationalities of Graduate School Managers, such as myself. Its origin was as a hermeneutic inquiry to develop an understanding of what is happening within my professional context (Koch, 1999). I wished to explore a growing sense of 'alienation' from my professional role during the move from what I perceived to be the liberal to the neoliberal university. In relation to Scott et al's (2004) examination of why students chose to do a professional doctorate, I would identify myself more closely to the 'intrinsic motivation group', that is an established Research & Enterprise Administrator enrolled primarily to develop personal understanding as well as for intellectual challenge. Yet, you will not be surprised, given the poststructuralist approach I will articulate, that I perceive such a simple and linear categorisation, 'fails to depict the complex and messy nature of human motivation' (Wellington & Sikes, 2006). Nevertheless, by undertaking the Doctorate of Education I had entered into a 'third space' (Whitchurch, 2012), moving fluidly along a continuum of 'academic' and 'non-academic' positioning. My determination to reflect on and challenge my own thoughts and practice, whilst playing a key role in sustaining me during the course of my professional role, could also be perceived as an administrator becoming 'other'. The issue of my hybridised identity of

both a researcher and a professional is something I will return to in Chapter 3 when I outline my theoretical framework.

Certainly, undertaking this thesis has challenged my identity, which indeed is not uncommon for doctoral researchers as found by Leonard, Becker and Coate (2005). I have felt like a case study for Crossouard's (2010) finding that the doctoral learning experience has a significant impact on individuals' view of themselves during their studies. It has been a difficult process during a period of substantive societal shocks; the thesis began with the BREXIT crisis and concluded during the emergence of a global pandemic. Yet it was not a process without joy. Being a doctoral researcher in the Centre for Higher Education and Equity Research (CHEER) at the University of Sussex allowed me to become involved in five international research initiatives. Whilst these international research projects and initiatives were not part of my doctoral research (e.g. they drew on very different datasets), they were all focused on issues pertaining to doctoral researchers and their impact is summarised below.

The award of a Horizon 2020 Marie Sklodowska-Curie funded *Higher Education Internationalisation and Mobility* (HEIM) Project (Ref: EU project 643739) to the Centre for Higher Education and Equity Research (CHEER) allowed an initial exploration of the implications for the academy in embracing the challenge to develop future Roma knowledge producers. The main objective of the research was to understand how participation in HEIM secondments developed the skills, knowledge and capability of Early-Stage Researchers. The resulting book chapter (Roberts, 2020) drew on 10 semi-structured interviews with early-stage researchers (defined by the EU Horizon 2020 programme as having less than four years research experience) who participated in secondments funded by the project. The secondments took place from 2015-2017 at the University of Sussex (UK), University of Seville (Spain), University of Umea (Sweden) and the Roma Education Fund, Budapest, Hungary. Seven of the researchers were Roma (of which three were female and four were male) and three were non-Roma (including two males and one female). The project helped me to problematize identity, not least because the term 'Roma' was used to account for a heterogeneous minority ethnic group for whom there was considerable debate over categorisation and naming (Morley et al, 2020).

In March 2017, I was fortunate enough to secure Erasmus+ funding to visit the University of Gothenberg, where my supervisor was a Guest Professor in the Department for Education at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. This allowed me to research

doctoral studies in Sweden, noting key differences around doctoral education (e.g. the examination process). However, what was most striking about the visit was perceiving how the discourse of neoliberal reason had begun to permeate a different higher education system, as exemplified by Morley et al (2018b) in their discussions about the re-purposing of fika (the Swedish practice of assembling for a coffee break at work).

Between 1 November 2016 and 30 October 2019, I was part of the CHEER team funded by the University of Sussex's International Research Partnerships Fund to investigate how migrant academics and doctoral researchers experienced internationalisation in Japan. This again allowed me to be absorbed into a different regime of doctoral education. It was interesting to experience the perception of my role as a Graduate School Manager being framed as hugely bureaucratised and technologized. Indeed, there was an element of bemusement when talking with my Japanese colleagues about my role as a Graduate School Manager. The challenge of translating such a role to a Japanese doctoral education system that continued to preserve academic freedom. Park's (2008) 'secret garden' of doctoral supervision was flourishing in Japan compared to the death of autonomy (Dill, 2001) in the UK. Yet academic freedom brings with it some of the challenges that brings. For example, a female international doctoral researcher studying in Japan recalled her supervisor's questionable behaviour:

> …he send messages to me, phone call, he came to my hotel and there are many, many things…They promised but they didn't do. (Morley et al, 2020:9)

This was a moment that suddenly placed research ethics front and centre of my journey as a researcher. Such a disclosure was particularly challenging, as a professional responsible for the doctoral experience at a university I wished to take immediate action and report the alleged sexual harassment. However, the disclosure had come about whilst I was a researcher, and my role was to capture the narrative through respectful and sensitive listening. Yet the affective impact of this moment still sits with me. It was through this project that I began to explore affect theory, resulting in a co-authored publication on the affective assemblage of internationalisation in Japanese higher education (Morley et al, 2020).

In February 2018, CHEER was invited to participate in the British Council to join a week-long fully funded delegation to India. I had the pleasure of presenting in India at an 'International Seminar on Quality and Excellence in Higher Education' 22–23 February 2018 organised by the Centre for Policy Research in Higher Education of the National

Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) and the British Council of India. Yet it was in the conversations with fellow delegates that the benefit really lay, in particular with Professor Paul Blackmore who presented on his work on the prestige economy (Blackmore, 2015). The visit highlighted the global obsession with league tables, which were increasingly fed by quality processes. Quality processes could in themselves be perceived as forms of disciplinary technologies (Blackmore, 2009), which risked performance in the processes (e.g. productivity) being valued over and above intellectualism (Morley, 2003, 2005).

Following rapidly on from the excursion to India, I was funded by Universities UK to go to South Africa to explore opportunities for collaboration and engagement between the UK and South African institutions to enhance the quality of postgraduate and postdoctoral training opportunities. A particular focus of the meeting was with regard to the UK model of Doctoral Training Partnerships, a topic I was implicated in implementing as a professional and had questioned as an early researcher (Pryor & Roberts, 2015). The South African exploration of doctoral training partnerships as a means of reducing inequity between historically black and historically white Universities presented another lens through which to challenge my thinking. Could the neoliberal structure of the doctoral training partnerships provide equity benefits? For example, the audit culture associated with doctoral training partnerships forces universities to account for their social inclusion strategies and quality practices providing a welcome challenge to elitism, mystification and academic solipsism (Morley, 2003). The visit challenged me to consider the costs and benefits of the neoliberal university and reminded me of Foucault's famous quote:

> *My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to hyper - and pessimistic – activism. I think that the ethico-political choice we have to make every day is to determine which is the main danger.* (Foucault 1983: 231/2)

On reflection these international projects served as means by which I could make the everyday, bureaucratised aspects of my role exotic. By being temporarily removed from the UK doctoral system I was able to see things differently and I was exposed to different leadership and policy regimes for doctoral programmes. I was left with tangible experiences of hybridity, wherein boundaries appeared to be porous and I had to grapple with holding multiple, often competing positions, simultaneously. Without doubt, this 'internationalisation' provided many social, professional and material benefits (Morley et

al, 2018a), and provided a point of difference to many of my research participants. Yet, they also challenged my thinking and introduced new concepts.

The impact of the doctoral enrolment didn't just provide an international dimension to my work, it influenced the ways I could engage in my professional role. The mere fact that I was enrolled in a course of doctoral study influenced people's perceptions of me. It imbued my professional voice with gravitas and allowed me to have greater influence than I deserved on projects and initiatives. The prime example of this was my involvement with developing and delivering a project overseen jointly by Research England and the Office for Students from March 2018 to January 2020 to improve support for the mental health and wellbeing of postgraduate researchers (Ref: https://re.ukri.org/research/postgraduate-researchers/) and initiating and serving on the steering group for the UK Council for Graduate Education's largest ever conference addressing the challenge of postgraduate researcher mental health and wellbeing (16th-17th May 2019). Whilst the project has led to two co-authored publications (Berry et al, 2020; Hazell et al, 2020) and the conference was exceptionally well attended (194 attendees), I began to become concerned as to whether I was becoming complicit and implicated in the latest crisis discourse on the doctorate. A concern I will return to later.

So why record all these experiences? They are not recorded as an excuse for taking so long to submit, but to highlight their value in shaping my thinking over time. An example of the substantial benefits of slow scholarship (Mendick, 2014; O'Neill, 2014; Karkov, 2019). They generated a high number of chance encounters and unforeseen learning opportunities, or as Nietzsche described it, 'excitation of our imagination brought about at the decisive moment by some immediate, very trial event…[that] happens quite by chance to leap forth…, which we can never take account of beforehand' (Nietzche, 2005:79). In progressing my doctorate, I found that whilst I wanted to continue to explore and learn, the benefits of slowing down and assimilating more knowledge worked against a university expectation for efficiency or as Berg and Seeber (2016:x) framed it 'a culture of speed'. I recognised, that for me to deliver a thoughtful thesis it would take time and I needed to manage the processes and procedures surrounding the doctorate to balance family, work and my aspiring intellectual life. It felt like a single-handed experiment to re-create the early nineteenth century Humboldtian model of the doctorate as an apprenticeship for a career as a researcher (Simpson 2009). My position on generating new knowledge aligns with Berg and Seeber (2016), that you should wait for the necessary amount of time it takes for any given research project to reach its natural point of completion.

Chapter 2

The UK Doctorate in the Neoliberal University: Policies, Crises and the formation of Graduate Schools

Introduction

This chapter outlines the doctoral policy landscape in which the Graduate School Managers I interviewed were working. I start by framing what the UK doctorate is before reflecting on some of the policy drivers that have impacted on UK doctoral education. In particular, I will focus on some of the key drivers that led to the creation of Graduate Schools. These include the growth in generic skills training, the demand for higher levels of quality assurance and progress monitoring as well as the massification of the UK doctorate. The Graduate Schools are situated in Universities subjected to the concepts and logics of neoliberalism. A key section of the chapter will attempt to examine critically and disentangle the assemblage of concepts that define the neoliberal university. Overall, this chapter aims to define the terms used in the title and thereby provide a framework for the thesis.

Why focus on doctoral education?

Researching doctoral education is fascinating. The doctorate boundaries so many different aspects of academia. The doctorate can be seen both as the last rung of 'education' and the first rung of 'research'. It is a point of entry to academia, refreshing disciplines, generating new knowledge and bringing new leadership. At the same time, it is a point of exit when individuals leave their respective institutions and enter into government, industry and other organisations. Doctoral students are often paid to teach, usually on a casual or fixed-term basis, as well as sharing the expectation on supervisors to publish; thereby straddling a university's teaching and research remits. They also often straddle the student/employee status, due to their roles as research or teaching fellows, creating challenges of identity and positioning within the institution. Furthermore, from a policy perspective this next generation of researchers is an ideal point at which to introduce new initiatives around international mobility or the contribution of doctoral students to a wide range of occupations through knowledge exchange, especially those contributing to economic growth and innovation. In the UK context, they contribute to each of the three key audit frameworks used: Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), Research Excellence Framework (REF) and the Knowledge Exchange Framework

(KEF). Elmgren et al (2016:87) argued that the doctorate is at the 'solar plexus of academia', constantly shaping and being shaped by universities' core practices of research, education and outreach/engagement. That is not to suggest that doctoral education is only shaped within an institution, since it also reflects many external changes both at national and international level to higher education policy. These policy changes impact both on the organisations within which the doctoral education is located, as well as the changing nature of academic work. Understanding the UK doctorate therefore can give insight into the wider issues within UK higher education, acting as a mirror for the future of higher education (Deem, 2016).

Where is the doctorate located?

A premise of this study is that the contemporary doctorate and Graduate Schools are nestled in 'the neoliberal university'. The neoliberal university is a higher education institution subject to neoliberal reason. One that has shifted away from being a liberal institution. Collini (2012) described this shift as moving from an academy focused on valuing scholarship, intellectual endeavour, knowledge creation, policy analysis and criticality/citizenship to a neoliberal university promoting entrepreneurship, income generation, knowledge mobilisation, policy compliance and employability. Yet, pinpointing precisely what neoliberal reason is has been subject to debate. The level of debate itself suggests that neoliberal reason is not static but imbibed with a fluidity or flexibility that allows it to adapt. Wendy Brown (2015) identified multiple signifiers of this reason. Brown argued that 'All conduct is economic conduct; all spheres of existence are framed and measured by economic terms and metrics, even when those spheres are not directly monetized' (Brown, 2015:10) and that 'market principles frame every sphere and activity' (Brown, 2015:67). She finds that has resulted in 'a normative order of reason developed over three decades into a widely and deeply disseminated governing rationality' (Brown, 2015:9). The reduction of all conduct to economic conduct is often reflected in higher education literature by the term financialisation. Financialisation processes attempt 'to reduce all value that is exchanged either into a financial instrument or a derivative of a financial instrument' (Morley, 2016:29). Prominent examples of this include universities turning to private sector companies and financial markets to fund growth and the increasing focus on the value of a degree in relation to future earnings (Britton et al, 2020). For those working in higher education, the implications of Brown's argument are that all levels of the institution are constructed as if they are a business; i.e. individuals (Graduate School Managers) or units (such as Graduate Schools) are investments required to compete in the market to make profit and

universities compete globally with each other for resources and student numbers (Boden & Epstein, 2006). In short, members of staff in a neoliberal university are expected to maximise their value and ensure they are competitive in the market. Human beings are constituted as human capital, with academic identities in UK universities increasing constructed via metrics (e.g. citation data) and management by numbers (Ozga, 2008). The individuals and the neoliberal universities themselves are made calculable and accountable and are all placed within a system of accounts (McGettingan, 2013).

The purpose of a university has gradually shifted due to neoliberal reason. I argue that neoliberal reason has not appeared overnight but has gradually permeated UK culture. It was predicted by Foucault in his 'The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures' at the College de France 1978-1979, when he contended that neoliberal reason places 'a state under the supervision of the market rather than a market supervised by the state' (Lemke, 2001:200) to the extent that a market economy functions as the 'organisational principle for the state and society' (Ibid). However, neoliberal reason did not become a dominant discourse until the late 20th century (Olssen & Peters, 2007). Its intellectual origins can be traced back to the ideology of neoliberalism that emerged between 1930 and 1947, largely through the members of the Mont Pèlerin Society (Jackson, 2010). The ideology was underpinned by academics from diverse academic traditions ranging from Frederich Hayek's work as a liberal theorist to Milton Friedman, whose work underpinned monetarist economics (Turner, 2007). It was a discourse that re-purposed the meaning of words. For example, Peter Drucker proclaimed that knowledge, rather than being about the creation of new concepts, had, 'become the capital of a developed economy'. The purpose of scholarship and education was to 'fuel' the economy (Drucker, 1989:236) and, as Nobel laureate Gary Becker, the pioneer of human capital argued, a person's education and skills should be viewed as investable assets (Becker, 1964). Such mantras were rapidly embraced by the Organisation for Economic and Cultural Development (1996a, 1996b, 1997) and the World Bank (1998). The UK, in particular, appears to have been an early adopter of this discourse. In 1998 the Department for Trade and Industry UK published, 'Our competitive future: building the knowledge-driven economy'. The crucial characteristic of this neoliberal reason was competition rather than free exchange (Gane 2012). The neoliberal university is therefore more about delivering innovation and enterprise than scholarship, mobilising rather than creating knowledge and enhancing employability as opposed to developing critically empowered citizens.

The neoliberal university is situated in a neoliberalised society. A society with a focus on competition, that encourages us to behave in an individualist way (Bowser, 2015). Again,

Foucault was prescient in his reading of Baudelaire's (1964) modern man (*sic*), as being not the man who goes off to discover himself, his secrets and his hidden truth; but the man who tries to invent himself. This modernity does not "liberate man in his own being"; it compels him to face the task of producing himself (Foucault, 1984:42). Although Foucault's selection of Baudelaire as the spokesman of modernity is problematic in that it is clearly gendered, the apparent desire to focus on/maximise oneself appears to be impacting all gender regimes. Whilst these desires cannot be said to be new, the concern is that these selfish reflexes have become the reflexes of an entire society (Roberts, 2014) creating a culture of narcissism (Lasch, 2001) wherein individuals are afflicted with a bottomless appetite for recognition, attention, glory and rewards (Kluger, 2014). A seductive strength of neoliberalism is how it speaks to, what I suggest, are some of humankind's more base desires and appetites.

These desires create a new form of governance as individuals and institutions chase after a prestige economy (Blackmore, 2015) to improve their position in the market. This governmentality is far from overt, it is subtle and insidious e.g. More termite-like than lion-like (Brown 2015: 35/36), and, to draw on Foucault's theory of capillary power, the neoliberal society is everywhere and nowhere. Indeed, an important part of Foucault's description of capillary power is that we govern ourselves through technologies of self. I argue that Foucault's definition of technologies of the self contains a great deal of relevance for how individuals operate under the governance of neoliberal reason. Foucault suggests that technologies of self are those 'which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being . . . to attain a certain state of ... wisdom' (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). As individuals continuously seek to 'self-constitute in difference' (Morley, 2011:79) and distinguish themselves their focus is on performing rather than reflecting or indeed resisting neoliberal reason. Indeed, Crary (2013:1025) has argued that keeping up with this model of competition has resulted in '…the incapacitation of daydream or of any mode of absent-minded introspection that would otherwise occur in intervals of slow or vacant time'. I suggest that within the neoliberal university the values of neoliberal reason have been internalised and the space to image alternative futures has been annexed. We are left with neoliberal universities emphasising measured outputs, whether based on strategic plans, specific performance indicators, quality assurance measures and/or academic audits (Ball, 2012).

What is the UK Doctorate?

The origins of the doctorate can be traced to early nineteenth century Germany and the vision of Wilhelm von Humboldt. Its original purpose was to make provision for the training of future researchers (Clark, 1993). The degree award did not become a popular in the UK until the twentieth century. The first Doctor of Philosophy was awarded by Oxford in 1920, and over the following decade all UK universities adopted the degree (Taylor, 2009). Within the UK, and indeed across the world, the doctorate continues to be 'the highest degree awarded in academia' (OECD, 2019: 246) and signify, 'the pinnacle of academic success' (Nyquist, 2002: 13), 'the zenith of our learning' (Lovat, Monfries & Morrison, 2004: 166) and 'the pinnacle of university scholarship' (Gilbert, 2004:299). Its award remains the key societal signal of an individual moving from being a recipient of knowledge to a knowledge producer. Chapter B11 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education describes doctoral degrees as, '…qualifications rooted in original research: the creation of new knowledge or originality in the application of knowledge.' (QAA, 2014:4) and the first Salzburg Principle states that, 'The core component of doctoral training is the advancement of knowledge through original research.' (EUA, 2005:2). During their degrees, students undergo a metamorphosis from knowledge consumers into knowledge producers. Whilst I recognise this is a simplistic distinction/binary, especially in contemporary academia where the moment of 'becoming' or 'arriving' as an academic is hard to pinpoint and can even feel as though it has been permanently deferred (Taylor, 2014). Nevertheless, the award of a PhD can be seen as a point of academic success and a form of arrival (Breeze & Taylor, 2018).

The UK doctorate remains a key boundary object for academia. Ingrained within it is a process of ascertaining 'acceptable academicity' (Peterson 2007: 475). Indeed, some doctoral examiners perceive their role to be gatekeepers to their respective disciplines and the academic community (Green & Powell 2005) and conduct the viva accordingly. The examination, and arguably the supervisory process itself (Manathunga, 2007), can be seen as process by which the doctoral student absorbs certain academic and disciplinary behaviours to the extent that they develop technologies of self (Foucault, 1988) leading to the (re)production of knowledge and disciplines. This suggests that the UK doctorate is 'stuck' and supervision is no more than a site of governmentality. However, the UK doctorate is not static, I will argue that it is continually being shaped and reshaped by discourse. It is no longer focused on academia and the creation of new knowledge, as Denicolo (2016:19) highlights:

> What used to be a qualification demonstrating critical thinking about and within a discipline to serve as entry into the academy has transmogrified into one with a wider remit, one which demonstrates the acquisition of a broad range of researcher skills suitable for transfer to an extensive range of employment…

The contemporary UK doctorate has been shaped by crisis discourses. Higher education has frequently been described as 'in crisis' (Sommer, 1995) and theorised using disaster metaphors to justify reform: Ruins (Readings, 1996), Tsunamis (Popenici, 2014) and Avalanches (Barber et al, 2013). Vassilu (1991: 57) describes metaphors as mediators, which translate and refer to 'that which precedes and escapes reduction to anything'. The growth in intensity and number of these metaphors, can be framed as part of the academy grappling with the neoliberal university. Using the metaphors to illustrate new aspects of neoliberal reason or rectify existing concepts. The metaphors are an attempt to make sense of the contemporary university. However, Davies (2018:16) suggests that these metaphors are encouraged by populist political leaders who are keen to use our nervous states, such as fear and anxiety, since, 'It is as feeling creatures that we become susceptible to contagions of sentiment, and not as intellectuals, critics, scientists or even as citizens'.

The UK doctorate has not been immune to this crisis discourse. Towards the end of the twentieth century there was a 'completion rate crisis'. Poor completion rates became a pre-occupation for doctoral education both nationally and internationally. Research repeatedly demonstrated that many doctoral students took significantly longer to complete their students than their funding provided for (Blaume & Amsterdamsaka, 1987; Winfield, 1987; Bowen & Rudentstein, 1992; Leonard, 2000; Colebatch, 2002; MacAlpine & Weiss, 2000). The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) began to publish institutional data on completion rates in 2007. HEFCE identified that 36 percent of full-time doctoral students starting in 1996-97 completed within 4 years, and 71 percent within 7 years (HEFCE, 2007). This annual publication was adopted as a key performance indicator by institutions in the UK alongside submission rate targets set the Research Councils for the students they funded. Viewed from the perspective of neoliberal reason, poor completion rates suggested not just a lack of efficiency but a waste of financial resource and a failure to deliver the human capital required to sustain a competitive knowledge economy/market. It could be argued that this search for efficiency in submission and completion rates at times displaced the primacy of academic content and each individual doctorate's contribution to new knowledge.

A further crisis in the UK was a narrative suggesting there were insufficient numbers of doctoral graduates to provide the highly skilled knowledge workers required by the knowledge economy (Harris, 1996; National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997). This concern rapidly developed to become a global phenomenon leading to a worldwide increase in the number of doctoral students. Since the turn of the century, the proportion of those graduating with a doctoral degree has risen by 80 percent from 154,000 new graduates in 2000 (OECD, 2014) to reach 276,800 in 2017 (OECD, 2019). The OECD (2019) project that if the current pattern of increased doctoral degree enrolments continues then 2.3 percent of today's young adults across OECD countries will enter a doctoral degree programme, compared to 1 percent in 2000 (OECD, 2014). This growth can be linked to a pervasive discourse or 'meta-narrative that assumes the commodification of knowledge in a global system of production and competition' (Ozga, 2007:65), which I will expound on further in Chapter 3. The main context to highlight at this stage is that the significant increase in doctoral awards highlighted by the OECD over the years is considered to be an indication of economic development (Kehm, 2006).

