

Meta Gorup

THE CHANGING FACE OF ACADEMIC MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

An Ethnographic Exploration
of University Heads
of Department's Identities



Academic middle managers, such as department heads and faculty deans, are a group of managers who sit between the top university management and the academic leaders below middle management. This position makes them crucial to the management of academic activities and the implementation of university directives. However, their responsibilities are rarely straightforward. With the advance of managerialism in higher education institutions, previously characterized mainly by collegial and professional academic values, the role of these managers has evolved from one largely defined by academic leadership to one in which they assume significant managerial responsibilities. As a result, their positions have become increasingly complex and often require addressing conflicting expectations.

Based on an ethnographic study conducted in a faculty of an English university, this dissertation examines in depth the complex environments and lived experiences of three heads of department through the lens of their managerial identities construction. Focusing on the instances in which the department heads experienced tensions between their multiple managerial identities informed by different identity sources, the study offers detailed insights into the academic middle managers' general conceptions of their managerial identities and their sense of managerial self in relation to their research management responsibilities.



Illustration: Tanja Lozej



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PhD dissertation

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Preface

Who am I? In the process of researching for and writing my dissertation, it seemed impossible for me to escape references to individuals' identities – that is the answers to the question “*Who am I?*,” in other words, one's sense of self – in whatever book I read, whatever series or film I watched. Everyday casual conversations with my close and not so close ones would in my head instantly translate into them making statements about their identity. I even noticed becoming more analytical of my own thoughts and statements I made to others about who I was. In doing so, my attention was almost always instinctively drawn to instances of dissonance where it became clear that an individual – be it a fictional character, a loved one or myself – was experiencing some kind of friction due to the multiple, often conflicting, available identities with which one was voluntarily or involuntarily associated. What were the individuals' responses to these identity contradictions? Who were they in the face of the latter?

Before diving into the remainder of this dissertation, which looks at the identities of academic middle managers, one might ask why questions of identity and identity tensions matter at all. While the answer to the question of who one is often proves to be complicated, the response to why that matters feels less so: it matters

because one's sense of self influences how one behaves, what actions one takes, in short, how one goes about one's life. Moreover, as individuals we are embedded in relationships with others and belong to numerous social groups. This means that the way we and others perceive ourselves may also have an impact on the people around us in our various spheres of life. Exploring the identities of groups such as managers – who are explicitly positioned to have an influence on the people they manage and the organizations they belong to – is therefore crucial to understanding what happens in organizations and why. These questions become even more significant when we acknowledge that they might not have easy answers; as indicated earlier, there are often multiple – sometimes contradictory – ways in which managers can construct their identities, and related to this, the choices they make in managing their units.

With this in mind, this dissertation examines how academic middle managers – who work in the basic organizational units of universities and thus play a crucial role in the implementation of organizational change – go about forming their identities as they head their sections. As mentioned earlier, this process is unlikely to be without identity tensions, as individual academic middle managers are embedded in often complex, contradictory social contexts. Not only do they carry personal baggage, but academic middle managers' sense of self may also be influenced – to mention just a few possible identity sources – by their professional background, their academic discipline, organizational units to which they belong, such as departments, faculties and the university, as well as the broader (inter)national systems. Given the critical – but complicated – position of this group of managers in universities, this dissertation argues that we need to better understand who individual academic middle managers are in relation to a variety of often conflicting influences and seeks to achieve this goal.

At the same time, however, the stories and efforts of academic middle managers are relatable to each and every one of us who have ever struggled to make the right decision in less than ideal circumstances, in situations where we had to decide on

one loyalty over another, risking conflict and uncertainty. To unravel the difficulties of this kind, this dissertation offers deep insights into the lived experiences of academic middle managers from their own perspective and from the perspective of their colleagues, while providing an academic analysis thereof. In doing so, this account – which I hope the reader will find both empathetic and academically rigorous – hopes to contribute a valuable piece of the puzzle to the study of academic middle managers and their identities.