Meeting the needs of the knowledge economy was not just a matter of numbers. It also raised concerns about the doctorate only serving as an apprenticeship to academia. Doctoral education was perceived as too specialised, producing individuals lacking the 'generic skills' relevant to industry and commerce. Within the UK's policy context this view was enshrined by the Roberts Review (2002), which asserted that the UK doctorate provided "inadequate training – particularly in the more transferable skills" (Roberts, 2002:10). In 2003, UK Universities and Research Councils received funding (approximately £20M per annum) from the UK Government to implement the recommendations of the Roberts Review. The momentum for transferable skills continued, fuelled by a series of reviews of UK Higher Education of which I will highlight three in particular. The first was a sector-led working group, known as 'The Rugby Team', evaluating the impact of the 2003 investment of 'Roberts' funding and 'to contribute to a strategic debate with national stakeholders on how to evaluate the effectiveness of skills development amongst postgraduate researchers and research staff'. The second, in 2006, the Warry Report gave a further boost to transferable skills training. It called for more incentives to allow researchers to participate in knowledge transfer through interventions such as two-way secondments between universities and businesses and by making enterprise training widely available for researchers in all disciplines. Alongside these reviews Vitae, a non-profit programme established in 2003 and constituted as part of the Careers Research & Advisory Centre (CRAC) Ltd, became

more and more influential. This was to the extent that the third review I wish to highlight, the government commissioned Smith Review (2010) recommended that, 'Higher Education Institutions should work closely with Vitae, employers and other stakeholders to provide better information, advice and guidance on career choices for postgraduate research students'. In the same year as Smith's Review, Vitae, which had become a nationally funded body, launched the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) and Researcher Development Statement (RDS), texts that 'continue to reflect the language of skills and competences' (Andres et al, 2015:13). These policies suggested that the reliance and trust previously place in academics' professional understanding of what knowledge and skills were valued and needed by society should be reconsidered by institutions (Boden & Nedeva, 2010); e.g. the Roberts funding should be used to introduce centralised control and regulation of skills training.

To address the perceived need to integrate transferrable skills, new forms of doctoral degrees were devised. In 2001 a 'New Route' doctorate or integrated doctorate was developed. This would usually consist of three elements; a taught component covering research methods and subject specific material, followed by a taught component covering transferable skills and a research and thesis element (Kehm 2009). This was not the only innovation, across the UK the number and variations of the doctoral degree became 'uncomfortably complex' (Green & Powell, 2005). The traditional PhD model was being challenged by a growing diversity of types of doctoral degree, including PhD by publication, Professional Doctorates, and New Route PhD (Park, 2008). These new forms of doctorate have been depicted as a response to the knowledge economy, replacing 'Mode 1' disciplinary and university bound knowledge with a 'Mode 2' trans-disciplinary knowledge in the context of application (Gibbons et al, 1994) as the market penetrates academia (Delanty, 2001). These new types of doctorate were often looked down upon by the academy (Park 2008; Kehm, 2009). Fenge (2009) suggests that part of this negative response arose from the fact that these new types of doctorate challenged the academy with regard to who produces and contributes to new knowledge.

The discourse of knowledge economy presented a challenge of competition, since the efficiently produced and suitably trained in transferable skills students could chose to work globally. Human capital could move to the market and doctoral researchers needed to be prepared to work internationally. In this context doctoral researchers became constructed in terms of not just income-generation, but indicators of prestigious internationalised knowledge networks (Lomer 2017; Owens et al. 2011). The positive attributes of internationalisation stuck to the doctorate (Morley et al, 2020), these

included the social and intellectual benefits of multiculturalism, expectations of prejudice reduction and the opportunity to contribute to an era of epistemological equity. The UK doctorate was influenced by the Bologna Declaration (European Ministry of Education, 1999), which called for increased international mobility in the Doctorate. Opportunities to internationalise, e.g. accessing funding via Erasmus+ and the Newton Fund along with a plethora of other schemes within doctoral training centres/partnerships, were promoted and research to understand why more doctoral students were not taking part in such schemes was undertaken (Universities UK, 2016). A significant concern in relation to the perceived positive benefits of internationalisation has been raised (Morley et al, 2020: 6) in that it, 'can serve to reinforce gender binaries by re-inscribing women and men in traditional gender roles'.

Driven by the Equality Act (2010), issues of equity have grown in prominence in the relation to the UK doctorate. While some perceive government intervention as progressive, for others it is only another sight of performativity and part of new managerialist 'noise' (Deem et al., 2007) with global university league tables not factoring equality into the performance indicators they use (Morley, 2018a). Yet, calling universities to account for their social inclusion strategies and quality practices can be seen as a welcome challenge to elitism, mystification and academic solipsism (Morley, 2003). Despite the breadth of the 2010 Equality Act, gender and charting changes in UK male-dominated university regimes, managements, patriarchies, and gender relations (Hearn, 1999 & 2001) has been the predominant focus. Whilst the discourse of radical feminism is discordant with the discourse of the knowledge economy, '…they were and still are concerned with making the academic managerial systems more transparent, more accountable, less overtly discriminatory, more 'collective'' (Hearn, 2017). However, the ability to count more women into male-dominated systems is not necessarily a victory for gender equality (Morley & Crossouard 2016). Progress has been far from comprehensive with interventions tending to be single issue campaigns to address inequalities, for example, encouraging more women to enter science, technology, engineering, and mathematics STEM subjects (Bebbington, 2002), and the introduction of the Equality Challenge Unit's Athena Swan Charter in 2005 following the work of the Athena Project and the Scientific Women's Academic Network at the turn of the millennium (Phipps, 2008). In May 2015, significant changes were made to the Athena Swan charter, broadening the award to cover all academic disciplines (not just science disciplines), recognising professional and support roles (such as Graduate School Managers) and trans staff and students. The changes did not substantively change Athena SWAN's focus which, like much of the global debate and current policy initiatives,

is on equality as demographic, representation and quantitative change (Morley & Lund, forthcoming). It was not until January 2016, some eleven years after Athena Swan, that the Race Equality Charter was launched, with an explicit focus on students and staff. At the time of editing my thesis Research England and the Office for Students have given notice of their intent to launch a joint funding competition to improve access and participation for black, Asian and minority ethnicity postgraduate research students in autumn 2020.

The final crisis discourse I will highlight was one that was emergent at the time of my interviews, with Oxford Economics (2016) estimating that the UK's 2015 Gross Domestic Product could have been over £25 billion higher if the economic consequences of mental health problems to both individuals and businesses could have been avoided. As I conclude my research, mental health has become a dominant discourse in UK Higher Education and Society. For example, the Economic and Social Research Council's 2019 Delivery Plan cited the need for Mental Health Research and Knowledge Exchange in relation to: Productivity, Prosperity and Growth; Living with Technology; Changing Populations; and in relation to positioning the UK in a Changing World. With respect to teaching in higher education, Thorley (2017:3) claimed:

> Levels of mental illness, metal distress and low wellbeing among students in higher education in the UK are increasing and are high relative to other sections of the population.

The impact of the poor mental health crisis on the UK doctorate was highlighted in a series of headlines and articles (see Figure 1). Although, it should be noted that these claims are largely based on the work of regulatory authorities and 'grey' literature (Hazzell et al, 2020).

Figure 1: Headlines on the poor mental health of students

As previously mentioned, this discourse led to funding opportunities for mental health research. The jointly funded Research England and the Office for Students project run by the University of Sussex from March 2018 to January 2020 found that mental health problems were a salient issue for PhD students. Furthermore, symptoms reached clinical thresholds for a significant proportion of doctoral students and the data suggested that mental health problems were higher amongst those studying for a doctorate (Berry et al, 2020; Hazell et al, 2020).

All these troubling discourses generated a deficit language for the UK doctorate, leading to funders issuing more and more guidance on expectations. The crisis narratives of the UK doctorate became enshrined in a plethora of policy documents. Stephen Ball (1998: 124) defined policies as ''ways of representing, accounting for and legitimizing political decisions'' and are ''articulated both to achieve material effects and to manufacture support to those effects.'' Firth (2016: 124) argues that political entities 'can alter structures of affect through policy and discourse, and they do so to suit the needs of neoliberal capital'. There appears to be a clear correlation between the emergence of a dominant discourse of neoliberal reason and the growth in policy in relation to the document. Duke & Denicolo (2016) argue that before the late 1990s, the doctoral process was left to the academia, yet since the turn of the century the UK has experienced 'an upsurge of government reviews and funding body policy changes' (Ibid:1). Throughout my interviews there were frequent references to policy documents

mentioned above, but especially Chapter B11 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA, 2014) and the Research Councils 'Statement of Expectations for Postgraduate Training' (RCUK, 2013).

Whilst these crises were enshrined in a vast panoply of policy texts, there has been little consideration of the conflicts created between these multiple crisis discourses. For example, Bossier and Eleftheriou (2015) emphasized the conflict that arises from policies that encourage additional training and mobility for doctoral students, yet also require efficiency in completion rates. Similarly, there is tension between equality and quality discourses, often leading to the surfacing of fears that diversifying entry to the UK doctorate would lead to a decline in its perceived excellence and standing.

The formation of Graduate Schools

As a response to this dynamic policy context UK Universities, especially more research-intensive institutions, began to develop Graduate Schools. They were portrayed as the means to: Enhance submission statistics, standards and completion rates; Address the growth in the number of doctoral students; lower failure rates; improve the doctoral researcher's experience; and enhance the supervisory and examination skills of academic faculty (McGlion & Wynne, 2015). Surveys undertaken by the UK Council for Graduate Education in 1995 and 2004 demonstrated a significant increase in the number of institution-wide Graduate Schools (78 percent in research-intensive universities and 53 percent in remaining HEIs). By the 2009 survey, the majority of institutions without a Graduate School stated they were in the process of establishing one or planning to create one:

> From virtual tabula rasa, graduate schools had become established in this period as the main institutional device in both research intensive and business-facing universities for dealing effectively with postgraduate provision and advocating at senior management level for postgraduate and research student interests. (McGlion & Wynne, 2015: 13)

The development and maturation of Graduate Schools was described by Denicolo et al (2010:38), as offering the 'potential to continue to contribute significantly to maintaining and enhancing the excellent postgraduate provision in the UK' and the 2010 review confirmed 'They have become the general structure of choice…'. Graduate Schools created a new site of socialisation for doctoral candidates and supervisors, as well as a focus for the 'practice of doctoral education' (Boud & Lee, 2009). I argue that such

developments in the administration of universities are important for understanding the nature and functions of universities. Clarke & Newman (1997) suggested that there was a tendency of institutions under the influence of neoliberal reason (or 'managerialism' as they coined it) to copy peers. This was driven by a need to remain competitive and assuage fears of missing out. The use of 'potential' by Denicolo et al (2010:38), suggested that it was difficult to precisely articulate the benefits of Graduate Schools. Even as I began my interviews some six years later, articles were being published suggesting that there were significant challenges facing Graduate Schools as Bengtsen (2016:277) articulates:

> Doctoral students, and typically their supervisors as well, sometimes feel a lack of commitment to their Graduate School, wherefore it is a challenge in future doctoral education for Graduate Schools to make themselves, visible, accessible, comprehensible, and relevant to doctoral students and their supervisors.

Graduate Schools are framed in the above quote very much as something that has been imposed on doctoral students and their supervisors. The creation of Graduate Schools can be therefore be interpreted as an example of the wider emergence of 'new function portfolios' and the 'extended development periphery' identified by Clark (2004) and Whitchurch (2006, 2008) respectively within the neoliberal university. Furthermore, they provided the opportunity for both academics and professional staff associated with them the opportunity to reconceptualise their roles in the neoliberal university (Whitchurch, 2006, 2008).

A key driver for the creation of Graduate Schools was the concentration of funding for the contemporary UK doctoral training (Haines, 2006; Park 2008). Creasey (2013:11) noted:

> HEFCE and Research Council funding for research postgraduates is being awarded more selectively, and there is a degree of concentration through such approaches as doctoral training centres, which may have implications for accessibility by some students.

Whilst there was relatively little written on the impact of Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTP) and Doctoral Training Centres (DTC), the literature confirmed that the development of such supposed 'centres of excellence' was relatively new (UUK, 2014) at the time my interviews took place. They had emerged from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), who issued the first call for bids to establish the first two DTCs in 2003, with a further five the following year (Lunt et al,

2014). Following the publication of the RCUK Strategic Vision for 2011-2015, which heralded that ''several Councils have introduced, or are developing, Doctoral Training Centres or other approaches which deliver greater concentration of resources in centres of excellence', such schemes became the prime vehicles for allocating research council studentships. 'From a funding perspective, the rise of the Doctoral Training Partnership and Centres for Doctoral Training schemes as the mainstream models for allocating research council studentships has been the most significant trend shaping PGR provision at UK universities' (Universities UK, 2014:4). These schemes were often multi-institutional requiring stronger operational management, strategic alignment between institutions' research strengths and the Research Council's priority themes, and more emphasis on partnership building and match-funding opportunities (Universities UK, 2014:4). The DTP and CDT framework increased the administrative burden of institutions, devolving administrative tasks and incorporating further expectations around related priorities and policy initiatives (Lunt et al, 2014). Indeed, Lunt et al. go on to argue that the ESRC Doctoral Training provided, 'a prism through which to study the shifting nature of university–state relations, and changing patterns of governance more broadly' (Lunt et al 2014:165), with research councils, 'becoming ever more energised and 'lively' bureaucracies' (Ibid, 2014:167). The establishment of Graduate Schools can be seen as universities creating their own lively bureaucracies to engage with the increasingly active Research Councils. This is an example of the productive power of discourse, not just enlivening extant bureaucracies but creating new structures and roles.

Graduate School Manager roles, new senior administrative/professional services posts, were created to ensure delivery of aspirations around: successful completion; evidencing quality (e.g. meeting audit process of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education or UK Research Councils); and growing student numbers, especially international doctoral researchers (whose attendance needed monitoring on behalf of the UK Border Agency. The conclusion was, that effective management could tame the various crisis discourses of the UK doctorate. Ball (1990) defined 'management' as the linguistic antithesis to chaos and faith in management as a transformative device has been described as, 'a potent regime of truth' (Morley & Rassool, 2000:170). Graduate School Managers would be able to bring their new organisational forms (Graduate Schools) to deliver the efficiency and quality assurance required. This subscription to managerialism, defined by Clarke & Newman (1997: ix) as, 'a cultural formation and distinctive set of ideologies and practices', placed the importance of corporate objectives, audit and performance at the centre of these new posts.

Graduate School Manager roles were positioned as leadership roles that were expected to deliver transformational change and a radical improvement to the doctoral education in the UK. However, Graduate School Managers are largely absent from current research literature, which tends to be almost entirely focused on doctoral students and their supervisors (Ives & Rowley 2005, Taylor & Beasley 2005, Lee 2012 to name but a few!). The study of doctoral education has become a discipline in itself, yet one that has tended to exclude the role of professional services staff, especially the relatively new posts of Graduate School Managers.

It is important not to exclude professional services staff from higher education research. I argue this on the basis of demographics. There are currently more 'non-academic' staff employed by UK Universities (see Table 1) and yet there remains a little written about their experiences.

Table 1: Academic and non-academic staff in UK Higher Education Academic years 2004/05 to 2018/19
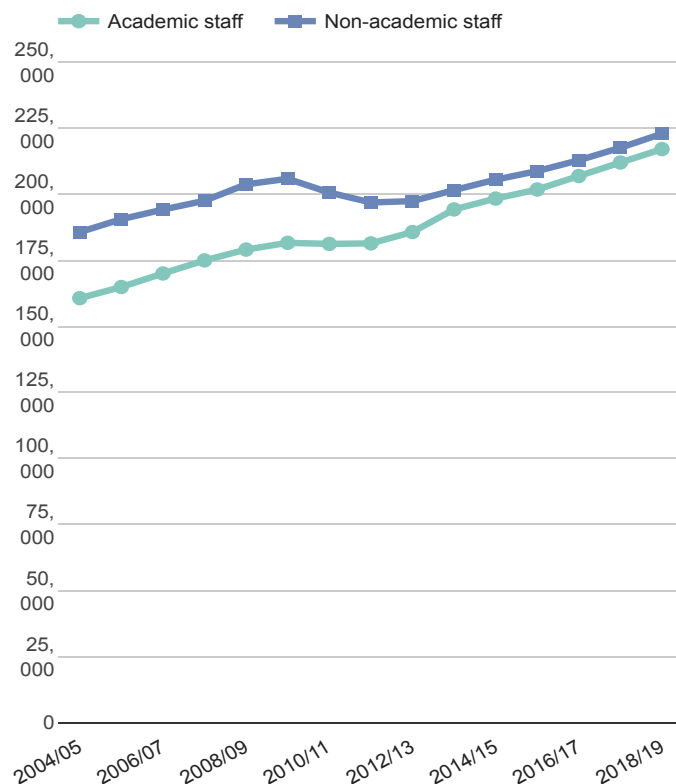
In particular, I believe there is a silence around 'middle managers' in the professional services. Graduate School Managers are an example of these 'middle managers', sitting

in between first line supervisors of a specific function and university leadership teams. Middle managers, according to Rosser (2004:317) are the 'unsung professionals in the academy yet they interact and participate with students, faculty members and the public and reflect the institutions overall spirit and vitality'. As, such I would argue that Graduate School Managers are a wholly appropriate subject of study.

In choosing to create Graduate School Manager roles, there was an implicit assumption by university leaderships that such appointees would possess the personal agency to act as 'change agents', i.e. individuals 'that are going to initiate, lead, direct or take responsibility for making change happen' (Caldwell 2003:140). Whether the individuals interviewed perceived themselves to be operating as agents of change is something I will discuss in my findings, including on whose behalf they saw themselves working. However, I argue was that the intention behind these new professional services roles was to create a cadre of 'change-orientated administrators', which Clark (2004: 176) argues are key ingredient for the success of the entrepreneurial or neoliberal university. The creation of Graduate School Manager roles can be framed within a wider process, described by Gornitzka and Larsen (2004), of professionalisation of staff in higher education administration. Such professionalisation they argued led to a rise in formal status, an increase in formal educational requirements for appointment, the emergence of a common cognitive basis (e.g. a belief in managerialism) and the growth and formation of networks among individuals. Graduate School Managers can therefore be theorised as new agents constituted by discourse who, as Gornitzka and Larsen (2004) highlight, possess a creative power leading to new networks and potentially a tendency to espouse common beliefs.

In the next chapter, I will explore further the theoretical framework that I have begun to introduce and articulate the research questions on which it will be brought to bear.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

Constructing claims to new knowledge

My thesis embraces poststructural approaches to the production of the social, our identities and of knowledge. These approaches were expertly described over two decades ago by Kenway et al, (1994:189) as perspectives wherein:

> …meaning is not fixed in language, in other cultural symbols or in consistent power relationships. It shifts as different linguistic, institutional, cultural and social factors come together in various ways. Meaning is influenced by and influences shifting patterns of power. And finally it constitutes human subjectivity, which is again regarded as shifting, many-faceted and contradictory.

Given the fluidity of meaning, I reject the idea that I will discover some absolute truth or that there is some 'grand imaginary map' (Smith, 1996:194). As such, I am accepting that any claims I make to new knowledge as a result of this thesis are, at best, fixed temporarily in the transcripts of the interviews and my situated interpretation. They can always be re-opened to further interrogation and analysis. This is in stark contrast to approaches by positivist theories that seek to identify an unquestionable 'truth'. My claim to truth is a situated reading and a partial unveiling of the myriad complex layers that form understandings of social realities. This is not to argue that there is no truth in what I present, but that the truth that is there is discourse dependent (Flax, 1992:452). Whether truth is or is not 'revealed' is not my pre-occupation, since my contribution to knowledge lies 'not in the hope of proving anything, but rather in the hope of learning something' (Flyvbjerg, 2006:224).

A significant challenge in developing the thesis was addressing my own hybridised positionality. In developing my research proposal and approach, I was immediately challenged by the binary construction of insider verses outsider researcher status. Wherein the insider is 'someone whose biography (gender, race, class, sexual orientation and so on) gives her [*sic*] a lived familiarity with the group being researched' and the outsider is 'a researcher who does not have any intimate knowledge of the group being researched, prior to entry into the group' (Griffith, 1998:361). The binary of insider/outsider suggests that an externality is possible. This echoes the methodological and ideological tool of positivism. Positivism can be defined as 'an epistemological

position that values objective, scientific knowledge produced in rigorous adherence to the scientific method'; it sees knowledge as 'worthwhile to the extent that it describes objective data that reflect the world' (Kincheloe, 2015b: 291). Positivism, particularly prevalent in the physical sciences, where the use of randomised and controlled trials is commonplace, suggests we can rely on our senses to perceive the world and prove absolute truths (i.e. reality can be deduced). In this scenario the truth is there to be found by the researcher and recorded in as neutral language as possible. This 'cold, rational process' (Steinberg, 2015: 121) encourages researchers to use empirical methods that claim neutrality and suggests that, as researchers, they can remain distanced from the object of study. This emphasis on objectivity and neutrality can be considered reductionist, accounting for 'very narrow dimensions of human experience' (Kincheloe, 2015a:x). Furthermore, under this approach, language is a faithful tool that can represent our sensory experiences. This approach has pervaded general cultures of knowledge construction, creating an overreliance on empirical data and a rejection of introspective and intuitive knowledge. The challenge of grappling with the insider/outsider binary was in part a test of my adherence to a poststructuralist approach, wherein I was '…*blurring the distinction between knower and known, viewer and viewed* – looking at truth as a *process* of construction in which knowers and viewers play an active role' (Steinberg, 2015:121). My rejection of positivism was a key component in the development of my researcher reflexivity and willingness to explore feelings and empathy within the context of research. The binary divide of insider/outsider was too reductionist to align with my positioning as a research and my interviews confirmed that there were many different types of 'insider' in operation. For example, as well as holding similar, but not identical, roles (e.g. as Graduate School Managers in the UK Higher Education sector dealing with the same kinds of policy challenges), there were also times when I could identify the same kind of experiences as my participants (e.g. as a parent, but also in terms of gender and ethnicity). Yet, whilst there were similarities, there were times when I felt quite strongly 'other' to those I was interviewing.

Power of discourse

My understanding of poststructuralism is that objects (e.g. policy) and subjects (e.g. individuals) are inexorably constructed and deconstructed in/by discourse. Discourses speak us, as Foucault observed, they are 'practices, which form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972: 49). I perceive discourses to be powerful, a 'discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but it also undermines it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it' (Foucault 1979: 100–101). They position and shape

what and how we experience the world and we are constituted in the language of the discourse (Usher, 1996). In short, they shape what it is possible to do and say. A focus on discourse removes the primacy of the subject-object relationship (Smith, 1996), and allows the interrogation and deconstruction of data by drawing macro-level shifts of power into the micro-level lived experiences of individuals.

One of the important considerations underpinning this thesis is that the power of discourse can be in its ability to provide legitimacy for certain kinds of knowledge while undermining/ disqualifying others. A discursive formation of power rejects Weber's (1922) notion that power is an attribute held by an individual or body by virtue of certain characteristics wherein 'one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his (*sic*) own will despite resistance' (Kronman, 1983:38). Discursive power, as represented by Foucault, is not static or visible in social or personal attributes nor legitimised through legal mandates. Foucault's description of power is diffuse rather than concentrated, discursive rather than purely coercive and creative (i.e. constituting agents rather than being something that is deployed by them). 'Discourse transmits and produces power, it reinforces it,...it also undermines it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it' (Foucault, 1979: 100–101). Foucault's power is, 'not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or lets slip away' (Foucault, 1990:94), yet it still requires us to ask whose interests are represented since individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application (Foucault, 1980).

A poststructuralist approach, therefore, rejects the idea of a fundamental self that is constant and stable in all situations. Identity has been a key concept in the contemporary world (Weedon, 2004:1), yet beset with conceptual difficulties (Hall, 2000:16). Whilst the word 'identity' is regularly used, the meaning ascribed to 'identity' can be quite different. For example, Hall (2000) suggested that modernity is associated with three very different models of identity: The Enlightenment subject – a unified individual with an inner core that unfolds as the individual develops, yet remains essentially the same throughout the individual's life; The sociological subject – emerging from the growing complexity of the modern world, a concept that places greater emphasis on the mediating nature of identity in continuous dialogue with the social environment and the inner core of an individual; and the post-modern subject where there is a rejection of a stable inner core and identity is continuously shifting.

My conception of identity is influenced by this latter conception and is based on a discursive approach seeing the process of identity formation as continuous, contingent

and constituted through competing and shifting discourses. These discourses, and thereby identity formation, are tied to power relations and the emergence of 'difference' or 'othering'. Whilst this links closely to Hall's (2000:17) position that, '…identities are never unified, and in late modern times increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different and often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions'. I would argue that at points of significant change, the antagonism between competing discourses becomes more visible, resulting in challenges for individuals to reflect on their own identification and how they ascribe or impose identities on others. Their subjectivity is revealed. The emphasis of my approach is to analyse these subjective meanings that emerge.

Yet there is still a need to be cautious with the narratives, since identity can be shrouded in performativity. I recognise Butler's (2006) notion that there is fluidity to speech; drifting between communication and performance as an individual describes their practices and indeed themselves. As such, the self-narratives on which this thesis is based do not represent the continuous or core beliefs of the interviewees, but are their presentation of themselves so as to be recognisable to society (Butler, 2005), and in particular in this research context, to me as the interviewer. There is both a temporality and a contingency of the accounts provided by the Graduate School Managers of their lived experience. Their identities are bound up and intermeshed with broader societal discourses, norms and conventions. As such, I am reticent to claim that these brief self-narratives could ever be ascribed as a full account of the identity of the participants.

Discourse and affect

I have, however, positioned my interviewees as individuals that are in the midst of navigating contradictions of neoliberal reason. Discourse has affect, however, sometimes this affect is hard to identify. The discourse of neoliberal reason has been described as more termite-like than lion-like (Brown, 2015:35) and the power of the discourse lends itself to Foucault's conception of power as having a 'capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their action and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (Foucault 1980:39). This means that it is easy to become complicit and implicated in neoliberal reason by internalising its values and not recognise how they are affectively charged. This Foucault argues is achieved through technologies of self, 'the way in which the subject constitutes himself [sic] in an active fashion, by the

practices of the self, these practices are nevertheless not something that the individual invents by himself [sic]' (Foucault, 1988:122). This is a key concept allows Foucault's notion of power to move beyond a presentation of individuals a purely passive subjects and reintroduces an element of agency. Technologies of self, 'permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality (Foucault, 1988:18).

Rosalind Gill (2010) wrote eloquently on the hidden injuries of the neoliberal university, which demands a sacrificial ethos that silences, often through technologies of self, stories of stress and insecurity. I endorse the argument that, within the neoliberal university emotions of shame, fear, pride, guilt, desire and joy are crucial to the ways in which neoliberal reason becomes internalized and reproduced (Morley 2018a). As such, it is important to have an appreciation of 'affect', by which I mean the emotions, responses, reactions and feelings that are cultural practices, not individual psychological states (Wetherell, 2012).

I will use affect theory to facilitate the questioning, disruption, diagnosing, and renewing of the cultures of the neoliberal university that my participants and I inhabit and reproduce. I will argue that the atmosphere or discourses of the neoliberal university get into the individual (Brennan, 2004) and whilst affect is not purely discursive, discourse can mobilise and manipulate affect (Anderson, 2016; McKenzie, 2017). Firth (2016: 124) argues that 'states can alter structures of affect through policy and discourse, and they do so to suit the needs of neoliberal capital'. Paying attention to affect can surface micropolitical subterranean tensions, pleasures and discomforts that are silenced in dominant policy discourses (Morley, 1999). The political economy of neoliberalism in the late capitalist economy has been installed via material, discursive and affective means. It has forced a governing rationality and a globally circulating cluster of policy measures, involving deregulation and markets, and cultural regimes that privilege price and profit. There has been a re-articulation of measure and its relationship to value (Clough & Halley, 2007). While this is all presented as a rational, objective and meritocratic process, it relies on a subterranean world of recognition, misrecognition, discrimination, inequalities and affect. Seigworth and Gregg (2010) claim that affect amounts to those visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing that can serve to drive us toward movement, thought, and ever-changing forms of relation.

This theoretical framework will be brought to bear on the following research questions:

- How can we evaluate Graduate School Managers as neo-liberal subjects?

- What power do Graduate School Managers possess to get others to do or not do things?

- What is the affective formation Graduate School Managers make of their own roles?

- What do Graduate School Managers believe needs to be done differently?

Chapter 4

Research Methodology and Methods

Introduction

My thesis discusses the findings of a small-scale qualitative research study collected over a period of six months starting in August 2016. Eight semi-structured interviews with interviewees who had served as Graduate School Managers, or equivalent, in eleven different institutions. The selection of participants was determined by the specific purpose of the research and not to achieve a statistical representation (Patton, 2002). The aim was to elicit narratives to address my research questions. I approached English institutions with established university-wide Graduate Schools/Doctoral Schools or Doctoral Colleges and strong affirmations in their strategic plans of their commitment to doctoral education. In doing so, consideration was given to preserve a balance of institutions (e.g. there was representation from English Universities established both pre and post-1992). Of the eleven different institutions, eight were pre-1992 institutions and three were post-1992 institutions. Brief details of participants are below; all have been given pseudonyms.

Table 2 – Details of Graduate School Managers participating in the study

Name	Type of Institution (current/previous)	Years as a Graduate School Manager	Educational Qualification Level	Gender
Annabel	Pre-1992	7	Masters	Female
Bethany	Pre-1992	7	Masters	Female
Claire	Post-1992/Pre-1992	8	Doctorate	Female
Deborah	Pre-1992/Post-1992	4	Masters	Female
Elizabeth	Post-1992	7	Masters	Female
Francis	Pre-1992/Pre-1992	4	Masters	Male
Grace	Pre-1992	2	Doctorate	Female
Heather	Pre-1992	3	Masters	Female

As can be seen from Table 2, the sample was predominantly female, between the ages of 25 to 44 and predominantly 'British White' by ethnicity. Whilst there has been some evidence of increases in women in middle management roles (Davidson & Burke, 2000), I was still surprised by how skewed, my admittedly small sample was. It raised the question in my mind, even before my analysis had taken place, as to whether a Graduate School Manager role is a gendered role. Was this middle management position in higher education – another 'ivory basement' (Eveline, 2004) or 'velvet ghetto' (Guillaume and Pochic, 2009) for female administrative staff? It has been suggested (Ryan & Haslam, 2007) that women often find themselves in unpopular and precarious management areas; are Graduate School Manager roles the 'glass cliff' opportunity Ryan and Haslam originally coined in 2003? Such theorisation of Graduate School Manager's roles aligns not only with the crisis discourse related to the UK doctorate mentioned in Chapter 2. The research into the "glass cliff" demonstrated that during times of crisis and poor performance people may "think female" (Ryan & Haslam, 2005, 2007). A prominent example this includes the selection of Teresa May to lead the UK through the Brexit crisis. It is a discourse that has gained traction. In an interview with Harvard Business Review (2013), Christine Legarde, the managing director of the International Monetary Fund advocating that women were better leaders than men in a crisis situation:

> In a crisis situation, yes. My favourite example is Iceland. The country essentially went down the tubes. Who was elected prime minister? A woman. Who was called in to restore the situation with the banks? Women. The only financial institution that survived the crisis was led by a woman.

The table also provides some evidence supporting the Gornitzka and Larson's (2004) assertion that the professionalisation of higher education administrative staff is leading to increased educational requirements. It is striking that all participants were educated to, at least, Masters level and could suggest an inflation of required credentials. Each participant interviewed held the most senior professional services administrator role in their respective institution. Such posts are typically advertised between points 35 and 49 of the UK's Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education pay spine, which in 2016-17 ranged from £38,183 to £55,998.

Embedded in practice

Researching the practice in which you are embedded, whilst presenting challenges, provides numerous benefits. Belonging to the same community of practice as my interviewees (Lave & Wenger, 1991) gave me privileged access to participants. Of the

requests to participate sent out, only one was not responded to, with the others receiving prompt responses. I conjectured, whilst organising the logistics of the interviews, whether this was an indicator of individuals eager to tell their stories. This was confirmed during the process of gathering my data. After one interview, I went for lunch with my participant and during informal (and unfortunately unrecorded conversation) she stated how great it was to have someone to listen to her story and to be given the opportunity to reflect. Another example of eagerness to communicate occurred in relationship to my interview with Francis. After an hour, the room booked for the interview was required, my participant said:

We'll just have to shove next door…the store cupboard. Sorry, I know it isn't ideal.

Twenty minutes later we emerged from the store cupboard with the interview complete, a venue that remains the most unusual place in which I have conducted an interview. This anecdote, whilst speaking both to the messiness of methodology, I believe demonstrated the urgency of the desire for this participant to be heard and to narrate his story. Yet even within this apparently efficient and straightforward process, challenges crept in. A change in circumstance after one interview was completed required me to consider the importance of the personal relationship with that interviewee and its future development. Cotterill and Letherby (1993:125) asserted that, 'all research involves the weaving of the biographies of the researched and researcher, the lives of those involved will be altered from then on. There are likely to be practical, intellectual and personal changes for all those involved'. The unforeseen 'intertwining' in relation to this one interviewee, provoked doubt in my mind as to whether I would be able to engage critically with the data or live with the consequences of my project (e.g. Drake and Heath 2008; Mercer 2007). This ethical dilemma led to the setting aside of one transcript, following the individual I had interviewed being appointed to a post within my own institution working on doctoral administration. Not just a colleague, a close colleague.

The Interviews

Interviews are a powerful means of capturing human knowledge, especially when there are potentially aspects of emotion or passion (Neumann, 2006). I chose a semi-structured interview process since it allowed for both flexibility and sufficient discursive space for unexpected issues or emotions to be explored. By moving away from a structured or standardized approach, the interviews aimed to, 'enable respondents to project their own ways of defining the world' (Cohen et al, 2000:147). By providing space,

this method ameliorated my concerns that my research would simply be viewed as a piece of 'self-justification'. On reflection, I would have chosen a much more complex method for gathering data, and since completing my data collection I have become interested in the methods expounded by institutional ethnography. Interviews alone have been critiqued in many ways, for example, Payne (2005) asserts that they are an artificial situation wherein participants are stimulated by the process itself. Relying on interviews alone provides only a partial account of Graduate School Manager's lived experience. The interviews are limiting, as Arskey and Knight (1999:15) argue:

> Since what people claim to think, feel or do does not necessarily align well with their actions, it is important to be clear that interviews get at what people say, however sincerely, rather than at what they do.

My approach to interviewing was informal, individual, confidential and one-off. I sought to establish a non-hierarchical research relationship with my participants (Oakley, 2000) and always visited their place of work to undertake the interview. I had thought this was important due to my concern to breakdown the hierarchy. However, potentially as a means of mitigating some of the performative responses discussed above, it may have been better to interview them outside of their place of work (e.g. in a private room in a coffee shop or pub). Using this method, I sought to identify how macro-level policy changes to the UK doctorate, were experienced at the micro level by individual administrators. I looked to identify the competing discourses that were being experienced and enacted and to understand what my participants believed there was a need to do differently. This was not always straightforward since the responses of those I interviewed couldn't be predicted in advance, requiring an element of improvisation during the research process. Whilst not unusual, Wengraf (2011:5) suggests that the requirement to improvise 'probably half – and maybe 80 percent or more – of your responses', improvisation was a challenge for a novice researcher.

Ahead of the interviews, participants were provided with an information sheet and a consent form (Appendix 1) for signature and return. In addition, they were asked to provide some basic biographical data. The interviews lasted between forty and ninety minutes and were recorded and transcribed. While the process sounds clear and efficient, it was far messier in reality. For example, the participants were largely unaccustomed to having their personal views solicited and were often keen to provide what they thought were the 'right' answers. Annabel, in particular, included a litany of phrases seeking (re)assurance: 'Is it okay?'; 'I'm not sure I've given you what you wanted there?'; 'Is that the kind of thing you wanted?', 'Is that the kind of thing you're after?', 'is

that what you're after?', 'I'm not sure I've answered that right?', 'That's not very clear, is it?'. Research on the gendering of speech patterns by Spender (1980) suggested that the dominance of male culture left women as a muted group, or as seeking approval and avoiding sounding too knowledgeable. Whilst Cameron (2003:196) since noted that, 'feminine speech patterns are gaining prestige', the seeking of approval and wishing to avoid sounding too certain could still be a remnant of the challenge of 'Man Made Language' (1980) articulated by Spender. Annabel's responses were challenging, since I was not seeking right or wrong answers but to explore the lived experiences of my interviewee. In some ways, this first interview experience was a great benefit, since it forced me to consider how my participants perceived both their role and my role in the interview process. Yet these phrases could also be interpreted as indicative of a greater need, a need to give account for oneself in a way that society recognises (Butler, 2005). Butler's theory of accounting for oneself adds to the messiness of the data by suggesting that within an interview an individual oscillates between 'communication' and 'performance' when giving accounts of themselves and their practices (Butler, 2006). As university administrators frequently occupy pivotal roles in audit and quality reviews they are likely and often required to perform key institutional mantras and messages. The commitment by individuals to invest themselves in a particular set of practices or 'field' was theorised by Bourdieu as *illusio* (Bourdieu, 1977), and such investment in the game involves repetitive performativities (Colley, 2013). It was very difficult at times to discern if participants were presenting a rose-tinted version of their institution, i.e. toeing the corporate line, and doing exactly what it says on the tin (Cameron, 2003). Relating back to the previous chapter's broader discourse of neoliberal reason a crucial characteristic of the model is competition rather than free exchange (Gane, 2012). Was I being perceived as an institutional competitor rather than as a researcher and as a result being presented with the positive and successful narrative that should be presented to a rival corporation? This certainly felt the case with one of my transcripts, where the majority of the first four pages were concerned with how that particular institution had established its Graduate School in the correct way. Another interview articulated, what I suspect may have been a dilemma for my participants, with Heather asking, 'Do you want the corporate line or my own personal?'.

One of the regrets I have, with respect to the interviews, and something I would have done differently, was the lack of a clear articulation of my ethical framework to my participants. This does not mean that I felt that the consent form or information sheet were inadequate, but that I had not revealed more about my positioning. In hindsight, I feel as though I progressed through the University of Sussex's ethics process but did not

fully comprehend the need to communicate my approach to my participants. I did not explain that I thought it was a myth that as a researcher I could explore the social reality of Graduate School Managers and constantly control my personal beliefs/feelings to thus allow the production of findings in a thesis that could be defended as objectively constructed knowledge (Hughes, 2002; Stanley & Wise 1993). It wasn't clear to them that I believed we were jointly constructing knowledge rather than adhering to a Cartesian duality that underpins positivist approaches to research (Letherby, 2010). I didn't articulate how, drawing on the work of Judith Butler, I recognised a temporality and a contingency to the narratives they gave. Nor did I discuss my aim through my enquiry to benefit the researched as well as the researcher (Letherby 2010). Had I been clearer, I would have been less anxious in the analysis of my data.

The Analysis

On several occasions, my participants expressed interest in seeing what I would make of the data. These seemingly innocuous and potentially merely 'polite' comments brought home to me the reality of my responsibilities as a researcher. This was particularly the case with Claire and Grace, whom having already completed their doctorate, I assumed would be only too aware of how data can be manipulated and misinterpreted. This was further compounded, when I unearthed one of my supervisor's articles (Morley, 1996) who had written about how she had felt victimised following her participation in some unreflexive research! I became acutely aware and somewhat anxious regarding the trust the eight participants who had agreed to participate in the study had placed in me. They had divulged their joys and anguish of working as Graduate School Managers, their feelings about the role and their futures. The challenge of creating discursive space, whilst simultaneously shaping the analysis of my thesis is something I have struggled with. Although I strive to let the participants have their own voices, I must recognise that I have selected quotes from the interviews that I believe best contribute to my thesis. This has resulted in some of my participants having a more prominent role in my work (e.g. they have been quoted more often) as I have had to be selective in order to contain my doctorate in the requisite word count.

My constructivist epistemology shaped my understanding of what constituted data from these interviews. The knowledge, meaning and understanding I report were constructed from the social interaction of the interview. I considered all aspects of that social interaction as part of the data I acquired. On this basis, my analysis has sought to go beyond the explicit speech and has rejected a rigid systematic focus purely on the words

of the transcripts. I have given space for reflections on aspects such as tone and intonation, the effect of what was said, and the reflections induced. I sought to provide room for the exploration of personal feelings and experiences, for example, reflecting on my own reactions during and after the interview and identifying parts of the data that stood out for me and caused me to experience wonder in the data as highlighted by Maclure (2013).

There is, therefore, a subjectivity in what I have selected as data. The selection of data was not taken lightly. My praxis was to challenge and reflect on not just the data that was included but also the data that was excluded. In the selection of data, I sought to adopt an assortment of different standpoints and negotiate these identities simultaneously. In doing so, I was forced to examine and understand how my gender, background and assumptions affected my research practice. For example, was I interpreting what I was hearing based on a dominant and dominating masculine 'reason' I had absorbed? Was I listening through the gaps or caught up in my own narcissistic masculinity?

Whilst, reflexivity was a key part of my approach to analysis, it was support by some practical processes. The process of analysis was as follows: Following transcription, the interviews were analysed through close reading and thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The process of analysis drew on three approaches: A holistic view of the transcript, a selective one and a line-by-line analysis to identify what phrases seem to be particularly essential or revealing.

Whilst writing up my findings, I found the systematic process of analysing the data problematic. It doused my enjoyment and engagement with the subject due to the process seeming to be mechanical (even performative) rather than creative. At times it felt like the analysis process was drawing me back into a positivist approach of an objective researcher. I found that I needed to set aside the analysis for periods of time and then return to it. This was to allow space to identify particular bits of data that 'glowed' or caused me to 'wonder' MacLure (2013). Providing this space to re-see the data was a key aspect of my process for analysing the data. Two big concepts emerged from this process: the challenges Graduate School Managers faced to present a coherent identity and the complexity and fluidity of power. The findings of my analysis are presented in relation to these two arguably interlinked themes. By focusing on these two key concepts, I reduced the data and made it more manageable. The transcripts were then coded, using a matrix that set out the key concepts in relation to my research questions with quotations from the transcripts placed into the matrix.

All my participants were offered a copy of the transcription of their interview, but no additional comments were made. This offer was made on my reading of Fontana and Frey's (2005) work on interviews as a negotiated text. The negotiation on text, however, was not done via the transcripts, but through presentations on work in progress which many of my interviewees attended and provided informal feedback on. In hindsight, I would have built into my research design a way of capturing these unplanned interactions, since they included some interesting reflections/comments. For example, in discussion of the presentation one of my participants was really positive about how I had captured their voice, yet it became clear that they were referring to quotes contributed from other Graduate School Managers, which they had ascribed to themselves. The coherence in responses from Graduate School Managers was one of the findings of my research presented in the next two chapters.

Chapter 5

Power and agency of the Graduate School Manager

Introduction

When setting out my theoretical position, I set out a discursive formation of power rejecting the notion that power is an attribute held by an individual, thereby limiting the possibilities of agency. By agency, I mean the capacity of an individual to 'feel they have the power to personally influence the world around them' (Hitlin & Long, 2009). This chapter explores the lived experience of Graduate School Managers and their perceptions of power and agency. It does so by drawing on discursive formations from the transcripts of my participants. I will begin by drawing out their description of their roles and their engagement with academic leadership of the Graduate School and descriptions of faculty and students. I will then address how Graduate School Managers described the 'doing' of their roles and how that was 'shown'. Finally, I will conclude on how the data speaks to both my theoretical framing and my research questions.

The Graduate School Manager, the Academic Lead, Faculty and Students

Graduate School Managers largely positioned themselves as leaders and identified their roles as being catalysts for change, both in terms of instigating and implementing, within their institutions. Their interests were in raising standards through strengthening processes:

> And I think when I came into the role, I came in very much with a very strong idea of governance and quality assurance, and those type of things (Annabel).

> Another big thing that we would want to look at, is quality assurance with the regulations but also with the examinations process. (Deborah)

> I love bureaucracy, if I can figure out a process and a form to deal with something, it makes me very happy (Bethany)

Then, having identified what was required, to use a range of management skills to ensure it was implemented.

> Well, I suppose, my role is to, sort of, convince people why... the benefits of why we need to do things in a particular way…to explain why it's the right approach.

> Why we needed to do it, particularly where we might have met with some resistance to it. (Annabel)

Graduate School Managers were inadvertently framing themselves as agents who mediate, comply with and promote neoliberal reason via a range of managerial technologies (Alvesson et al, 2008; Haake 2009). Based solely on the way the jobs were introduced it was easy to imagine these administrative positions becoming more empowered or even policy actors in their own right (Ball et al, 2011). *Prima facie* Graduate School Managers were agents of the knowledge economy with no agency, merely subservient to the dominant discourse of neoliberal reason. Not only that but they were beneficiaries of the neoliberal university. They possessed 'really interesting' (Elizabeth), 'varied and interesting' (Francis) roles, and Heather articulates how it felt good to be a Graduate School Manager. The creative power of the neoliberal discourse had created attractive managerial roles, which they inhabited. Graduate School Managers reported that one of the main attractions of their roles was the opportunity to exercise this creative power across a broad remit. What mattered to them when considering the role was the individual agency the roles offered:

> I always tend to go for new roles that haven't existed before, and I can very much put my stamp on things (Claire)

> ….an opportunity to develop something that looked, I try not to use the word interesting, but I suppose it was, that's probably the best word to use for the moment. (Bethany)

> I like the diversity of it, and I like the fact that I can to some extent be master of my own destiny… Sometimes we talk about the Graduate School as kind of an umbrella, but actually sometimes it's a little bit more like a bicycle wheel with a lot of spokes and we kind of sit in the middle and there's lots of kind of things happening around us and we pull it all together and introduce everybody… We kind of have our fingers in everything, but a lot of it is just pulling things together and putting people in the right places, in the right rooms and making sure that everybody knows what everybody else is doing. (Grace)

However, when I asked about the support they had received in relation to their roles, none of the Graduate School Managers I interviewed had received any sustained training or coaching/mentoring. Their professional development appeared to be restricted to engaging with peer networks and experiential learning. As Claire helpfully summarised, 'There was no training…. You just do it and you develop experience over the years'. It was quite interesting, when listening to the interviews to hear that the question was almost greeted with shock. It was almost as if no-one had asked them that question before, or possibly that they were struggling to answer in a way that didn't denigrate their

institution to a 'competitor' or 'auditor' as I may have been perceived (see Chapter 3). The hesitancy in how to answer was most prominent in Annabel and Elizabeth's responses:

> Professional Support?...I suppose it would be quite useful to have some... I could probably do with some... I could do with some coaching, or, probably, mentoring would be good. (Annabel)

> Well, yes, it's, kind of... that would just be my initiative, I think, to do that. (Elizabeth)

Others, such as Claire mentioned above, and Heather answered rapidly clarifying the lack of support:

> In terms of the training pot that we have in our area of professional services, it's non-existent. (Heather)

Interestingly, the lack of professional development was something that a number of the Graduate School Managers felt that they needed to explain/justify. A number talked about not needing it due to experience:

> I don't think so, particularly… So that's not me saying, I know everything, but I have got quite a lot of experience (Bethany)

Whilst others presented it as a structural issue, with those reporting to an academic lead suggesting that was why they were excluded:

> I don't think somebody who's an academic or a dean, possibly, recognises the steps you should take to move on in your career, in the same way as somebody in the professional services would. (Annabel)

> It's a difficult one for me to answer because here we are not tied into the other professional services very well at all. (Francis)

However, there was also the suggestion that this was a much broader trend in relation to how professional services middle managers in higher education are supported:

> I think for not just graduate school managers, but a lot of, you know, fairly senior professional services roles within universities, there's no training *per se*. (Claire)

The comments of my participants leave me to conclude that senior staff with responsibility for Graduate Schools should be more aware of the developmental needs of Graduate School Managers. The concern for me was a gendered one. Given the high

number of female Graduate School Managers, I was concerned that I was capturing evidence that the 2015 extension of Athena Swan to administrative staff was ineffective or had simply not been implemented. A simple recommendation for practice could be to invest in the mentoring proposed by Annabel. Benefits of mentoring in the context of higher education have suggested that it improves women's sense of belonging and thereby retention in higher education (Falkenberg, 2003), supports their advancement (Javahar & Hemmasi, 2006) and can lead to increases in productivity (Evans & Cokley, 2008). Yet mentoring itself should not be seen as a panacea and consideration needs to be given to the discourse within mentoring, does it undermine equity by seeking to assimilate women into dominant masculine university cultures (McKeen & Bujaki, 2007). In order not to be seen as purely a performative programme so that the institution can be 'seen to deal with the problem of gender inequity' (Devos. 2008:195) it needs to be supported by other interventions (e.g. provision of sponsorship) and not reduced to an individualised technology of self but recognise wider social and structural aspects may need addressing. See Morley and Lund (forthcoming) and Morley (2013).

On a broader scale, the findings lead me to advocate a wider review of the professional development afforded to female middle managers in the professional services in UK higher education institutions. A topic that appears to have been explored in Australia (Wallace & Marchant, 2011) but not in the UK. Such a review could consider, based on Joan Acker's (2006) definition of an 'inequality regime' this apparent issue. Acker's inequality regime does not suggest a single causation (e.g. gender) but seeks to understand 'the inter-related practices, processes, actions and meanings that result in and maintain inequalities'. Nevertheless, albeit based on this modest sample, there could be a large number of universities missing an opportunity to support the advancement of women and address gender balance within their institutions, not to mention the UK university sectors' persistent gender pay gap.

Despite the lack of investment in professional development articulated in the data, the job of the Graduate School Manager was in two of my interviews framed as a role that had, "overcome the prevailing simple dichotomy of administrative versus academic staff" (Rhoades 1998).

> One of the joys of this role is its sort of not really an academic role and it's also not really a professional services role. I kind of sit in between the two, so I do a lot of kind of research work. (Grace)

The potential of the role led to one Graduate School Manager (Claire) commenting, in the context of discussing their future career, that, 'some universities are now challenging the boundaries of that [senior administrative roles] and we may have some non-academic Vice-Chancellors come up through university management ranks'. It is not surprising that Claire has aspirations towards being a Vice-Chancellor. Boden (forthcoming) has highlight some of the material benefits that make Vice-Chancellor posts desirable. The average annual remuneration for a UK Vice-Chancellor stood at just under £300,000 per annum in 2016-17. Based on the historical evidence of rapid pay escalation, Boden and Rowlands (2020) suggest Vice-Chancellor remuneration packages are expected to continue to increase at a faster rate than those of other university staff. Interestingly, both the Graduate School Managers who had already attained a doctoral degree were the most vociferous in their assertion that the Graduate School Manager role had moved into what Whitchurch's (2008) referred to as a 'third space'. This could have been linked to their desire not to relinquish their academic identity. Their perception of their roles was as individuals that spanned professional and academic domains, using institutional-wide initiatives to confidently cross traditional borders between academic and professional services staff. This was highlighted in particular by Grace who talked about the role's, 'freedom and flexibility to be trusted to do what I think is right for this university'. However, a number of the elements, such as freedom, that were claimed to illustrate the transition to the 'third space' were also highlighted by other Graduate School Managers. For example, Francis confirmed that, 'most of the time there is a degree of autonomy and freedom to explore different things'. The interviews revealed that a number were undertaking what they described as 'pet projects' (Heather) or 'personal hobby horses' (Grace). With this suggested a level of autonomy and influence and a greying of the boundary between professional services and academic. Macfarlane (2011) may have included Graduate School Managers as part of his argument on the 'Rise of the Para-academic' with the boundary between the academic manager (Deem et al, 2007) and the Graduate School manager becoming increasingly blurred and at risk of becoming irrelevant (Coaldrake, 2001). As such, Graduate School Manager roles can be seen as an example of modern higher education institutions becoming multi-professional organisations (Henkel, 2005), with more and more staff finding the borders to their roles becoming permeable and the ability to flex being valued. This is not to suggest that all the 'pet projects' should be curtailed, more that they should be recognised. Afterall are potentially positive aspects to this perceived trespassing, such as developing a greater understanding of, and hopefully respect of colleagues' roles and encouraging the development of new skills.

During the interviews, Graduate School Managers expressed an interest in their interviewee, which just serves to illustrate that the impossibilities of the positivist objective researcher discussed in my methodology chapter. They were interested in the Doctorate of Education from a professional development perspective:

> I was asking you about your degree, because it's kind of one of those things, okay, if you want to go higher up in a university, having a PhD helps a great deal. I can see that with my colleague who is the Head of the Research and Development Unit. He is someone who would be considered as the replacement of my Director of Graduate School whereas I wouldn't because I'm not an academic. He is not necessarily 'academic' but he has a PhD and it just makes a difference in a university. (Deborah)

I found this quote interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, the articulation of the PhD as a credential to ensure promotion. Secondly, how the quote reinforces rather than disrupts the power dynamics of Universities based on knowledge. It illustrates succinctly that the pursuit of knowledge is intertwined with issues of power and identifies the doctorate as the point of arriving as a knowledge producer. Whilst this may be a simplistic distinction, especially in contemporary academia where the moment of 'becoming' or 'arriving' as a respected academic voice is hard to pinpoint and can even feel as though it has been permanently deferred (Taylor, 2014). Nevertheless, the award of a PhD can be seen as a form of arrival and border crossing (Breeze & Taylor, 2018) and in Deborah's perception a legitimising of voice. This leaves Deborah's quote reinforcing historic hierarchies of power framed around knowledge, whilst at the same time diminishing that importance of knowledge and making its purpose about career enhancement/income generation. I saw this as an example of the 'messiness' of discourse with UK higher education, whilst even if one accepts that there is a dominant discourse, that does not mean that this is necessarily a coherent discourse or one that has fully replaced or incorporated previous discourses.

Whilst there were concerns about future career and progression, which I will return to in my next chapter, the focus of the Graduate School Managers often tended to be less about themselves and more about serving others. They wanted roles that offered the 'opportunity to put my skills and experience to use' (Claire) and 'to have a reputation for being able to help people' (Claire) and 'to actually help people' (Francis). One of the joys of the role was helping others. Grace talked about taking her partner to an exhibition and the pride of being able to say 'we helped with this'. Bethany declared that the Graduate School 'exists to support students outside of their departments' and Annabel articulated

how the whole Graduate School was based on a 'service strategy'. In short, Graduate School Manager roles, were framed as service roles, rather than exercising power:

> I don't think of myself as powerful, I think of myself as persuasive, friendly, come and see me and let's have a chat about this, kind of approach. (Bethany)

Yet, whilst the role was framed that way it Graduate School Managers did recognise that they were also conduits of power. For example, Bethany continued the quote above by saying:

> But occasionally, when I need to, if I think I need to, I will go to the Dean, if I think it's appropriate, or if the Dean is absent I will go to Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and say, we really need to sort this out because we're going to get into trouble here. (Bethany)

Graduate School Managers roles appeared to be caught between providing support and ensuring adherence to policy.

> I would assume that most of the people in this position are kind of schizophrenic, in a way, in that you provide a service element, a support element in trying to develop training programmes, trying to develop all the academic support while at the same time you are still the, almost the registrar of that degree programme, so there is that slight nature of trying to account for which one you're doing and whether one is getting too much attention. (Francis)

The focus of their mixed roles of providing service and compliance was first and foremost in support of the academic lead or leads of the Graduate School. The interaction with the academic lead was central to how Graduate School Managers experienced policy changes to the UK Doctorate at a micro-level. I use the term academic lead to describe an academic who has taken on a management role within their institution in relation to the Graduate School, whether this is temporary or permanent. These posts have in themselves been theorised as arising from the transition from a liberal to a neoliberal university by Deem et al (2007)'s conception of academic managerialism. Deem et al (2007) suggested that UK Universities had moved away from more collegial forms of conducting research and teaching (McNay 1995; Dearlove 1997) and instigated a, 'highly managed' top-down approach by manager-academics based on new managerial ideology (which sits within the wider discourse of neoliberal reason). Amongst Deem et al (2007)'s findings were that manager-academics had received little pre-management training of any kind and that the majority of manager-academics occupied their roles only temporarily. The affect of this temporality I will return to in my next chapter. As a result, Deem et al (2007) found that the managerial identities of academic leads, where they

existed, were often temporary and secondary to other occupational identities. Nevertheless, the relationship with these academic leads was cited by Graduate School Managers as a key enabler for navigating and implementing policy changes.

> I think a lot of it is having that good relationship with the Academic Lead of the Graduate School and making sure that you're both on the same page with where you're going and being very clear what your goals are. (Annabel)
>
> When he started, I think he really got what we were saying about it. And because he was new and wanting to change things, he's quite kind of, forceful, so he's pushed it forward as well, which has really helped. (Elizabeth)
>
> So it's very much down to him and me to set up the agenda. (Heather)

However, navigating the social interaction with academic leads of Graduate Schools was not always the positive symbiotic relationship portrayed by the quotes above. There was some frustration expressed towards manager academics asserting their 'right to manage' over both Graduate School Managers and their teams:

> We've got a new research strategy and the graduate school should actually work with that strategy, rather than just doing whatever a maverick academic lead wants to do. (Deborah)

Graduate School Managers cited a number of challenges in working with academics and supervisors, in particular supervisors not understanding what was expected of them; especially in relation to careers advice, pastoral care and the promotion of transferable skills training. Whilst supervisors tended to regarded as the 'problem' that needed fixing, the narratives were not consistent, not even with single transcripts. For example, supervising was portrayed as both a key weakness, but also a sight of *pro-bono* work with supervisors portrayed as victims trying to supervise 'on top of everything else'. Graduate School Managers questioned whether there were sufficient resources for supervision and adequate time in workload allocations for the level of complexity, especially in relation to supervisor's roles as pastoral carers, that was now involved in doctoral supervision. This rather convoluted narrative is captured by Francis's quote:

> I spent eight years criticising supervisors for being not good enough, and I actually think that, in fairness I think there is more that can be done to support them, because we don't actually really define what we expect from them, I think, apart from the fact I don't think they're doing it well enough. I'm not sure I can really define on what metrics and criteria I'm coming from that they're not doing well enough. (Francis)

Whilst what was expected of a supervisor may have been unclear the data were unequivocally in support of Lee's (2012) assertion that the supervisory relationship remains a key component of doctoral education. Graduate School Managers recognised supervision as a practice where there is already an overarching tension between the professional and the personal which surfaces during supervisory practice (Lee, 2012). The interviews hinted at that the need to develop an ethics of care for both supervisors and their students. However, this did not displace a dominant view that supervisory behaviours needed to be 'fixed' and the majority of interviews mentioned plans to further enhance their supervisor training. Yet, analysis of precisely what needed fixing varied. Annabel perceived inadequacies in the support by supervisors for doctoral students' long-term career ambitions.

> Well, every supervisor should have asked the candidate; what, ultimately do you want to go on and do. And if you don't do... If you haven't done that, I don't think you've been a particularly good supervisor. (Annabel)

There was the suggestion that a number of supervisors didn't care for their students:

> I think there are a number of academics who see PhD students as ah I've got a lab monkey, they will come in and do my bidding and their thesis is the secondary product and that's frustrating, but I think it's changing. I hope it's changing. (Grace)

For Bethany, Grace and Heather the main challenge was trying to engage with what were portrayed as supercilious academics who refused to be demeaned by attending 'training':

> I quite enjoy doing the training that we offer, as well, particularly with academic colleagues, doing the supervisor briefing as it were, call it training they won't come….One of our priorities is training for supervisors…we just need to be better at it or get more people through the workshops or briefing sessions. (Bethany)

> We have supervisors who are not engaged with what we're doing, so they think that we are just more layers of academic administration and, you know, "PhD students don't need training and I've supervised PhD students since the beginning of time and I don't need training", that's quite a difficult nut to crack. (Grace)

> Supervisors, supervisors, supervisors. I would… and it's a difficult one. It's an impossible task but those *prima donnas* I would tell them, we looked after your students all year round and it's harsh out there. But we need to do a little more… much more work with the supervisors… If we could find a way to tell them that everybody, including them, would benefit if they supervised their… if they took the time to properly supervise their students. (Heather)

Whereas the issue for Deborah was less about '*prima donnas*' and more one of ignorance, 'we're giving all these students all this training, but supervisors aren't always aware of it' this ignorance was compounded when difficult situations arise:

> It's a lot to take on at the moment, supervisors not being aware of what to do if the relationship with a student breaks down or if a student has mental health problems and they don't know what to do, where to send them. So, making sure that they know where to get the support and what their remit is and what the university expects from them but also what they can expect from the university in support back. There's not a lot of that clarity there… There's this assumption that supervisors know and quite often they don't.   (Deborah)

Quotes from Graduate School Managers, such as the above from Deborah and those before, suggested that Universities were still struggling to meet the Research Councils expectations for doctoral training (RCUK, 2013), that:

> Supervisors must receive the support and training that they need to provide the highest-quality supervisory support for their students.

> Supervisors (recognising that these may also be teams of supervisors) must recognise doctoral study as a broad training opportunity for a range of careers and encourage and support students in developing their career options.

Yet at the same time there was an expectation that the role of the supervisor should be more holistic and incorporate high levels of pastoral care, especially 'if a student has mental health problems'. When reviewing the transcripts mental health and wellbeing tended to be discussed purely in the context of students. The importance of supervisors' abilities to safeguard doctoral student mental health was emphasised without any acknowledgement that supervisors themselves were a high-risk group for mental health problems (Hayter et al., 2011).

In contrast to many of the statements on supervisors, Graduate School Managers expressed warmth when talking about what they often termed 'my students'. Faces lit up in the interviews as Graduate School Managers talked about these 'really interesting individuals' (Elizabeth) who 'just make it for me' (Grace).

Graduate School Managers tended to present 'their' doctoral students as a 'small constituent body of an institution' (Francis) that they needed to 'champion' (Annabel) or 'negotiate on behalf of' (Bethany). This championing could take a range of forms, whether addressing specific issues (e.g. Annabel described championing space in academic departments for doctoral students, whereas for Grace is was about

championing consistent terms and conditions for doctoral students who were employed to teach) or acting as an institutional Jiminy Cricket by ensuring the different needs of doctoral students aren't forgotten (Elizabeth).

In reading through the transcripts, the students appeared to be talked about as infantilised victims. They needed to be supported and looked after (Grace, Heather), were beset by poor supervisory practices (Annabel, Heather, Grace) and expected to have mental ill-health and/or experience difficult issues (Deborah, Elizabeth, Grace, Heather) often without access to adequate pastoral support (Francis). In all the transcripts there was only one reference to an infuriating student, which was balanced by a reference to the infuriating supervisor.

Students were individuals whom Graduate School Managers could 'make a difference' for by providing communication (Bethany) structure (Francis) and the development of their transferrable skills. This was a role that was enjoyed and rewarding as Annabel articulates:

> I like the fact that we are helping and we're working with students. I like the fact now that we've got this location, that we actually are having more focus on students. And in our graduate school, the main focus we have with them, is through the training side of things, and in the activities, which we create, kind of, inter-disciplinarian interactions. So, things like: PG experience awards; the festival... those types of things. (Annabel)

However, the majority of the discussions about students in the data were (as suggested by Table 3) in relation to maintaining student numbers and securing and managing doctoral student funding. Students were statistics to be counted and monitored and part of McGettigan's (2013) system of accounts. Some of my participants ways of thinking and talking about themselves in relation to students and in articulating their role to me as their interviewer appeared to be 'a regime of truth' (Butler, 2005:22). Their self-recognition was possible by talking about their role in financial terms (i.e. with student numbers equating to fee income and/or the value of doctoral training grants). The balance of text about what really matters (i.e. the key issues) suggested the subordination of moral obligations (e.g. around mental health and wellbeing) to economic ones (Walzer, 1984) so that 'everything is simply a sum of value realised or hoped for' (Slater & Tonkiss, 2001). One of the key values hoped for were international student numbers. For Annabel it was a pressing concern:

> International intake, we've got some work to do, and we could be better. (Annabel)

The interviews supported Universities UK's (2014) assertion that, 'Maintaining a high level of international postgraduate admissions (currently around one third of the annual intake) is a further important priority for Higher Education Institutions'. The majority of my participants played a role in promoting international student recruitment. Deborah highlighted managing the international postgraduate research student scholarships offered by her university, a 'process which for a very low number of scholarships is an enormous amount of work. It's crazy!' Securing international postgraduate research students was identified as desirable by Francis:

> I think, fairly clearly, we want international [students], we do want to be internationally excellent and want to attract and promote Britain abroad, all of that kind of thing, so I think from my perspective it would be a major thing. (Francis)

Francis's quote is interesting in that it shows a broader engagement with policy. He describes the desire to be international, incorporating the perceived benefits of soft power, the pursuit of excellence in addition to the material reward of international student fee income. Supporting the construction of international doctoral researchers in terms of income-generation, and indicators of internationalised knowledge networks (Lomer, 2017; Owens et al. 2011). It shows the relay of nation-state concerns of soft power to a justification of individual activity, or in other words an example of Foucault's (2010) concept of governmentality.

A buoyant international intake was presented as an unquestioned good and the data was silent around issues of supporting international postgraduate students either during or after their doctorate. Yet recent research has questioned whether such assumptions about the benefits of internationalisation should be left unchallenged. Morley et al (2020) concluded that the immaterial or affective labour that is required to unstick, install and maintain an internationalised academic identity and navigate the translations and antagonisms from everyday encounters with difference is substantially under-estimated. Instead the interviews appeared to convey that what mattered was what could be counted.

Doing and Showing

During the interviews, I discussed with Graduate School Managers about how they knew what they should be doing and what the key issues they were facing were. There was a remarkable coherence in their responses. The interviews when analysed offered a performative repetition. By this I mean, that the same messages permeated the transcripts. The agreement about 'what counts', 'what is of importance', reminded me of Butler's claim that power operates through the endless repetition of discourse (Butler, 2011). This congruence was recognised by Francis:

> Now, what seems, just on a slight aside, what I found with my role in the eight years that I've done this is whatever the hot topic issue of that year, it seems to bubble at exactly the same time at every institution… what actually is surprising is the amount of conformity between all of the institutions when they're looking at what to do. (Francis)

At the time of my interviews, when asked about the key issues they were experiencing as Graduate School Managers seventeen out of nineteen responses were about improving practice. The two remaining responses were around Britain's exit from the European Union (Brexit) and tending to be a mixture of concerns about covering student numbers, funding and loss of staff. The seventeen responses could be clustered in seven areas as set out in Table 3 below:

Table 3: The key issues for Graduate School Managers when interviewed
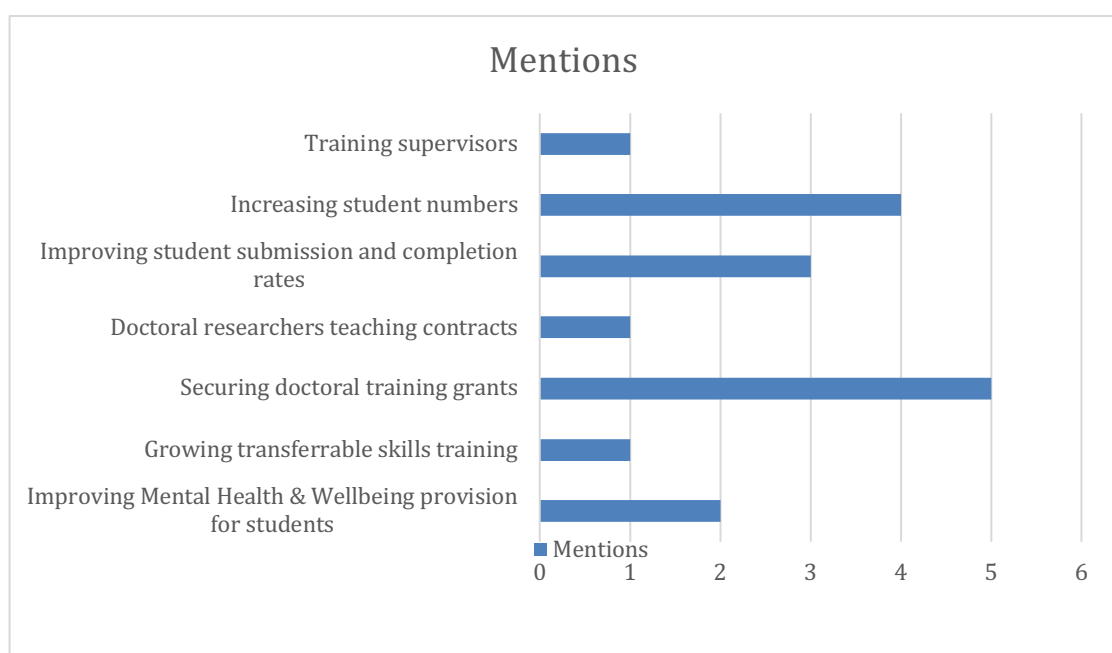
There are a few key points I would like to draw out from the table. Firstly, it is striking from Table 3 that the top three key issues were all things that could be counted and quantified. Secondly, the congruence mentioned by Francis is reinforced. Perhaps this narrowing of what matters is unsurprising given that, when I asked about how the key issues were identified, it was not as you might expect from the academic lead that was most frequently cited but peer networks. The importance of peer networks to Graduate School Managers can be seen as evidence for Gornitzka and Larson's (2004) assertion that the professionalisation of staff in higher education will lead to a growth in the formation of networks.

> One of the big developments, for <institution name> but also for me personally…is that I think we have much better networks, people doing similar jobs. (Bethany)

> I mean, clearly, everybody's on these forums now, so people pick up questions from each other, so we're all on the forums, we're all going to the same conferences and groups, we've got the doctoral training partnerships where we all share information, so we pick up on the same things (Francis)

These networks allowed discourses, or as Grace describes it, gossip, to spread:

> Because higher education is a massive gossip factory as far as I can tell. It's all just have you heard that so-and-so is doing this, or have you heard that this government have done that and it's… So, it's kind of a slightly weird input if I'm being honest. There's a huge amount of gossiping that goes on, some of which is useful and some of which is terrifying and not useful in any way, shape or form. (Grace)

Six different networks/special interest groups for supporting doctoral students were mentioned, with the most frequently cited being the UK Council for Graduate Education (4 times) and Vitae (3 times). Networking was also mentioned as a benefit of having to work across institutions to deliver doctoral training partnership grants and doctoral training centre grants awarded by the UK's Research Councils.

Graduate School Managers talked about their roles becoming increasingly collaborative. The prime reason for this was not due to the multiple networks and special interest groups mentioned, but due to what UUK described as 'the most significant trend shaping PGR provision at UK universities' (UUK, 2014), the introduction of doctoral training partnerships and centres. This new aspect of work was stimulating, forcing confrontation with different practices and opening up new possibilities:

> I like working with doctoral training partnerships, actually, but that doesn't come as a surprise, because I think that it is useful, in terms of gaining experience of other institutions…... I think there's probably a lot more that can be done with those partnerships that aren't being done, at the moment. (Annabel)

It was interesting to note that across the interviews the challenge of greater collaboration was discussed almost completely in the context of UK higher education institution to higher education(s) working practices. This was seen as challenging in terms of monitoring students and aligning processes and procedures, prompting frustration amongst my participants as well as the stimulation described by Annabel above:

> If we continue down this route of fewer, bigger collaborations to manage research council funding for PGR students, then I think it's just going to turn into a complete nightmare. (Bethany)

> Each doctoral training partnership works in a different way, each doctoral training centre works in a different way. Some of them, not many anymore, but some of them are institution only… it's that thing of everybody in one of those doctoral training centres, doctoral training partnerships, works in isolation and then… so, everybody is trying to reinvent the wheel. (Deborah)

Absent from the data was any discussion of the challenge of working with non-Higher Education partners, although the growth in collaboration with industry was highlighted in the academic literature (Kitagawa, 2014). There was though a recognition of the need to collaborate with higher education institutions beyond the UK's borders. For Annabel there was 'a particular focus on increasing our European doctoral collaboration', whilst Deborah was trying to put in place structures to manage joint degrees with overseas institutions and in particular the issue of 'joint PhDs and quality assurance'. Graduate School Managers indicated a growing sense of the doing being internationalised. The impression was given of the places of doing were expanding, with Graduate School manages situating work as solely within their institution, in collaboration with other institutions in the UK and even overseas.

There were lots of references to insufficient time in the data:

> You can't do all of it, so it's either going to be this or that…. I don't have enough time. (Deborah)

> It didn't work, because we didn't have the time to push it forward… Which is why, we need staff input, but then, we don't really have the time to be doing that kind of thing… I don't have time for anything other than frantically trying to get

> everything done. It's the basics… So, that's the main challenge, I think, just getting everything done in the time that I have. (Elizabeth)

> I think also we're operating in a sector context where we have a lot of change and challenge being thrown at us in a very short timescale that makes things quite uncertain, and yet we still have to continue to plan and progress and be as universities. (Claire)

Claire's quote links the lack of time to the policy/sector context, with 'what needs to be done' subject to flux and change. Due to the lack of time there was a focus on just performing the operational tasks required rather than 'understanding government policy, understanding all the higher-level strategic stuff that I don't get a chance to do frankly' (Bethany).

> It's very easy for operational to take over because there is so much that we do because it somehow ends up with us, so that might be the most challenging thing (Deborah)

The experiences articulated by my participants appears to support a broader societal observation of the acceleration of time in late capitalism (Adam 2004; Bauman 2000; Leccardi 2007; Rosa 2003). In relation to higher education, Vostal (2016) has suggested that the temporal modes of contemporary academia have been reordered in response to neoliberal conditions. As such, individual academics 'feed the acceleration machine of immediacy' (Vostal 2016, 24). I would suggest that there needs to be a sister book to Berg & Seeber's (2016) 'The Slow Professor,' to discuss the need to reintroduce into the administrative life of the university time to collectively reflect on some of the endless 'doing'. Yet if things weren't done, they couldn't be measured. My participants reported that a growing demand on time was spent on measuring. Requests for management information to meet auditing requirements or demonstrate key performance indicators to Committees were presented as a key part of the role. These reporting requirements were frequently changing in response to new institutional strategies or governmental policy initiatives. The impact of regularly changing performance indicators and demands on time meant that my participants often expressed the feeling that their work was not under control. The social and psychological impact of this should not be underestimated, for example, constantly changing demands can make people feel more insecure, anxious and hence governable. Systems of audit are not, 'just neutral or politically innocent practices designed to promote 'transparency' or efficiency: rather they are disciplinary technologies – or 'technologies of the self' – aimed at installing new norms of conduct into the

workforce' (Shore, 2008:283). I would suggest these new norms served to reduce time for my participants to reflect on their practice, increased their levels of uncertainty (which I will return to in my next Chapter) and disrupted social interactions and relationships. Grace delightfully recalls the response from an academic colleague about this seemingly constant need to measure:

You're auditing us on audits that don't apply to us! (Grace)

The quote above from Grace demonstrates that audit was not always popular! Grace described having to deal with the accusation that the Graduate School was 'making up rules again'. This vignette shows how Graduate School Managers are actors and agents of affect; having both a force to affect and be affected (something I will return to in my next chapter). However, the faculty's desire to attribute blame to the Graduate School demonstrated a lack of awareness of the policy expectations. The pervasiveness of neoliberal reason has resulted in burgeoning expectations for universities to be held to account by government, especially via funding councils, for their efficiency and effectiveness (Barnett 2011). In Grace's case the audit of the audit was required to respond to a Research Council reporting process. This sense of Graduate School Managers acting as conduits or intermediaries for government policy was articulated by Bethany in relation to the UK's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education:

I think we take what the QAA tells us we have got to do, we try and make it more palatable, and say look, just bear with us, come on, let's go with this, we have got to do it and show that we have done it, because if we fail to do it then we are really in deep trouble. (Bethany)

Bethany's reference to 'deep trouble' invokes the TINA (There is no alternative) effect (Marcuse, 1964). The data suggests there is both an increase in discourses, such as quality assurance seeking more things to be done and an increase in actual things to do. It is of no surprise then that the policy expectations have resulted in changes to management practice, serving to further amplify accountability, efficiency, productivity, quality control and cost-effectiveness within the neoliberal university (Deem & Johnson, 2017). In facilitating audit, Graduate School Managers can be framed as agents of neoliberalism whose practice impacts others. For example, Shore and Wright (2000) found that audit processes have resulted in a culture change in UK Universities by influencing academics' conduct and behaviour. There was little discussion within my data about the benefits or impact of audit. The importance of audit was recognised as Heather describes, 'So we have evidence which is as important as the actual doing'. Heather inadvertently describes Ball's (2012:30) conception of the impact of performativity whose

rigours and disciplines require us, 'to spend increasing amounts of our time in making ourselves accountable'. In the transcripts this need to make oneself accountable tended to be bemoaned as a banal but necessary part of a Graduate School Manager's job. For example, Deborah complained of being 'tired of going through Je-S[1] records and finding something wrong with every single one of them'. Listening to the weariness of the voice, you can readily endorse Ball's (2015:2) observation that, 'The dry, soulless grids and techniques of reporting elicit a range of often unhealthy emotions'. In reading through some of narratives of audit processes, however, especially the reality of having to 'audit audits' and when the 'evidence' is as important as the doing, I couldn't help but recall Graeber's (2018:9) definition of a bullshit job:

> …a form of paid employment so completely pointless, unnecessary or pernicious that even the employee cannot justify its existence even though, as part of the conditions of employment, the employee feels obliged to pretend that this is not the case.

Yet, there was no hint of resistance or refusal to comply with audit work amongst my participants. The issue was how to manage it. Graduate School Managers portrayed the demands for audit processes as growing to the extent that increasing amounts of their time was devoted to improving or making them more efficient. The solution to this was often presented as investment in IT systems:

> One of our key priorities, it comes back to the bureaucracy thing, the paperwork, we are looking at an online PhD management system, and that is really high on the list…one of the things that came out in our Review [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education Review] was that we need to have better monitoring of postgraduate research students. Whilst we have been doing that up to a point with the paper based system, it will be much better with an online system. (Bethany)

> We're going through a big project to try and sort out the IT systems and put all our monitoring processes online. Which has been an uphill battle the entire time I've been here. We're finally getting to the point where it's nearly ready. We're going to start user testing soon. That's a really big thing to have achieved. (Elizabeth)

Meeting the demands of audit was both time consuming and expensive. The aspiration was that these expensive IT systems would save time allowing Graduate School Managers to address other priorities. Yet, it was recognised that these systems would still need to be accepted by faculty and there were some signs of resistance:

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[1] Je-S is the electronic grant services system used by the UK's Research Councils to manage their investments.

> I think there are still some people across the <<name of institution>> who still have this, yes, come and do your PhD with me and you can take as long as you like to do it and the world isn't like that anymore. (Bethany)

> I am very conscious that if people won't do paper based recording of supervision meetings, they are probably not going to do it online either! (Bethany)

The experience of requesting funds for such IT projects tended to be described as an arduous process. Requests for additional investment, e.g. IT systems to meet audit demands, placed Graduate School Managers in competition with their colleagues for university funding and resources:

> People asking for money constantly, and why aren't we running another conference fund competition; why can't we get external trainers in; why didn't you sort out this online monitoring system years ago – it all comes down to money. (Francis)

> It's very frustrating when we sort of turn around and say well actually we'd like to do this but we need X amount of funding to do it or we'd like to do this but we need X amount of space to do it and we find we are at the very bottom of the pecking order. (Grace)

> Obviously, I had to write something convincing because there was, as you can imagine, fierce competition between all those bids. (Heather)

My understanding of being placed in 'fierce competition' with colleagues as Heather describes can often risk eroding collegiality! However, the quotes above suggested other impacts. For example, Francis was having to spend emotional labour fending off questions from doctoral student customers about the lack of conference funding and external trainers. In the case of Grace, it was demoralising to find out that investment in the doctoral education appeared to be 'at the very bottom of the pecking order'. The affective economy of these experiences will be explored further in my next chapter.

Yet despite all the doing and accounting for doing, one of the most challenging questions for my interviewees to answer, was 'How do you know you are doing a good job?'. The question, in a similar vein to the one on professional development tended to be greeted with hesitation. The answers were not on the tips my participants tongues:

> Oh God, I don't know…It's all a bit woolly if I'm completely honest. (Grace)

The answers, when they came, are summarised in Table 4 below.

Table 4: How Graduate School Managers know they are doing a good job?
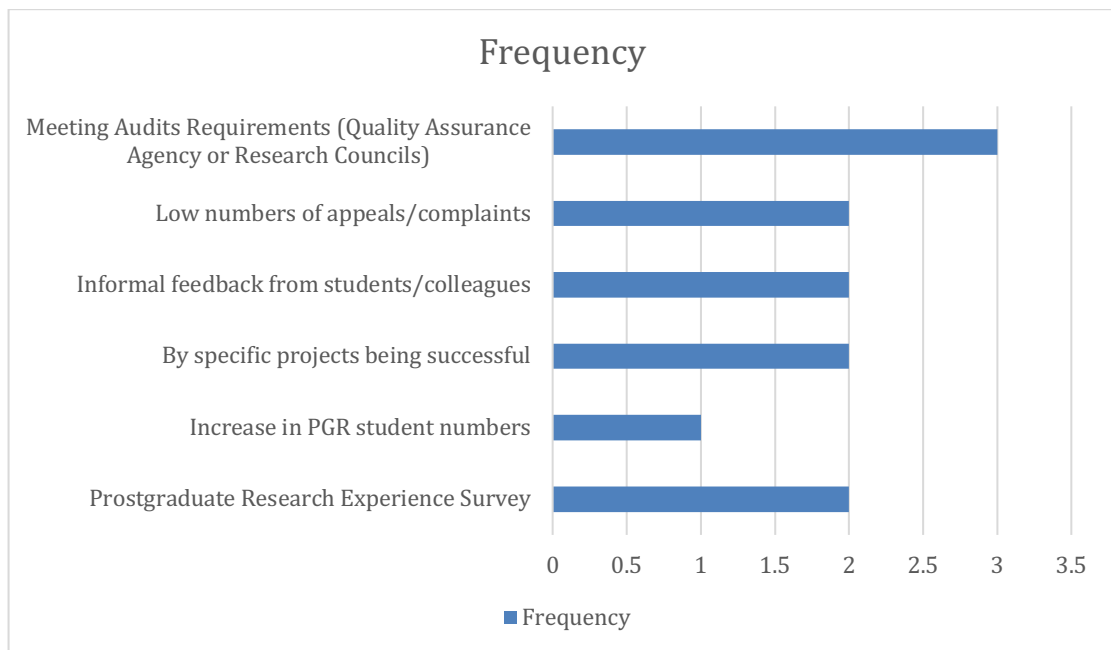
Many of these responses can be linked back to neoliberal reason. The reliance on the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) can be equated to corporate entities relying on a customer satisfaction surveys to monitor their performance. The focus on low numbers of appeals and complaints reinforces this sense of the student as a consumer (Naidoo, Shanker & Ekant, 2011) rather than learners. Even the focus on audits provides the 'evidence' whereby the customer is becoming more empowered to call a university to account as well as to increasingly be able to account for themselves. This is often referred to as the choice discourse of neoliberalism. Within the neoliberal reason these audits produce the metrics that provide the truth and imply new norms (Lynch, 2014), Judith Butler argues that identities are shaped by such norms and conventions and by using such norms, individuals will present themselves in a way that is recognisable to society (Butler 2005).

Conclusion

Whilst Graduate School Managers in applying for their roles anticipated experiencing policy as something they actively and independently choose and seek to implement and change, their lived experiences suggested a number of limits to this sought-after agency. They experienced policy changes as something that they had to negotiate with their academic lead(s) who could exercise their 'academic managerialism' and set new directions. Key issues arose not from individuals, but through the repetitive discourse of

peer networks and the demands of audit regimes. These demands reduced both time and space to reflect. The acceleration of the academy existed for Graduate School Managers both in terms of policy discourse and operational matters. The doing often reached the point of taking over; with operational matters requiring business cases to be written and competition over resources with colleagues within the university. Aside from a few 'pet projects' that managed to be instigated; the much-heralded agency of the Graduate School Manager seems to have been oversold.

Yet the loss of agency was also a gain for Graduate School Managers. Individual agency was a cruel optimism (Berlant, 2001) since the agency desired would have been an obstacle to Graduate School Managers flourishing. What mattered was not individual creativity or 'pet projects' but ensuring the passing of audits and the correct metrics. A growing part of the lived experiences was 'metronomic', concerned about measuring and managing the data of doctoral education. Through responding to audit imperatives Graduate School Managers gained access to resources (even expensive IT systems). They were more likely to experience policy changes as conduits or intermediaries, working across university boundaries between students and faculty interpreting, promoting and implementing government policy. Examples of this governmentality included: Implementing the requirements of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, addressing the Research Councils' expectations on supervisory performance and support.

The focus on the demanding roles of measuring and acting as conduits for policy left Graduate School Managers 'time poor' and resulted in a loss of space to reflect and consider moral imperatives over operational ones. For example, the new IT system may improve efficiency but at what cost? Ball (2012:30) argues that, 'Systems designed to 'support' or encourage those who are unable to 'keep up' continuously teeter on the brink of moral regulation.' The metrics they produce allow 'problems' to be identified and 'blame' to be duly assigned. The danger of managing by numbers (Ozga, 2008) is that the social context is completely obscured. The concept of IT systems used without social context reminded me of Foucault's interest in the Panoptican centres. They make it possible to see constantly and to 'recognise', or I would suggest also 'misrecognise', immediately. The full lighting and the continuous eye of the supervisor create a visibility trap for those working with complexity in higher education (Foucault, 2020).

Another issue that was silent in the data was around any discussion of equality and diversity issues. The word 'equality' was used in only one transcript. This was in the context of a doctoral student mentoring scheme:

> …trying to work out the amount of mentoring you give them. Talking to the people from equality and diversity about issues like that. (Elizabeth)

The use of 'equity' occurred only once to describe the need to provide 'an equity of experience across the University' (Elizabeth). Elizabeth, the only one to use these words confessed, 'we haven't really spent a lot of time looking at the equality and diversity side of things either'. Incidentally, the either was a reference to 'student wellbeing'. There was one mention of disability, but only in the context of mental health and individuals not having to 'declare a disability' (Bethany). The only use of the word 'diversity' was to describe the broad roles and functions a Graduate School Manager completed and not in relation to the Equality Act (2010), Other missing words included: 'gender', 'race', 'ethnicity', 'sexuality' and 'religion'. Discussion of the characteristics that the 2010 Equality Act protects was a noticeable silence. What I portrayed as a 'crisis' discourse of equality and diversity in my context chapter that had led to a wide variety of policy interventions, did not appear to have relayed to, let alone through Graduate School Managers to the same extent as other policy narratives. The discourse on equality and diversity did not appear to be one that was privileged in the neoliberal university. This can be seen as a further example of the subordination of moral obligations to economic ones (Walzer, 1984).

In working through the transcripts, I struggled to identify clear statements of what Graduate School Managers believed should be done differently. You could argue that there was a desire for more autonomy in their roles and more resource to do the things they need to do and measure the things they wish to measure. At most I can suggest that there may be unexpected consequences of getting Graduate School Managers to reflect on their own practice. Afterall, even asking people to think about their own practice can cause attitude change (Tesser, 1978). For example, my questions around support and professional development may prompt interest in the enrolment on a course. Nevertheless, my analysis, possibly driven by its focus on power and agency did not suggest the need for substantive changes. Perhaps a different lens is required.

In my next chapter I try and move away from considering my participants as being defined by their roles and seek to recognise them more holistically including references to their multiple other identities such as parents and friends. I will re-visit my data to

explore the 'affect' of neoliberal discourse and seek to identify moments of affective intensity.

Chapter 6

The Affected Graduate School Manager

Introduction

Discussions about the neoliberal university tend to focus on the 'macro-processes' (e.g. Olssen & Peters, 2007; Holmwood, 2014). Their gaze tends to fix on the ascendancy of neoliberal reason, and its associated discourses, and the consequences for: government policy; higher education as a sector; and individual higher education institutions. By contrast, there has been little consideration given to everyday affective experiences especially those of professional services members of staff such as Graduate School Managers. This is despite the strong arguments that have been made about the affective economy of academia (Morley, 2018b). These include describing a sector with: An insatiable drive for distinction and differentiation; beset by crisis discourses (as set out in my Chapter 2); and subjected to a policy environment rooted in competitive anxiety (e.g. the fear of missing out on the latest advancement in research and innovation or the competition for international students). As these elements are discussed within universities, they lead to a range of feelings being stimulated and provoked, with these experiences magnified by the transparency of personal success/failure delivered by the audit culture (Morley, 2003). At an individual level, our emotions are linked to this affective economy through, 'our anxieties and desires and our concomitant efforts of self-management and self-improvement' (Ball, 2015:2). To gain a greater insight into how the doctorate is experienced at the micro level on/ by individual Graduate School Managers, the losses and gains they experience and their beliefs on what needs to be done differently, this realm of affect needs to be explored.

To do this I will draw on affect theory, whose broad aim is 'to deliver the tools required for lively, textured research on embodied social action and for productive insights into the entangled forms of assembling constituting social life moment' (Wetherall, 2013:351). My aspiration in using affect theory was to move beyond the text of the interviews and use it to explore the perceptions, feelings and vibrations of my participants; 'the limits of the immediately knowable and communicable' (Wetherall 2013:351). This step was taken partly due to my concern that an approach based purely on the patterns identified from the transcripts in the previous chapter failed to engage with the affect that was heard, observed, sensed and perceived in the interviews. By purely looking at discursive

formations of the text, I was privileging their role as a Graduate School Manager and not taking a more holistic approach that allowed space for other identities such as being a parent or caring friend to be explored.

In Chapter 3 on theoretical framing, I described affect as a phenomenon, neither appearing before nor after a given point but as a constant dynamic and circulation. This draws on Wetherall's (2012:62) assertion that affect needs to be understood as a 'dynamic, interacting composite or assemblage of autonomic bodily responses (e.g. sweating, trembling, blushing), other body actions (approaching or avoiding), subjective feelings and other qualia, cognitive processing (e.g. perception, attention, memory, decision-making), the firing and projecting of neural circuits (e.g. from the thalamus to the cortex and the amygdala), verbal reports (from exclamations to narratives) and communicative signals such as facial expressions'. Affect, therefore, includes the emotions, responses, reactions and feelings that are cultural practices, not individual psychological states. They circulate in social interactions. I portrayed the neoliberal university as driven by the materialities of financialisation, yet in this chapter I will demonstrate that there is also a powerful psychic and affective economy of shame, pride, humiliation, anger, disappointment, despair and anxiety within it (Morley, 2016). The neoliberal university is a regulated affective space, in which Graduate School Managers are actors and agents having both a force to affect and be affected.

Whilst acknowledging the dangers of disclosure narratives and confessional tales (Paechter, 1996), one of the significant findings in my research was the frequency of reference to emotions. These ranged from overt statements, where 'fear' was seen as dominating the entire institution's decision making, 'I would like the organisation to not rule on fear' (Heather) to moments of anger, 'That was the person [talking about a senior male academic] I mentioned, I just wanted to hit.' (Bethany). Yet, the term 'emotions' has proven utterly refractory to define with psychologists accepting that, "…probably no other term in psychology shares its absence of a clear definition" (Reber, 1995). The challenge of definition is not just bound to the discipline of Psychology and is well documented across the social sciences (Ahmed, 2004; Beard et al 2007). The importance of emotions is recognised, they 'are a vital ingredient in the very composition of the world as a world' (Smith et al, 2009:2). Most of the debate is with respect to where the emphasis should be, and my thinking has been influenced by Ahmed's (2004) work, which shifts the focus onto the impact of emotions (i.e. what they do) rather than what they are. Especially given that whilst no clear definition of emotions exists, it is generally recognised that there is a relationship between emotions and the physical, resulting in implications for

mental health and wellbeing. Another influence on my conception of emotions, draws on the work of Burkitt (2014:7), it is one that goes beyond defining them simply as feelings and sees emotions as relational to others and the situated lived experience. Burkitt suggests that within his conception of emotions as complexes feelings, emotions and affect are intertwined. Wetherell's (2012:24) describes her concept of affective practices in relation to this broad understanding of emotions as the 'most coherent unit of analysis possible for the social science of affect'. It is these units that I will seek to explore. My participants described a number of subjectively experienced affect-laden states with an emotional dimension due to their implications for the Graduate School Managers' personal goals or wellbeing, or for those for whom they cared about (Woods, 2010). This chapter presents the areas of affective intensity that emerged from the interviews as Graduate School Managers, namely: uncertainty about the future; the heated-up floor of doctoral education policy and their investment in social relationships. In addition to these thematic areas of affective intensity, I will explore a particular micro-narrative, which really stood when I was analysing my data. Such moments have been theorised by MacLure (2013) as moments of 'wonder'.

Uncertainty about the future

When talking about the role of Graduate School Manager, there was real warmth. Despite all the challenges it was a role as mentioned at the start of the previous chapter that my participants were happy to have. Even Heather who was the most vociferous about the current education sector expressed contentment:

> So, yes it feels good to be the Graduate School Manager. I wake up in the morning and I don't have this dread of going to work. Even some days I look forward to going to work. (Heather)

> I have a pretty good job because it's interesting and it's a lot of different bits and it brings a lot of things together, and I think that's true. It is interesting to be central and to be involved in so many different aspects of the university, and I think I made a pretty good choice in coming here. (Deborah)

Heather and Deborah demonstrate joy and pride and engagement with the content of the post. They value their work and their work is consistent with their values as Heather describes:

> I really enjoy my job and I enjoy the fact that I can make, I can help to make a difference to some of my students… So, I hang on to the fact that I'm useful, I

have a purpose in this university, I have a use… I need to feel that I'm making a difference. (Heather)

We can conclude that Graduate School Managers did not perceive themselves as holding one of Graeber's (2018) bullshit jobs! Instead the quotes suggest that happiness and desire have become integrated into the neoliberal university (Ahmed, 2010; Blinkley, 2014). Participants talked about how they became a Graduate School Manager with pride and were cognisant of the status it gave them within their institution. Participants talked about the post as having a 'high profile' (Annabel), being a 'senior staff role...[and a] …good promotion' (Claire). In short, the post was desirable. It was interesting to note that at a time when the sector was frequently in dispute over issues of pay and pensions that dissatisfaction with reward and remuneration was absent from the data. Drawing on the proverbial phrase, 'no news is good news', one conclusion is that all the participants were as happy as Heather about how their posts had been monetarised:

It's comfortable, it pays well. The holiday entitlement is good. (Heather)

A key point revealed by Heather, Deborah, Annabel and Claire from their comments above is that neoliberal reason is not just about injury or subjectification, a role in a neoliberal university can be experienced as positive and personally rewarding/intellectually challenging. Yet, whilst the present was perceived as positive the future was wrapped in uncertainty. When asked about their future career plans, Graduate School Managers responded with a high level of uncertainty:

I don't know, I suppose I'd only got as far as this. I don't know really. I suppose one thing about graduate school manager, is you do become very specialised in one particular area, if you've been there for a long time. (Annabel)

But then my question is…what am I going to do afterwards because what is there after this? (Deborah)

I haven't got a plan after this…. My daughter is two, at the moment, that, combined with working part time, takes up all my energy. There's no space for career planning at the moment. (Elizabeth)

PGR career is a non-career. There is no real sort of path…anybody at a lower level than I am, I tell them if you really like PGR then fine, but there is no career. There is no progression. (Heather)

This lack of long-term strategy could be a gendered response to career planning, in contrast to the 'young men in a hurry' syndrome that Collinson and Hearn identified with many young men in organisations (2005). Yet when these comments are juxtaposed

with the previous chapters evidence of a lack of professional development support, there appears to be evidence of Universities failing to honour their frequent boasts of 'staff development activities which are relevant to the needs of the university and to your future or existing work' and suggestions that 'we may be able to provide financial assistance and day release' for all employees. Elizabeth's quote is interesting in this context, suggesting that there is 'no space' within her role for career planning. Every second of her time is needed to maximise her productivity, an example of Freeman's (2010) notion of chrononormativity. Freeman (2010: xxiii) defines chrononormativity as 'the interlocking of temporal schemes necessary for genealogies of descent and for the mundane workings of everyday life'. It is a useful concept to explore and question ideas about the 'right time' for particular stages of life and the interplay between the timing of 'private' matters of partnering, child-raising or caring and 'professional' concerns about career progression and promotion. A lack time to consider this interaction, to career plan as part of your working time and a lack of support (e.g. mentoring) and capacity building can have subtle effects on self-esteem and professional identity. Even more confident voices, like Claire's, had a tenor of anxiety noticeable in the recordings when the subject of future career roles was raised:

> I don't have a plan as such, but I'm ambitious and I like to be in roles where I have the full opportunity to put my skills and experience to use (Claire).

The responses quoted above hopefully convey the uncertainty with which the questions were answered during the interviews. There is a challenge in presenting the text without the voice and its accompanying intonation and nuance. My impression was of a general 'mid-career' angst; of being stuck in a career bottleneck. I was intrigued as to whether these quotes were simply a chrono-normative narrative of the staff in their mid-careers or potentially a gendered response (Morley & Lund, 2020). Certainly, mid-career angst is something that has been recognised with the higher education sector, although the focus tends to remain on academic faculty as opposed to administrative staff. For example, amongst female academics Kandiko et al (2018) highlighted how mid-career is often a challenging time often concerned with reflection on opportunities for promotion and leadership, feelings of de-motivation and being 'stuck'. This sense of being 'stuck' was conveyed within the data I collected. For example, Annabel felt unable to progress, proclaiming, 'I'm not senior enough or experienced enough to do it' with both Deborah and Heather, as seen from the quotes above, sharing the view of there being no obvious path forward. A further aspect highlighted by Kandiko et al's research (2018) were dilemmas associated with consideration of familial caring responsibilities; as Elizabeth

highlighted in the quote above. While this could be seen as heteronormative, the feelings of precarity about the future in Elizabeth's case can be seen to be interacting with gender. Reproduction is often cited as the explanation for the gender pay gap and for women's under-representation in senior management. The reduction of the gender pay gap to a single issue is problematic for a number of reasons. It relies on archaic constructions of women as living in heterosexual, nuclear families, with sole responsibility for childcare; failing to recognise women who are child-free and the movement towards childcare being an increasingly shared responsibility in both homo- and heterosexual couples. Furthermore, there is no recognition of other ways in which the male gender premium can manifest itself, for example, Morley et al (2020:6) found the practice of 'trailing spouses' facilitated male professional mobility. It also risks situating issues of progression as purely private or domestic matters. This ignores the historical cultural practices of organisations, which I will discuss later in this Chapter.

If feelings of precarity interact with gender it could be suggested that they would also interact with other structures of inequality such as race and class within a higher education sector that remains historically and implicitly based on white middle/upper class males with no caring responsibilities (Leathwood, 2013; Read & Leathwood 2020). Despite this historical and implicit understanding of white middle/upper class male academics, many of the women interviewed by Kandiko et al (2018) appeared to hold themselves as personally accountable for their failure to progress as quickly as male peers. It would be interesting to follow up this thesis with respect to career progression of my participants, to see if similar feelings of self-blame became present or continued. However, that is not to assume that career progression is necessarily a universal good. For example, it has been suggested that many women are refusing to occupy senior leadership posts in UK higher education (Morley & Crossourd, 2016) as they do not subscribe to the values of the neoliberal university, with such roles being conceptualised in terms of sacrifice (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009), and resulting in the living of unliveable lives (Butler, 2004). One of the aspects of this mid-career angst were fears expressed about their perceived diminishing or deficit human capital:

> I can see at a lower level people who we're hiring at the moment, quite a few are PhDs because, as you're probably aware, universities are churning out people with PhD titles but there are not actually jobs for them in universities on an academic level, so it is getting to that point where it's… yes, if I want to stay in a university environment, then having a PhD would be useful. So, that's something I'm looking at starting. (Deborah)

> You know, I've only got an undergraduate degree, and I manage the PhD programme, so, I'm slightly under qualified. (Elizabeth)

These Graduate School Managers were conscious of the 'hyper-competitive world of higher education' (Hey, 2004:33) and the technologies of the self. Feelings of competition caused them to worry about not doing more, to keep improving and reinventing themselves. Deborah articulates the feeling of deficit that she has not got a doctoral degree and commits to addressing this. Likewise, feelings of insecurity and inferiority are expressed by Elizabeth with 'only' an undergraduate degree, a sense of not being academic enough. Their emotion is linked to the economy of their universities through their anxiety about the absence of and desire for additional qualifications. In Deborah's case the absence of doctoral degree is causing her to take on the commitment to self-improve in light of the competition. This mirrors Ball's (2015:2) commentary on academic life in the neoliberal university and its demands for constant self-improvement/self-maximising:

> We are constantly expected to draw on the skills of presentation and of inflation to write ourselves and fabricate ourselves in ever lengthier and more sophisticated CVs, annual reviews and performance management audits, which give an account of our 'contributions' to research and teaching and administration and community.

Such self-improvement can be described as an individualistic entrepreneurial project Relating back to Brown (2015), who conceptualised the individual human actor under neoliberal reason as a market creature in every walk of life, self-improvement is driven by enhancing one's future value in the market. In the case of Deborah and Elizabeth the justification for pursuing knowledge was purely in relation to concerns about their career. Rather than new knowledge the main issue appeared to be credentialism. Knowledge in this way has been commodified and subservient to the competitive market. The motivations for pursuit of knowledge appear to be more about the emotions of fear, i.e. falling behind younger competitors, shame of being underqualified and desire to progress into more senior roles.

An example of the tendency to reduce wide-ranging social practices was provided by Annabel when searching for a solution to the career uncertainty discussed. Annabel proffered the solution as 'I suppose having confidence'. Within a few words, wide-ranging changes in social practices were reduced to an issue of personal psychological state. The confidence 'Cult(ure)' has been roundly critiqued by Gill & Orgad (2015). They described how women are exhorted to overcome their deficit in confidence through 'a

range of experts, programs and discourse'. How the discourse incites women to constantly regulate their confidence quotient and so creating a 'new technology of self'. The promise of this technology of self is that women can seek to transform themselves and find the source and solution for gender equality (i.e. Confidence) within themselves, which seems as cruelly optimistic as Berlant's (2016) search for the American Dream.

Individual angst was compounded by feelings of broader uncertainty either about the institution, the sector or global changes (e.g. Brexit[2]). Mentions of Brexit by Graduate School Managers can all be grouped together as part of a catastrophising discourse (i.e. no participant saw Brexit as positive):

> We've got the whole Brexit… I just… I don't even want to touch that because when that happened, I lay awake for three nights in a row going I don't know how we're going to do this. (Grace)

Bethany anticipated that, 'the shifts that are going to happen in the post BREXIT would, I think that's going to have quite an impact on Graduate Schools and postgraduate research study'. The impact of Brexit was framed as a significant threat to student numbers and funding and risked institutions losing employees (both academic and administrative staff members) from the EU. Whilst, it is historically interesting to note how Brexit was received by Graduate School Managers, it did raise a concern as to whether the scale of the shock of Brexit articulated by Grace may have skewed my data by making feelings of uncertainty more prevalent than they otherwise might have been.

Heating up the floor

The title of this section is taken from a description by Davies (2014) of the development of neoliberal thinking and its incessant demands, ascribing it with an almost Darwinian sense of survival of the fittest, or a virility test. Certainly, the interviews provided a sense of more and more demands being placed on Graduate School Managers in order 'to see who can keep hopping the longest' (Davies, 2014:np). Despite the earlier claims highlighted above of feeling good to be a Graduate School Manager, the impression was given that this was being eroded by constant change and the constant visibility resulting from frequent audits. The narratives suggested a level of anxiety and insecurity as

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[2] This research was conducted before the global Covid-19 pandemic that began in 2019 – a crisis that continues to have a significant impact on higher education.

Graduate School Managers fended off a 'micro-politics of little fears' (Lazzarato, 2009:120). These little fears came from the uncertainty caused by regular changes at a policy level:

> And there are so many changes happening at Government level, with expectations for PGR. (Deborah)

> You give them your honest answer and then find policy has changed. (Francis)

Whilst Deborah's quote highlights the volume of change, Francis reveals the impact of that volume in undermining a Graduate School Managers perceived professionalism. Bethany articulated the expectation of senior academics, which was brought home to her an hour after she had started her Graduate School Manager role:

> Yes I mean the day I started in post, having had not a great deal of handover, somebody handed me this, a copy of this [Doctoral Degree Regulations Handbook] as it was then, 'to research' and they said, oh you will need that, and I think an hour later I got a call about regs [regulations]. 'I have no idea, but you're the Head of the Graduate School, you should know'.

Graduate School Managers were expected to be aware of policy changes and the opportunities/challenges they presented. This expectation was often internalized by the Graduate School managers. When listening to the transcripts of my participants, I could feel the pressure that the Graduate School Managers put upon themselves to perform and drawing the responsibility of keeping up with the policy environment onto themselves:

> I have to be expert in everything. (Elizabeth)

> I have to know about everything; admission, recruitment admissions, data, quality and management…But then that means sometimes I'm the only one that holds the community together. I'm the only one who understands how things work…And you make a mistake it's a whole person whose life can be affected. (Heather)

In the quotes above both Elizabeth and Heather have taken, 'responsibility for working harder, faster and better as part of [their] sense of personal worth and [their] estimation of the worth of others.' (Ball, 2015:2). The discourses of 'needing to keep up' has resulted in them governing themselves, or to return to Foucault, discursive power has resulted in a technology of self. Whilst the desirability and benefits of such 'responsiblised' staff for a neoliberal university is clear, the affect on the individual is less so. Firstly, they are striving for the impossible, hoping to reach the point where the work has either been

completed to the extent that additional hours are no longer required, this was articulated by Claire:

> And also knowing that no matter how many hours you work, there's always going to be more work. (Claire)

Claire's quote appears to support Bal et al's (2014) assertion that the neoliberal university is producing new forms of insecurity and pushing its employees to work harder. Graduate School Managers portrayed the performance pressure to meet this constant stream of demands as encouraging a perception that you should be constantly working and enticing you into a culture of unhealthy practices. Whilst, I may disagree on their theoretical framing of identity, psychologists have suggested that allowing your professional identity to become dominant, to the extent that it results in a poor 'work-life balance', can have a negative impact on good mental health (Brook et al, 2008). Deborah shows below that this demanding environment is endemic covering both academic and professional services staff and Claire suggests it appears to escalate with seniority:

> Emails, endless, endless emails. I think it's the terror of our day, coming in and… even on a Monday coming in to 25 or 30 emails. It's just crazy. Who emails me over the weekend? There seems to be no boundary between… and I know that a lot of the time it's to do with academics, but I see it with admin staff a lot as well, is that people work on the weekends, work in the evenings, weird hours. (Deborah)

> I think there's a certain culture, particularly the more senior you get, that there's this kind of... Yes, or actually culture is a bit unfair, but this kind of view like yes, you're hard core, I answered my emails while I was on holiday in the South of France or, you know, I've just come out of an appendix operation and I was still recovering from anaesthetic and I answered all my emails. And I just think that's rubbish really. I mean, you're not on leave if you're answering your work emails. And yes, you know, sometimes you probably have to regularly work long hours or work weekends or whatever it might be, but just to kind of do it in a manageable sense. Otherwise you're just your job, that's it, nothing else. (Claire)

Claire's response was interesting, whilst it articulated clearly that you should avoid 'just becoming your job', it also accepted that free labour in terms of additional hours done during the normal week as well as the occasional weekend was acceptable. Resistance and complicity are entangled within the quote which both deplores and engages with the culture of long working hours. Deborah's is interesting for another reason in that it highlights the impact of technological advance on working practices. The impact of technology on both the amount of work and its dispersal over time and place was identified as a key topic in relation to labour in the neoliberal university (Gill & Donaghue, 2015). A topic that has become even more sensitive in light of the Covid-19 pandemic,

leading to the blurring of the professional and private or even the absorption of the private into the professional. The endless demands of work take an emotional toll, this was represented by Bethany as an extraction of 'joy' from work:

> So, you can get bogged down in the hard work and the difficult things, without remembering why we are here and the good stuff that comes out of it. (Bethany)

Another facet of the constant changes to policy highlighted by Graduate School Managers was that it triggered regular reviews of the Graduate School and even the purpose of Graduate School Manager roles. This continual change and uncertainty risks the creation of a culture of governance by fear (Braidotti, 2012). Over half my participants were either already part of a restructuring process, with many of the others expecting to go through the process shortly. This again served to undermine Graduate School Managers professional identities:

> So, that's one thing, is trying to work out…what the School [Graduate School] does in the structure, how it can be taken seriously as well as just being this, seen as this sort of add-on…. So there is a bit of lack of clarity about what they actually should be….I think there is a question about what the role is, there is a genuine question about what the role is...if we're struggling to actually define it, I think clearly that the rest of the institution is struggling even more. (Francis)

Irrespective of the definition of the role the outcome of restructuring processes often led to more work being channelled to Graduate School Managers:

> It's unclear what our role is and therefore more and more gets sent our way because, oh, you're the only central unit. (Deborah)

Yet the affect of the 'more and more' work that Deborah describes was not discussed in detail, other than the erosion of joy highlighted above. For academics in the neoliberal university, Mike Crang (2007) suggested that demands on time were perhaps the biggest source of dispute, anxiety and stress. It would seem reasonable to assume that Graduate School Managers would also suffer detrimental effects due to the demands on time. As seen in Chapter 4, the discourse on time suggested that Graduate School Managers were also experiencing the accelerated academy. However, within my data there was an absence of discussion by Graduate School Managers about the implications of 'trying to keep up' on health and wellbeing. This was an interesting silence in my data, especially since there was a high number of references across the interviews to the

importance of good mental health and wellbeing for doctoral students. It is almost as if mental health was just a student problem. In grappling with what to make of this silence, I recalled Gill's (2010) work on how neoliberal reason creates a sacrificial ethos, which silences stories of stress and insecurity. This silence is perhaps understandable given disclosure of mental health problems in Higher Education remained rare at the time of the interviews (Equality Challenge Unit, 2014). A lack of disclosure was often due to widespread stigmatizing discourses that people with mental health problems cannot or should not work, are unpredictable or dangerous, and/or do not have a legitimate illness (Krupa, 2009). Interestingly, workplace discrimination appears to increase with the educational level of the individual in relation to mental health problems (Brouwers et al, 2016; Yoshimura et al, 2018). At best the data suggested a narrative of resilience, with Graduate School Managers accepting the need to embrace the negative aspects of their roles and regulate themselves:

> I think I have developed my relationship management skills in the sense that I have learned not to take things personally when academic colleagues, in particular, some academic colleagues can be challenging to deal with, so I have had to teach myself to go, it's not about you. (Bethany)

> And also building a certain tolerance when people play politics and power games. I was very impatient of such things when it came out, fresh from my PhD, and I couldn't really believe that quite senior, very intelligent people wasted their time on kind of ego-driven power games. But they do. On a quite regular basis. And I'm kind of resigned to that now and take it into consideration in terms of how I work and take advantage of it when I can. (Claire)

> The reason I succeeded is because I stuck around, not a lot of this was rocket science, most of the proposals were being put forward by predecessors, but when they'd been shouted down they'd left… I don't think I did anything particularly clever, I just hung around and kept going at it, and it was simply persistence (Francis)

The concern about this resilience discourse is that it is very reductionist, suggesting that if you have the right self-management strategies then nothing needs to, or should change. In the narratives above, Graduate School Managers are flexing and absorbing instead of challenging practice or behaviours. They reflect the neoliberal emphasis on the individual, and in this case in 'fixing the individual' or 'fixing oneself'. As a result, some of the organisational cultures remain unaddressed, there is no peering beyond.

Invested in relationships

The interviews revealed that there was a real willingness to invest in relationships with colleagues by Graduate School Managers. The interviews contained a high frequency of enthusiast comments about the teams they manage and the colleagues they worked with. Not everything in the neoliberal university is bad.

> I work with one of the best teams ever…They're just good fun. (Grace)
>
> The people. I really enjoy working here. The people are really, really nice. (Deborah).

In particular, a close working relationship with the academic Dean or Director of a Graduate School was perceived as a real highlight of the Graduate School Manager role:

> So, when they're good they're absolutely brilliant, and that interaction is one of the best things. (Francis)

Yet this relationship was frequently disrupted or imperfect. For example, Bethany outlines her frustration at the regular turnover of Graduate School Deans:

> I have also learnt how to manage senior academics who are the Dean, or who have been the Dean, and to manage that bizarre thing that we do…where we have senior staff appointments on rotation. So I have a Dean for three years, so they come in all excited and gung ho and ready to do stuff on September the 1st, and then I spend a year rushing in trying to do stuff, and occasionally put the brakes on, and then they settle down into it for a year and then they spend a year going, oh I am not going to be here at the end of the year. That's a little bit unfair, it's not quite as harsh as that, but that's the essence of it really. So I have learnt how to probably manage things. (Bethany)

The experience of Bethany is true of many professional services and academic partnership, with academic leadership roles often either rotating or on a fixed-term basis. The regular rotation of academic leads could be theorised as a governmental practice designed to create and maintain governable subjects, a form of Foucault's governmentality (Foucault, 2010). The uncertainty created serves to keep Graduate School Managers under subjection, as 'wonder' about the future 'direction' (Deborah). As these changes occur, Graduate Schools and their managers can amass multiple and conflicting affiliations, resignifications and generally experience an unstable engagement with hierarchy and power (Cross & Goldenberg, 2009). This disruption was recognised and largely accepted by Graduate School Managers.

> I wonder what's going to happen when we have a new Director because that might take it into a completely different direction. (Deborah)

Yet it was often mourned and even equated to signifying of the change in values within academia:

> So, he's retiring at the end of the year….You know this kind of older generation are irreplaceable and then suddenly they're going. **…**they have the old values which is not all about money. (Heather)

The lack of this key internal partnership often left Graduate School Managers with feelings of loneliness and isolation:

> I think... well, I've said loads of time before, if you're the only person in the institution doing the role, it can be quite lonely (Annabel)

> I think that going to the UK Council of Graduate Education meetings and, in particular, the Graduate School Manager meetings, is massively important to me, because it's a very isolated role. (Elizabeth)

> You do feel sometimes you were just flailing around in a vacuum… you are basically left on your own. (Francis)

> I think it can be a lonely and isolated and an isolating role because everything rests on your shoulders. (Heather)

This finding should be a cause for concern since the relationship between isolation and negative health consequences is well-established, for example both physical and mental health problems (Leigh-Hunt et al, 2017), and even increased mortality (Holt-Lunstad et al, 2015). On a practical level, institutions employing Graduate School Managers should identify ways to support them in engaging with professional support networks (such as those cited in the previous chapter) and consider how such roles can be integrated into multiple group memberships. Both support networks (Thoits et al, 2012) and multiple group memberships (Haslam et al, 2018) have been shown to reduce isolation.

The investment in relationships was no restricted to the immediate colleagues within the Graduate School For example, there were frequent references to current or planned restructurings and the uncertainty they brought, '…one of the things that they're looking into is do we want to have a Graduate School (Deborah). The associate uncertainty related to these processes was identified by Annabel as the hardest part of the Graduate School Manager role, whilst Heather expressed concern for colleagues she cared for:

> The sense of uncertainty, I think. And I think... yes, I think it's also when you build up a lot of relationships with different people, across an institution, and you know things are working well. When you get a lot of turnover of staff, then you've got to really start to build up again, because, actually, other agendas are coming on, and our priority is the University. I suppose, particularly, when the University is looking for where they can get cost savings and so on. (Annabel)

> There are lots of things I dislike about the way that this university is treating its staff and therefore the impact and effect it has on my ability to do my job. (Heather)

Concern about where 'cost savings' might come from and the 'impact and effect it has on my ability to do my job' point towards a level of precarity. During restructuring, middle-managers can often be identified as candidates for delayering and redundancy. It has even been suggested that middle-managers are, 'directly or indirectly showered with the 'insecurity message', either from their corporations or else from the business or other media' (Hassard & Morris, 2017:346) in order to improve performance. I do not want to overstress the precarity of Graduate School Managers, since compared to many roles in a UK higher education system that relies on fixed-term contracts (e.g. 34 percent of academic staff were employed on fixed-term contracts in 2018-19 according to data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (2020)), they are not. Restructuring is more likely to impact Graduate School Managers in terms of workload creep and its associated time pressure and as Annabel highlights emotional labour to establish/build or even rebuild relationships with different people across the institution.

Casework contagion?

The affect of some of the casework is an area that I would have liked to explore further. Grace when asked, 'How you know you're doing a good job?', responded with, 'I have fewer students come and cry at my desk'. Being a doctoral student was presented in the data as a challenging experience. For example, Heather felt that Graduate School Managers had a, '…duty, our moral duty to warn them [doctoral candidates] of the danger of doing a PhD' and that it was inevitable that at some point doctoral students would find themselves suffering from mental ill health ranging from 'stress to thoughts of suicide'. Graduate School Managers frequently found themselves on the front line, 'you become a bit of lightening rod. I've certainly felt that' explained Francis. The complexity of the problems was described by Elizabeth and I couldn't help feeling that there were some truly harrowing stories behind her words:

> PhD students have really complex issues, and when something goes wrong, it goes very, very wrong…Unravelling what's happened and working out the best way to respond to it, I think. It's probably the most challenging side of the job. (Elizabeth)

Bethany was more explicit in associating many of these complex problems with mental health:

> I think the other thing as well, something that I deal quite a lot with through my casework is, students with mental health problems…I probably know thirty or forty students in any given year who have got problems (Bethany)

Initial research on doctoral students suggests they have a higher prevalence of mental health problems than both undergraduate students and young professionals of a comparable age (Guthrie et al, 2017; Levecque et al, 2017, Hazzel et al, 2020). Amongst the challenges faced were: job and funding insecurity; a competitive and judgemental academic atmosphere; and isolation (Guthrie et al, 2017; Levecque et al, 2017; Mackie & Bates, 2019; Berry et al, 2020).

My participants talked about projects and interventions to try and support their doctoral students. The Graduate School Managers promoted training and events to 'fix' the individuals including events, 'on the theme of resilience', 'mindfulness sessions' and even 'lunchtime yoga'. Morley (2018b) suggests that such sessions and the recommendation that individuals need to attend such sessions reinforces feelings of fragility and vulnerability. In short, whilst the they may be salves for the symptoms, they do not treat the underlying causes. As Gill and Donaghue (2015) noted, such interventions systematically reframe the lived experiences purely as problems of a psychological nature (e.g. a deficit in resilience) rather than considering the consequences of the neoliberal university system. In this way both the mental health problem and its solution can be explained as personal, individualised and psychologically based (Gill & Orgad, 2016). This represents a shift 'from an attempt to alter the social pressures towards interiorized affective spaces that require constant self-monitoring' (Rottenberg, 2014:424). Doctoral students with mental ill health are expected to govern themselves, or perform 'technologies of self' in order to regain good mental health. Doctoral students are invited to work on themselves, 'by their own means or with the help of others…to transform themselves.' (Foucault, 1988:18). It can be argued that the appearance of such initiatives for doctoral students does allow the 'hidden injuries' (Gill, 2010) of the neoliberal university to become more visible. However, it does so in a way, i.e. by reducing these injuries to a 'profoundly individualistic framework' and excluding

social analysis, that the injuries can be sustained within the model of the neoliberal university. Afterall, it is not the institution or the system…it is of course you that needs to be fixed.

The question is why are there such challenges with respect to mental health now? Why are we trying to fix individuals and not explore social structures, policies and discourses (Roberts, 2018)?   Can part of it be explained by the affective economy of higher education that has emerged under neoliberal reason? This would be an interesting area for further research and there is already some evidence suggesting a link. For example, part of the explanation of the isolation of the doctoral student was that their fellow doctoral students were 'not proper friendships' but linked to a sense of essential and obvious competition on current and future resources (Enzor, 2017) that were given to a select minority of individuals (Acker & Haque, 2014; Pifer & Baker, 2014).   Competition is at the heart of neoliberal discourse. Returning to Graduate School Managers, it is hard to imagine that there is not some transference, affective contagion or emotional labour experienced in listening to and trying to resolve those instances where things have gone 'very, very wrong' for a doctoral student. It would appear wise to recommend that any institutional approach to mental health should ensure it includes professional services staff such as Graduate School Managers.

A micro-narrative

The neoliberal university in the UK often promotes itself as being at the forefront of the drive towards equality and diversity, able to demonstrate an exquisite array of policies and market various charter-marks and awards (e.g. Athena SWAN Award holder, Stonewall Diversity Champion and Race Equality Charter Member). On the surface at least, equality and diversity issues appear to have unstoppable momentum. They are tracked through quantitative data the often admittedly slow progress towards greater diversity is set out in both the vision statements and annual reports of the UK Universities. *Prima facie*, Issues around inequality have been accepted and are being addressed and are on there way to being 'resolved' through initiatives documenting diversity, such as Athena SWAN. However, Ahmed's (2007:607) work considering the politics of documenting diversity found it led to the creation of 'fantasy images of the organizations they apparently describe' and that the true value was their use as supportive devices 'exposing the gap between words, images and deeds. The following micro-narrative suggests that within UK Universities there remain sites for the

reproduction of male power and that sexism can be found in the micropolitics and informal practices of UK higher education (Morley, 1999). Micro-narratives such as this can be difficult to capture but also difficult to report and address. Yet the affect, in this case described as the worst part of having worked as a Graduate School Manager, can be much deeper than the 'banter' so often dismissed.

> When our IT system crashed… I had to deal with older white blokes. And I'm saying older white blokes because they really were older, typical older white blokes, geeky and IT with a sense of superiority, this sense of you're a woman, what the hell do you know about these things, and that we know best… So, yes that was the, I don't want to get out of bed moment. I have to face those old white blokes. Such amazing blokes. (Heather)

What are we to make of this micro-narrative? It could be construed as evidence that the neoliberal university, whilst presenting an impressive array of policies, is not a single homogenous culture, but one imbibed with historical and variable cultural practices. In this instance, Heather's narrative suggests that within the sub-unit of the University with responsibility for supporting information technology an alternative conception of gender, compared to the official policy, persists. Was this a reaction against the dominant university equality and diversity policy framework, or as Foucault (1976) termed it 'a reverse discourse'? Within the IT department had a counterculture emerged, celebrating its difference as a pocket of masculinity and male power? Did the social interaction with Heather show in practice the reinforcing of their masculine identity by the negation of Heather as a woman who does not know about these things? How should Heather's apparent ageism be addressed, is this part of a wider construction of how 'old men' are perceived in her institution? Part of the wonder of qualitative data is that it is so rich that it just sucks you in, making you want to keep probing and exploring.

The existence of differing views within an organisation is something that should be expected since, 'organisations occur in the context of pre-existing (organizational) social relations' (Collinson & Hearn, 2005). Difference can be exhibited in both obvious ways such as denigrating others or more subtly in terms of practice. In this case it is possible to see a difference in practice with the protagonists offering different conceptions of management. The IT specialists can be seen to be seeking to solve the organisational problem using their 'scientific' and 'rational' analytical practices to report the problem back through the hierarchical layers of their functional area. This is can be framed as concept of management based on control and co-ordination, only managers with the right specialisms can make the decision, 'we know best'. In contrast Heather advocated

for a much more collaborative approach, suggesting a wider and more social conception of management practice:

> And instead of saying, really sorry, this is what it is and let's work together, they just tried to hide that, but in the most sort of bloke-ish, whitish…Patronising way.

What was particularly galling for Heather in this case was that she had previously worked as an IT specialist prior to becoming a Graduate School Manager and possessed appropriate expertise to help resolve the problem. The example of this difference in the social conception of management being articulated by Heather suggests we need to develop a greater understanding of how management practices relate to gender in the neoliberal university and highlight the effect of such practices.

With apologies to my readers, I am still not done with unpicking this narrative. Whilst, in reading the quote, let alone listening to it or experiencing the telling in person, the injury felt by Heather is clear. She has a strong visceral reaction to these 'typical, older, white blokes' which has stuck despite the interaction happening 'over a year ago'. What the data did not reveal was whether this was resolved in any way or reported back to the Athena Swan self-assessment team. As Deem et al (2005) have highlighted, many experiences of discrimination remain hidden from policy interventions. In fact, based on research by Whitehead (2001:79) in the UK's further education sector we can speculate that the 'blokes' may have been blissfully unaware of or even unable to understand 'the gendered reality' that surrounds them and is so strongly felt by Heather in this interaction. This suggests that these often non-disclosed or hidden narratives need to be highlighted and discussed, in a hope that it will encourage the 'gendered self-reflexivity that would appear critical if change in men's practices is to come about' (Whitehead, 2001:79). Another reading could be that they were aware of the gendered reality and their practice was driven from a position of feeling threatened by social and economic forces, such as the emergence of younger, female managers.

Yet in focusing on gender with result to this narrative there is a danger of excluding some of the other social divisions and power inequalities Heather's narrative highlights. It struck me that in the narrative the IT specialists were drawing on multiple sources of power. These ranged from a basic numerical advantage (two versus one!) to their status as specialists (arguably invoking a more dominant management discourse of control and co-ordination), gender (as discussed), age and ethnicity. I would suggest that the narrative is best understood as the intersection of multiple oppressions (Crenshaw,

1991; 2003). Indeed, it has been argued (Kandiko et al, 2018) that gender is best understood within a broad-based use of intersectionality analysis since such a conceptualisation, 'reflects a perspective of universities as highly complex sites where multiple and intersecting spheres of 'difference', including culture, ethnicity, gender, disability, socio-economic status and language interact'. In relation to the two men described by Heather, did their status (i.e. as a specialist), race or age serve to reinforce their assertion of their masculinity? Did their age mean that Heather could be disparaging about them?

Finally, there was a personal ethical dimension to this narrative. What should I do with this narrative? As you can see from the number of words I have devoted to it, it had an effect on me. Here was the point where I wanted to intervene but felt obliged to maintain confidentiality as a researcher at the expense of my convictions as a practitioner. As a practitioner, I wanted to investigate the sexism discussed, yet also address some of the difficulties of Heather's narrative in evoking both race and age. Are white males as they get older more likely to be sexist? Are such attitudes particularly inevitability if you work in a 'geeky' IT department? Age is one of the protected characteristics in the 2010 Equality Act but is often casually cited as an explanation for a range of undesirable attributes/qualities (Morley & Lund, 2020). Yet, in the end I hid as a researcher and said and did nothing about either the apparent denigration of a peer due to their gender nor to challenge the problematic way the micro-narrative was told, which still remains a point of discomfort.

Conclusion

Through the exploration of three thematic areas of affective intensity and a micro-narrative I have explored the emotional and affective labour of Graduate School Managers. I have, as most clearly shown by the micro-narrative, been affected by the data in its construction. My affective readings of the narratives of Graduate School Managers are not a truth but provide a way in which to explore the conjunction between discursive power and affect, highlighting how neoliberal reason is differently felt, resisted, imagined, mediated, negotiated and desired.

Whilst holding 'good' jobs which they enjoyed, Graduate School Managers subjected themselves to a number of technologies of self. Career progression was internalised as their lack of career planning and skills development or even inner confidence. The

pressure of work was internalised as their responsibility to keep up with, remaining resilient no matter how isolating their role was. At the same time, they were also agents of affect in others. They were compliant/complicit with academics and senior colleagues working long hours. Through well-meaning interventions, they contributed to the framing of mental ill-health problems and solutions as personal, individualised and purely psychologically based. All these technologies of self were highlighted as exercises of 'cruel optimism' (Berlant, 2018), that resulted in a more governable neoliberal university to the detriment of its employees and doctoral students.

The micro-narrative demonstrated that moments of affective intensity can appear without warning in our day to day experiences. This short story highlighted that not all is as presented by policy documents and that it is important to research the micro-level lived experiences to test such documents. A micropolitical perspective allows one to see how power is exercised and experienced in organisations (Morley, 1999). It made visible difference that is to be expected within an organisation such as a university, even if it is subjected to a dominant discourse of neoliberal reason. Given this intersectionality analysis needs to be used to shed light on the multiple oppressions within the neoliberal university.

Neoliberal logics would have us frame the ideal Graduate School Manager as a neutral individual —unburdened by embodiment, social difference or affect, this was not the case. Instead we are presented with Graduate School Managers acting as both subjects and agents of affective practices. Their experience of policies, whilst they may not always recognise it themselves, is that they go beyond demanding ever increasing amounts of work and target bodies, minds and affect. The material and emotional gains are undermined by high amounts of emotional labour expended on uncertainty, self-maximisation and maintaining resilience. These 'technologies of self' inculcate the Graduate School Managers within the neoliberal university, reducing their capability to reflect and declare what needs to be done differently. Moments of affective intensity disrupt the veneer of the neoliberal university, yet even these do not always lead to a reserve narrative of firm declaration of what needs to be done differently.

Chapter 7

Conclusions and Futurology

Introduction

My final chapter is constructed of four distinct sections. I will begin by revisiting my research questions. I will then reflect on the aspiration I set out in Chapter 4 that my enquiry might benefit the researched as well as the researcher – what can be advocated for on behalf of Graduate School Managers? In the third section I will consider what the future for the UK doctorate in UK Universities might hold, including whether my data left hope for alternative futures. Finally, I will suggest what further research I, or others, might undertake to build on the knowledge base established by this thesis.

Revisiting my research questions

My aim was to answer through an analysis of power and affect the following questions:

- How can we evaluate Graduate School Managers as neo-liberal subjects?

- What power do Graduate School Managers possess to get others to do or not do things?

- What is the affective formation Graduate School Managers make of their own roles?

- What do Graduate School Managers believe needs to be done differently?

In answering the questions, I have not sought to include every possible answer, but to identify what I consider to be the most substantive findings.

My findings demonstrated that Graduate School Managers can be evaluated as neo-liberal subjects through their interaction with policy. Graduate School Managers experienced policy changes as: steeped in affect; laden with values and creative potential; and as constraining/disciplining. I will briefly articulate each of my claims, which are based on my situated reading and partial unveiling of their multiple social realities.

Policies were experienced as steeped in affect, with the affective load took a number of forms. However, I would particularly like to highlight two; how Graduate School Managers were 'responsibilised', whilst at the same time having to constantly confront a 'cruel optimism' (Berlant, 2001). By 'responsibilised', I mean that they took 'responsibility for working harder, faster and better as part of [their] sense of personal worth and [their] estimation of the worth of others' Ball (2015:2). This commitment to self-maximisation was both put on Graduate School Managers but also performed through a variety of 'technologies of self' as they sought to transform themselves (Foucault, 1988:18). The high degrees of accountability contained within policies was something they took into their own practice, but also contributed to the shaping of the practice of others (e.g. doctoral supervisors being given additional training!). This provoked great pride when the results were good and feelings of shame and anxiety when they were not. However, most of the time, due to the constantly changing policy environment, policies were experienced as a form of 'cruel optimism' (Berlant, 2001). Graduate School Managers were never able to reach the end of the quixotic demands of policy nor their aspiration to 'feel' on top of their work, 'there's always going to be more work' (Claire).

Policies were not neutral and inert, but laden with values and creative potential. Some values were deemed more important than others. My data suggested that policy discourses driven by financialisation were experienced as being of the highest importance. What mattered was what could be accounted for and measured (i.e. meeting policy aspirations on student numbers and doctoral training grant income). The creative potential of policies was evidenced by how the growing demands of audit were shaping Graduate School Manager roles, making them more metronomic and leading to investments of capital in complex and expensive IT systems.

Policies were experienced as constraining/disciplining. They were experienced not as opportunities to demonstrate individual agency, but as things to be negotiated on numerous levels. As such, it was not just the policies that were constraining but also the processes by which they were interpreted and applied. These included discussions with their academic lead, addressing 'strong' academic voices (or '*prima donnas'*) and via the machinations of committee work. Roles were constrained away from topics or priorities Graduate School Managers wanted to undertake (e.g. pet projects to support the mental health and wellbeing of doctoral students) and increasingly required to meet the demands of audit. There appeared to be no resistance to either policy demands or audit regimes, with Marcuse's (1964) TINA effect (There is no alternative) seemingly evoked.

This constraining and disciplining was both on Graduate School Managers but also by them.

Through policies, power can be observed as circulating through Graduate School Managers, appearing to give them agency to get others to do or not do things. My data found they were often a conduit or even an enforcer of policy (e.g. encouraging the implementation of Quality Assurance Agency recommendations or working with colleagues to ensure the UK Research Councils' expectations for supervision were met). As a result of this the experience of policy was not always comfortable, with elements of resistance from faculty, with my favourite quote being the alleged protestation from faculty that 'You're auditing us on audits!' (Grace). This sense of being over-monitored is a growing discourse from faculty and was described by Grace as a potential point of friction with administrative colleagues. This is illustrated by an anonymous academic writing in the Guardian (2018) in a piece entitled 'I'm an academic, and I feel underpaid and over-monitored':

> It strikes me that we need to start asking serious questions about why academics are subject to so much more scrutiny and surveillance than their administrative peers. (Anonymous Academic)

The above quote provides an example of how the corrosive effects of the neoliberal university can be felt by academic faculty, but what was the affective formation Graduate School Managers made of their own roles? Overall my data confirmed many of the negative features identified in the literature on neoliberalism in higher education, whilst recognising it was not all detrimental, especially to Graduate School Managers. The gains my participants identified were both emotional and material. Of particular note were terms and conditions of employment; a sense of status/prestige; a sense of belonging both to a team and community; and joy and satisfaction derived from working with students and being of service. As Graduate School Managers, my participants received material rewards included a good salary and holiday entitlement. Many were proud to have achieved the status of manager and the prestige associated with being part of doctoral education (i.e. the pinnacle of academic scholarship). Even if there was the risk of a glass cliff, the role had served as a promotion for a number of female professional services staff. Whilst future career paths were uncertain, the roles did often fit within a broader professional services framework (with a few exceptions) so they were not completely unimaginable. They also had their own teams to lead, and a real gain for Graduate School Managers was in the relationships with their colleagues and even their

respective academic lead(s). This gave them a sense of belonging. There was further warmth when talking about the wider community of practice and the national networks (e.g. UK Council for Graduate Education) that supported doctoral education. Yet, joy was most prominent in the data when my participants talked about their interactions with students. It felt good being of service, this was no bullshit job!

The most substantive losses to Graduate School Managers were certainty and time. Both of these losses included significant affective loads. The loss of certainty was drawn out from the data in three specific ways: the shifting, quixotic nature of policy; institutional restructuring; personal career progression. My data suggested both a high volume of policy initiatives in relation to doctoral education, a high level of complexity (e.g. The introduction of doctoral training partnerships as part of a policy of research concentration resulted in Graduate School Managers not just acting as intermediaries and conduits for policy within their own institutions, but to fulfil that function in collaboration with peers at institutions both nationally and internationally), and a high level of changes to policy. Constant changes to policy also appeared to trigger structural discussions within institutions (e.g. are doctoral students primarily students or primarily researchers) resulting in restructurings and rumours of restructurings. The combination of this backdrop of constant change at policy and institutional level presented great uncertainty in relation to career progression. Arguably, the potent combination made it impossible to plan even if one had the time.

Time was a key loss expressed by my participants. The impression was given that every second was needed to 'do' and 'show', with even additional free labour provided some evenings and weekends to cover 'crunch times'. In the workplace the pressure on time, means there is less time to challenge, or even reflect, and therefore you become more governable. However, the affective load of a lack of time goes beyond the professional. Melissa Gregg (2011) cautioned that the importance given to work is threatening to displace intimate relationships with partners, parents, children and others. The loss of time makes the aspiration of creating 'liveable lives' (Bulter, 2004) exceptionally difficult. The loss of time meant that there were few opportunities to imagine alternative futures for higher education, to reflect on practice or idly consider what should be done differently.

Writing and discussing the affective lives of Graduate School Managers may counter some of the corrosive effects of the neoliberal university by demonstrating the need for change in given situations. However, the main issues raised in my data by Graduate

School Managers about what should be done differently were more evolutionary than the revolutionary. There was little evidence of subversion or resistance, nor a sense of any of the political stances held galvanising into action. In other words, the things that needed to be done differently could all be accommodated within the existing hierarchies of the neoliberal university. These included, desires for additional funding and resources; the championing of doctoral student consumer needs; competing for the attention of university leaders; and for investment in their own human capital. These were the things that would make them happy. This supports assertions by Ahmed (2010) and Blinkley (2014) that desires and happiness can become entangled with neoliberalism and the knowledge economy. I will address each of the main desires briefly.

The wish for additional funding and resources, was most frequently in juxtaposition with narratives about the requirements of audit processes. IT systems were perceived as key investments to be sought for. They were seen as essential, in order to address the demands of both management information and audit processes. They were heralded as a solution that would save the valuable commodity of time. Other desirable investments included: an enhancement (both in terms of number and value) of international doctoral student scholarships to aid recruitment; and additional funding to support doctoral students to attend conferences or undertake transferrable skills training.

Within the interviews my participants were strong advocates for 'their' doctoral students. My participants suggested that more attention should be paid to doctoral students by university leadership teams. Within the data there were a number of comments that doctoral education was poorly understood at senior level:

> There's a lack of understanding, you know, in a lot of places, what a Graduate School is and what your role is, and I think that is probably the biggest pressure I've had, and the bit that's caused the most problems. (Francis)

> And I think the thing I find frustrating is that there doesn't seem to be that very senior voice, so the very top-level university understanding of what postgraduate research is, why we need to support it…. I think the postgraduate research agenda at this university and to be honest when I've been to other universities it's not as high up the list. (Grace)

The suggestion that there is an increasing distance between university leadership teams and understanding of practice within institutions is not new. For example, Boden and

Epstein (2006) argued that the managerial hierarchies that have developed due to neoliberal reason are not necessarily attuned with or particularly understanding of academic work. University leadership teams were presented as out of tune with doctoral education, with it often being invisible within university policy documentation. An aggravation for a number of my participants was that doctoral education did not feature in their university's strategic plans or was simply reduced to issues of growing student numbers and improving efficiency.

> Doctoral research education or support…doesn't feature in our ten-year plan. (Heather)

> Four or five years ago there were a number of Russell Group universities who had a strategic aim of increasing their PhD students by 50 percent and if I'm completely honest that seems to be a number that was pulled out of various people's asses and there's no relevance… no relation to the current funding environment in the UK… It's one of those unachievable targets and it doesn't feel like anybody's thought about how that affects this role, but also this kind of team… There's no realistic aim, so it's kind of quite demoralising when you sit down and do the numbers because it's, oh we're still not there, we're never going to be there. (Grace)

> You also have to fit in with the University's research strategy. But it's quite broad, it just says more students; higher completion rates. (Elizabeth)

When my interviews took place doctoral students represented 4 percent of the overall student population of UK Universities (HESA, 2020). It was suggested that part of the Graduate School Manager role was to raise this 'forgotten' student group:

> So, it's my role to make sure, you know, if there's something going on, that PhD students aren't forgotten. (Elizabeth)

One of the areas identified by multiple Graduate School Mangers where they perceived PhD students as having been forgotten was in relation to mental health. This was something many of my participants believed needed to be done differently and as stated earlier some had already instigated 'pet projects' to address. The topic of mental health was something that immediately caught my attention even before all my analysis and transcribing was complete. For me the repeated reference to mental health created, what

MacLure (2013) described as 'wonder', that is it had a particular intensity for me. It released a 'cognitive passion' (Daston & Park, 2001) to address the topic. The wonder was not a comfortable feeling; but shaded into curiosity, horror, fascination and disgust (MacLure, 2013). There was something within both the data and myself which led to this becoming another strand of my own research and a means to enter into relation with other researchers. Having revealed the impact on me, what did my participants say to contribute to such a reaction? The theme of care for students, especially in relation to Mental Health and Wellbeing, was mentioned in a number of different contexts, whether in relation to supervisor training or existing challenges:

> We'll try and address, you know, classic problems, like: isolation; imposter syndrome; and do something around, kind of, mental health support....So, I think it's something that we need to do a lot more work on. (Elizabeth)

> And things like on the actual pastoral care of students, I think, on the doctoral side, and I would suspect it's true of a lot of institutions, it's not up to scratch, and that is a frustration. (Francis)

> So the mental health thing we've known has been bubbling for a long time purely from looking at our own interruptions and our own issues. (Grace)

What I found particularly interesting is that the mental health discourse was circulating amongst Graduate School Managers prior to policy intervention. It wasn't until after my interviews that *Research England* commissioned Vitae to undertake the first specific piece of research into the wellbeing and mental health of postgraduate research students in the UK (Levecque et al, 2017). The research looked at the policies and provision relating to these issues in higher education providers through interviews with staff, and postgraduate researcher focus groups at ten UK higher education institutions between September and November 2017. This reminded me of how discourse is not owned by authorities, it is not static but diffuse. In this case, Graduate School Managers were prescient of a future crisis discourse (see Chapter 2) of doctoral education. This was a great reminder for me for my future research practice, to listen to and value voices less often heard.

It caused me to wonder whether within the neoliberal university the voices of Graduate School Managers, especially female managers, were not recognised as 'knowers'. Fricker (2007) coined the phrase 'testimonial injustice' to refer to the systematic or

incidental disregarding of individuals' knowledge due to how there are positioned/identified. Dotson (2011) augmented Fricker's theory by suggesting that some would not attempt to be recognized as 'knowers' due to their expectation that they would not be understood or recognized (Morley and Lund, 2020). This would be an interesting area to explore further, including the challenge of being heard against dominant discourses focused on the student (or should I say consumer's?) voice. The strength of competing voices was recognised briefly by Graduate School Managers. Annabel spoke of 'very, very strong academic voices', and Francis noted that when the request to senior management 'comes from the students it's very difficult to knock it back in the way it is if it comes from me'. Whilst it was not said, there appears to be the suggestion that something that needed to change, was for Graduate School Managers to be listened to. They were certainly not being listened to or were not asking about professional development nor included in policy discussions. They were merely positioned as operatives in policy implementation. A number of my participants expressed fears of diminishment or deficit human capital. When asked about their professional development there was interest expressed, which included coaching or even mimicking the journey of their interviewer through the exploration of a doctorate! There was a desire to self-maximise in order to remain competitive.

An advocacy on behalf of Graduate School Managers

In Chapter 4, I expressed my aspiration that my enquiry would benefit those I researched as well as myself as the researcher. The benefit of my thesis to those I interviewed, I fear may be limited. This is partly due to time. Many may no longer occupy Graduate School Manager roles. For those remaining in professional services roles some of the patterns I noted may still be applicable. I hope the mere engagement in the research encouraged others to explore their own perceptions of the neoliberal university and the imagining of alternative futures for higher education. My hope is that Dotson's (2011) notion of 'testimonial smothering', wherein some people choose to remain silent because of an expectation that they shall not be understood or recognised, will be countered by hearing the narratives of peers. There are a few recommendations for practice that I believe my thesis supports in relation to Graduate School Managers.

Recommendation 1

There needs to be an investigation into whether Graduate School Manager roles are gendered. Have institutions promoted women into these roles (Ryan & Haslam, 2007)

due to doctoral education being perceived as continually in crisis, i.e. is doctoral education a glass cliff? I appreciate that equality is not just about representation, and that gender needs to be factored into services as well as employment opportunities. However, I would recommend that the review is widened to consider whether there is an inequality regime (Acker, 2006) in effect for all female, professional services middle-managers in the UK Higher Education sector.

Recommendation 2

Those with the responsibility of line managing Graduate School Managers need to be more aware of their professional development needs. There should be careful consideration given to appropriate mentoring and sponsorship schemes, especially to support the development of future female leaders. One possible option would be to engage with Advance HE's Aurora program, designed specifically to support leadership develop for women in higher education. Since its launch in 2013, more than 7,000 women from nearly 200 institutions across the UK and Ireland and is a programme underpinned by research (Morley, 2012). The practice of supporting engagement with professional networks needs to be supported in particular to reduce the loneliness of the role.

Recommendation 3

There needs to be greater recognition of the affective load born my Graduate School Managers. They should not be left to develop their own strategies for resistance and resilience, when confronted with some of the very challenging experiences of doctoral researchers. Interestingly, Deem et al (2005) discovered that for many academic and administrative staff, equal opportunities policies and practices were perceived as only relating to the student body. This finding appears to be at risk of repeating itself but this time with mental health and wellbeing policies and practices being perceived as only relating to the student body. Professional service and academic staff are in danger of being conceptualised merely as a service class, with no affective lives of their own.

The future of the UK Doctorate

UK doctoral education has seen many changes over the last two decades, born out by a rapid rise in policy documents and changes to practice. In this next section, I will try

and draw out from my data what the future of the doctoral degree may look like in relation to the crisis discourses of my Chapter 2.

Submission and completion rates

There appears to be some optimism for overcoming the submission and completion rate crisis. The future sees institutions continuing to invest in IT systems to make the processing of students more efficient. There are the occasional human errors, but additional on-line tutorials are available, to support supervisors to properly engage with the system. The drive for efficiency has meant a greater focus for the UK Doctorate on 'what can be done in the time' rather than its 'contribution to new knowledge' (QAA, 2014). Consideration is being given, at policy levels, as to whether the doctorate should be framed more as 'training in research skills in order to allow a future contribution to new knowledge' rather than the doctorate itself being a contribution to new knowledge.

Doctoral student numbers

Likewise, there has been a reduction in concern over insufficient numbers of doctoral researchers to support the economy. The firm commitment to continue to grow doctoral student numbers was realised and the massification of higher education at doctoral level looks set to be a continuing trend. With the increased efficiency in submission and completion rates, the UK could contribute to exceeding the OECD's (2019) projection of 2.3 percent of today's young adults across OECD countries entering a doctoral degree programme (compared to 1 percent at the turn of the century). Yet with massification and more people gaining a doctoral degree, its value as social capital may start to decrease and more questions are being raised about why we are training so many doctorates, especially where there continue to be poor earnings returns to individuals and extensive precarity in the labour market. Reports, based on early work by Britton et al (2020) for the Institute of Fiscal Studies, on projected future earnings have been converted into performance indicators for each degree programme at some institutions.

Transferrable skills training

Enhancing transferrable skills remains a key issue identified by Graduate School Managers and an important part of the service provided to students by Graduate Schools. However, there has been a slight change. Whilst previously doctoral candidates were supported by members of Graduate School staff, this has now been outsourced to private sector professionals. This 'unbundling' of the doctorate, foreseen by Macfarlane (2011), was driven by financial efficiencies and the need for Graduate School Managers

to focus more directly on audit process requirements and the maintaining and enhancing of their IT systems. In addition to transferrable skills training the private sector is becoming increasingly interested in whether the doctoral projects are of value and have sufficient technical expertise incorporated within them.

Professional doctorates

The trend of challenge to the traditional PhD model from a growing diversity of types of doctoral degree, recognized by Usher (2002), continues. In particular, the challenge is coming from professional doctorates, which have been publicly described as 'more useful, less stressful [but a] no less rigorous alternative to the moribund PhD' (Times Higher Education, 2018a). Professional doctorates have increased in number as individuals seek to self-maximise themselves and fulfil their desire to attain the highest level of credential offered by a university. They have certainly become popular amongst professional services managers in higher education. It is even suggested that, for some middle-management roles in UK universities, the professional doctorate qualification should be listed on job adverts as a desirable criterion for applicants, if not a requirement.

Equality and diversity

Moral imperatives around equality and diversity continue to progress slowly, with critical scholars continuing to assert that they are in subjugated to financial ones. The future of doctoral education in the UK appears set to continue to struggle with equity challenges, despite a recent funding call from the government to address 'disability and the doctorate'. Whilst increases in the number of women undertaking doctorates in celebrated (Times Higher Education, 2018b), there is still more to be done and other groups continue to be marginalised (e.g. the Roma and BME communities etc.). Sadly, the evaluation of success appears to be based solely on representation, i.e. counting the numbers of underrepresented groups, rather than challenging unequal distributions of power and historical hierarchical structures and process that enable discriminatory practice to endure.

Internationalisation

The competition for international talent remains high, with increasing amounts of money devoted to scholarships and marketing messages in order to attract and retain overseas students. However, international competition for doctoral students is a factor, with new providers such as China and Japan offering attractive scholarships, and the Nordic countries treating doctoral students as employees, with the related benefits. Global

competition and collaboration are increasingly leading to policy makers exploring the appropriation of aspects of other higher education systems. For example, it is rumoured that Japan's large private sector – approximately 78.6 percent (MEXT, 2019) is of particular interest to those seeking to further open up the UK higher education market. Meanwhile, Graduate School Managers are still grappling with the operational implications of *UK Research and Innovation*'s decision to open up UK PhD funding to international students (UKRI, 2020).

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Regrettably the challenges around mental health and wellbeing do not appear to have abated, despite investment in interventions to help individuals to address their personal challenges. In the current context of the global pandemic, it seems wise to suggest these are likely to increase.

A new crisis

However, there is a new crisis in doctoral education. A financial crisis. The complexity and cost of Doctoral Education to Universities has grown. The Finance Directors meeting are revisiting a report for originally done for the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE, 2005). Even then there were poor levels of cost recovery. The Finance Director expect the calculations to look much worse due to the ongoing investment in Graduate Schools to meet:

- The demands arising from collaborative working. These include managing contracts and agreements across institutions nationally and internationally for doctoral funding. The challenging issues of procedural difference and quality assurance have led to additional staffing in the Graduate School. There exists an unlikely financial hope that some costs could be reduced by such collaborations leading to the removal of the institutional autonomy over doctoral rules and regulations. Yet to gain agreement on the diverse ways the doctorate is conceptualised and operationalised continues to be challenging as highlighted by Tinkler and Jackson (2010). Progress towards conformity and thereby efficiency is slow.

- Growing reporting obligations. There has been a continued growth in auditing demands, with the associated requirements to invest and re-invest in more and more sophisticated IT systems.

- Consumer needs. The vision for the holistic support of doctoral students has been realised in some institutions. In particular, this has seen further provision of support services and interventions (e.g. Resilience training for Mental Health, Counselling Services). The student experience/consumer discourse will continue to permeate doctoral education. The costs continue to rise to keep pace with the messages sent out by the marketing department.

Questions are being asked by institutional leaders as to whether they can afford to deliver doctoral education. Cost savings solutions being considered include: the scrapping of the viva, limiting doctoral programmes to certain disciplines and moving to digital delivery. The viva in the UK is a publicly debated discourse, with advocates for its removal framing it as labour intensive, not covered by national standards and out of step with more pragmatic approaches in competing global higher education system (Times Higher Education, 2013; Times Higher Education, 2015). The pressure on the viva is growing. Limiting provision of doctoral awards to disciplines where the contribution to a university can more readily measured (e.g. Science disciplines, where a doctoral student becomes a member of a team of workers delivering a large-scale grant) is being consider by a number of institutions. There are even suggestions of moving to the Nordic model of employing these valuable doctoral students in the sciences. For those disciplines in subjects with lower earning outcomes (e.g. arts and a large proportion of the social sciences) the suggestion is to an on-line only offer, which is seen as viable due to the technical expertise developed within universities during the global pandemic.

There is a risk that doctoral education will become focused in a relatively modest number of elite UK institutions that can afford it. The costs are even causing some institutions to revisit the Humboldtian model of the doctorate and leaving doctoral education as a 'secret garden' for the academic workers to produce and reproduce research.

In this piece of futurology, I have deliberately referenced a number of newspaper articles, since they evidence a public discourse. I would suggest that these discourses have productive power and will lead to more and more policy interventions, such as the UKRI's decision to open up its funding to international students referenced above. All the signs are that the future of the doctoral education will continue to be one subjected to continuous change.

An alternative future for the UK doctorate?

The future that I have, admittedly slightly tongue in cheek, presented above seems somewhat bleak for those looking for the 'fragile' discourse of neoliberalism to 'thwart'

(Foucault, 1979:101). Could Graduate School Managers do more to manage and maintain the distinctions between the aims of academia and those of neoliberal discourse? Has neoliberal reason been completely absorbed into the professional identities of Graduate School Managers? Were they simply happy to be beneficiaries, complying with the policies and performance indicators given to them?

Neoliberal reason portrays the individual as one whom obeys commands and flexes to its demands. It was interesting to consider the future of doctoral education from the perspective of Graduate School Managers and to analyse the data as to whether there was the potential for any resistance to the neoliberal university. There was evidence that the Graduate School Managers saw many challenges in their existing practices. For example, a QAA visit was described as 'a bit shambolic', with, the reviewers just asking, 'the questions they wanted to ask and that was it…we actually wanted to say this and that, but we didn't have a chance' (Deborah). In some cases, there was a desire expressed by participants to step back and question their practice/experience.

> I think it would be good to take a, sort of, in depth look at what you're doing; why you're doing it and be able to learn from what other people are doing and look at different theories of practice. (Elizabeth)

Others raised more specific questions about practice. Grace questioned the multiple ways in which metrics could be used to value PhD students.

> Yes, it's a very frustrating environment to work in because we could put all sorts of numbers of metrics on the value of our PhD students. (Grace)

Whilst Francis and Deborah questioned the purpose of the doctorate.

> I think the volume of PhDs being produced and what they're being produced for is a question as well. (Francis)

> I think one of the big problems is the whole structure of the PhD changing with more training, more skills training, more expectations from students as well of, okay, what am I going to do when I've finished this PhD. And we've started addressing that by doing a lot more skills training and career advice from an early point. I mean, it's mentioned when they start. It's like, okay, what do you want to do when you're done and don't think you'll become an academic because research shows that you might not. (Deborah)

There was only one case, where the interview data demonstrated concern had developed to a deeper questioning of the whole education system:

> I do not believe in the wider educational agenda, and that has some ethical and moral indications from the inside, inside myself… I'm one of those few people or

people who maybe think it but never say it, who believe that our education system enables kids, young adults to get a piece of paper to become a… just to become an agent perpetuating that same old machine that is very… that is increasingly creaking and falling apart. Whether you want to call it capitalism or anything like that, but it's really taking a kid and moulding that kid's brain into what fits in with the current paradigm which is the best they can achieve is to join those really high tech Silicon Valley Google, Apple, or the likes of those, you know, the big, big things really and this is where, you know, they have achieved a good life… But by and large this educational system is just replicating the same sort of brainless people. They come out of it just thinking that there is only one way…it produces people who are deeply unhappy, who have no emotional health, who are not well in their mind and in their body. (Heather)

My impression was that these few signs of resistance were not sufficient to overcome a Graduate School Manager's investment in the game of neoliberalism. Even Heather had been really positive about her role as Graduate School Manager. They were beneficiaries of the system ensconced in roles they enjoyed. By being subjected to the challenges of the accelerated academy reducing capacity to imagine alternative futures for UK Universities, points of disagreement were not developed. As, I write, I am conscious of the challenge of making such alternative futures imaginable to not just Graduate School Managers but professional services staff. How can they trouble neoliberal discourse as Foucault (1976:100) suggested? Perhaps a discursive resistance is possible, which like a power discourse, appears to be everywhere, flowing through social networks. A discourse focussed on the challenges (e.g. exposing increasing socio-economic inequalities/exclusions) and indeed injuries (e.g. poor mental health) of the neoliberal university needs to continually flow through social networks, to be discussed and debated. In this way Graduate School Managers could contribute to a covert, termite-like resistance, described by Foucault as a 'reverse discourse' (Foucault, 1976: 101).

Future Research

In a higher education system increasingly dominated by metrics (Kandiko et al, 2018) there is an urgent need for research that attempts to understand the complex world of lived experiences. Such studies need to cover all lived experiences within the system. There remains a dearth of research about professional services staff and administrators in the UK higher education system. In particular, in relation to how such roles interact with policy imperatives, academic colleagues and students.

I would be particularly keen to see future studies on how managerial professional service roles and responsibilities are accomplished within UK higher education institutions. In relation, to the thesis it would be interesting to capture the lived experience of academic

supervisors, doctoral students and other professional services staff who interacted with Graduate School Managers. The aim would be to build up an inclusive representation of all the key constituents and their social constructions of Graduate School Managers. Would such a study further highlight the affective lives of Graduate School Managers?

The benefit of developing a portfolio of small-scale narrative work is that it allows a focus on the perceptions, feelings and lived experience of its participants. The depth and richness of the qualitative data it produces highlights some key issues that need to be addressed and which, I would suggest, are absent from positivist studies of higher education. My data contrasts with public accounts of higher education, which are often based on positivist methodology and large data sets (e.g. from the Higher Education Statistics Agency) and/or imbibed with issues of power. So, despite being part of 'a doctorate in a tight compartment' (Wellington & Sikes, 2006) with all the associated challenges of timing impacting research design and participant numbers, I believe my these to be valuable in that it supports a re-orientation of higher education research onto the affective laden narratives of a group of under-researched participants.

There is certainly opportunity to build on this work further through applying different research methods. For example, the constraints of the EdD structure precluded the inclusion of ethnographic research methods such as spending time observing Graduate School Managers in their work settings. Yet, the thesis provides strong insight and suggests further research endeavour is needed especially in relation to: the gendering (and other inequality regimes) of professional services roles in UK higher education, understanding the career trajectories of female middle-managers in the professional services roles, and in exploring the affective lives of professional services staff. Whilst this initial empirical study provides a foundation to explore these issues in more detail, there is the opportunity to utilise/design different research methods for the topics outlined. For example, applying the method of concept-map mediated interviews (Kandiko & Kinchin, 2012; 2013) to further work on concerns around career trajectories of female mid-career professional services managers.

Through such a portfolio of deep small-scale qualitative studies there may begin to emerge a counter narrative to thwart some of the corrosive effects of the neoliberal university.

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Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

Areas of discussion

Career Trajectories, Motivations, Drivers and Aspirations
- What is your job title?
- How long have you been working in this role?
- What were you doing beforehand?
- What attracted you to the post?
- What would you say you have gained from being a Graduate School Manager?
- What enabled you to become a Graduate School Manager?
- What are your aspirations for your long-term career?

Conflicts/overlaps between professional identity and person values
- Can you give me an indication of what you like/dislike about the post? Are there any aspects of the post that you particularly like/dislike?
- Have there been any particular factors that have contributed to making your experience as a Graduate School Manager positive?
- Have there been any particular factors that have contributed to making your experience as a Graduate School Manager negative?

Dominant discourses informing Graduate School Managers
- From your experience, what do you perceive to be the key issues for UK doctoral education?
- Are there any key words or phrases that come to mind?
- How do these issues impact on your work?
- How are the priority issues communicated to you?

Engagement with policy and their perceptions and interpretations of their role
- What are your views on the current policy priorities in doctoral education
- Could you give me a specific example?
- How would you describe the role/function you played?
- How do you know you are doing a good job?
- What in your view is the difference having a Graduate School Manager has made?
- What support do you receive as a Graduate School Manager?
- What support would you like to have?

Perceptions of key challenges
- What do you perceive to be the most challenging part of your role?
- What would you do differently for…doctoral students, supervisors, your institution?

Is there anything else you would like to add about your experiences as a Graduate School Manager?

Appendix 2: Participant Information and consent form

Dear Participant,

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study 'The Changing Nature of the UK Doctorate: Identity, Power and Interest Representation of Graduate School Managers', which has been approved by the University of Sussex's Research Ethics procedures (Ref: ER/PER21/2).

I am interested in exploring your experience and perceptions of being a Graduate School Manager[3].

I would be grateful if you would read the following information and decide whether or not you wish to participate.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The data from participants will inform a Doctor of Education thesis to be submitted to the University of Sussex. As such, Information from the research may be shared with my supervisor and may also be put forward for publication in a journal or for presentation at a conference.

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You have been invited because of your position and your institution's commitment to doctoral education.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO IF I TAKE PART?

You will be invited to take part in an interview, which will not take more than 40 minutes. The interview will take place in a private office or meeting room, I am happy to discuss what will be most convenient for you.

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[3] This is the term I am using for the most senior member of professional services staff with responsibility for doctoral students as their main focus.

Interviews will be digitally recorded and stored on a password protected computer, which will be kept with me at all times during the course of the research project. Following transcription and examination of the doctorate, the recordings will be deleted. I will send you a copy of the interview transcript for you to read and edit, if you require.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES AND RISKS OF TAKING PART?

In view of the fact that all data will be anonymised, there is no risk of any comments or views expressed being attributable to individuals. Although the process and findings of this study will be reported in my doctoral thesis, the data will be presented in a completely un-attributable format or at the aggregate level in order to ensure that no participant will be identified. This is the term I am using for the most senior member of professional services staff with responsibility for doctoral students as their main focus.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

The research will provide an opportunity to talk about your experiences of being a Graduate School Manager. You will also be helping the researcher to further understand engagement by professionals with policy. Your contribution in this study will provide a greater understanding of the identity of Graduate School Managers in the UK, helping both practitioners occupying such roles, but also those regularly interacting with them.

WILL MY INFORMATION IN THIS STUDY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

All information collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Every step will also be taken to assure your anonymity. However, in reporting the data I may make reference to your age, gender, and years of experience. This will be done in a way that will not make it possible to identify you personally. In the event that you withdraw from the study, you may request for your data to be removed. This request for the removal of the data may be made up until the end of the analysis stage of the project.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I WANT TO TAKE PART?

To take part, please call me or email me directly on the contact details below.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY?

The results of the research study will be written up for a dissertation, which forms part of my doctoral research. Parts of the study may also be submitted for publication or be presented at a conference.

WHO HAS APPROVED THIS STUDY?

My supervisor and the Cluster-based Research Ethics Committee (C-REC) for the School of Education and Social Work at the University of Sussex, UK, approved the research.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you do agree to participate, please complete and sign the consent form attached as an annex to this letter and return it to me at the address given below.

Kind Regards

Paul Roberts

EdD candidate Centre for Higher Education and Equity Research (CHEER)

Falmer House, University of Sussex BN1 9QF

E-mail: p.e.roberts@sussex.ac.uk Phone: 01273 877223

Consent Form

The Changing Nature of the UK Doctorate: Identity, Power and Interest Representation of Graduate School Managers

University of Sussex Research Ethics Approval Reference: ER/PER21/2

I agree to take part in the above research project. I have read and understood the participant letter, which I may keep for my own records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- Be interviewed by the researcher
- Allow the interview to be electronically recorded

I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential, and that no information that I disclose will lead to the identification of any individual in the thesis or outputs of the project, either by the researcher or by any other party. I understand that I will be offered a transcript of my interview, on request, for my approval before being included in the write up of the research.

I understand that I may request for the data pertaining to me to be removed up until the end of the analysis stage of the project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part of or the entire project, and that I can withdraw at any stage prior to the submission of the thesis without being disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that the information provided by me may be used in future research and analysis that have research governance approval as long as my name and contact information is removed before it is passed on.

I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated in the utmost confidence and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

I understand that the research study may be put forward for publishing in a journal and/or for presentation at one or more conferences.

Name:	
Signature:	
Date:	

Please return this form to:

Paul Roberts, EdD candidate,

Centre for Higher Education and Equity Research (CHEER)

Falmer House, University of Sussex BN1 9QF

E-mail: p.e.roberts@sussex.ac.uk

Phone: 01273 877223