Meta Gorup

May 3, 2023

Chicago

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मेरे प्रिये भारतीय परिवार को, मुझे पता है कि परिवार मे मुझे धन्यवाद नही कहना चाहिये, लेकिन मुझे पृथ्वी के दूसरे छोर से हमेशा स्नेह और प्रोत्साहन भेजने के लिए आभार।

Mama, tata in Špela, hvala za vašo podporo in razumevanje, tudi kadar me je bilo težko razumeti, in za vašo nadnaravno sposobnost zaznavanja, kdaj me je bolje ne vprašati, kako napreduje doktorat.

And to Vishvas, thank you for always, always being there.

1 A Brief Introduction to...

In this dissertation, I aim to examine the lived experiences of the so-called ‘academic middle managers’ (AMMs; AMM, in the singular, in this text refers to either ‘academic middle manager’ or ‘academic middle management’). More specifically, I examine the nature of the identity construction processes among this group of university managers.

Before diving into the details of the research project and its findings, I briefly outline in this introductory chapter who AMMs are and some general features of their positions; the conceptualization of identity on which I have drawn and the research (sub)questions informed by it; organizational ethnography as my chosen research methodology; the context relevant to the thematic focus of this inquiry; the envisioned contributions of the project to the AMM literature; and the structure of the remainder of this dissertation.

1.1 ... Academic Middle Management

AMMs such as department heads and faculty deans occupy a space between top university managers and the academic managers below the middle management level,

such as course or research group coordinators. Because of this position, they are crucial to the management of academic activities and are “best placed for implementing institutional policies and strategies” (Meek, Goedegebuure, et al., 2010b, p. 1).

Arguably, this important role of AMMs in the operation of universities has sparked great interest among researchers of university life. In particular, as I argue in several places in chapter 2 of this dissertation, a substantial proportion of AMM literature has explored various aspects of AMM related to the transformation of higher education institutions from entities characterized by the centrality of collegial and professional academic values to ones importantly influenced by managerialism-, private sector-inspired practices aiming at making these organizations increasingly efficient and effective. In this context, many AMM roles have evolved from ones of “scholarly” leadership (Rosser et al., 2003, p. 2) to ones involving significant managerial responsibilities (De Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009; Meek, Goedegebuure, & De Boer, 2010).

This has led to AMMs holding increasingly complex positions in which they often have to deal with conflicting expectations. For example, AMMs are frequently seen as both academics and managers, but commonly struggle to devote sufficient time to both roles (Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Sotirakou, 2004). Furthermore, they may be seen as both colleagues and managers to the members of their academic units, capacities often associated with disparate expectations (Kallenberg, 2007). More broadly, many AMMs find themselves caught between collegial, academic values on the one hand, and managerialist ideas, often seen as challenging these values, on the other (Carvalho & Santiago, 2010a; Degn, 2015), with the two sets of principles themselves at sometimes carrying ambivalent notions (Deem & Brehony, 2005; Machovcová et al., 2019).

How individual AMMs choose to go about their sometimes conflicting and ambiguous responsibilities depends, as detailed in continuation (sections 2.2.4.1, 2.2.4.2), on a variety of personal and contextual factors: from various aspects of their

biographical and career specifics to the features of their organization and the broader higher education system to which they belong, to name but a few.

1.2 ... Identity

The different ways in which AMMs can fulfil their jobs are related to an individual AMM's sense of self, that is their identity. Indeed, notions such as “personal and professional identities” (Floyd, 2012), “academic identity” (Henkel, 2000) and “role identities” (Huang & Pang, 2016) have become firmly established as helpful in understanding this group of academic managers.

Complementing this body of literature, as described in chapter 3 of this dissertation, I examine AMMs' identities through the lens of “managerial identity” (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008), that is their sense of self as managers. In line with the above recognition of AMMs' different approaches to their jobs and the probability of these managers experiencing contradicting demands in the process, the notion of managerial identity as I employ it in this study recognizes the likelihood for individual managers' sense of self to be informed by multiple personal, organizational, and societal identity sources. Moreover, it emphasizes the potential for identity tensions to emerge as a result of this plurality of identities.

Underlying this conceptualization of managerial identity are several interrelated assumptions. First, I define identities as socially constructed through interactions between people and, by implication, as formed through the interplay of an individual's agency and the broader structural forces (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Jenkins, 2008). These notions draw our attention to the importance of understanding both the more individualistic and contextual elements of identity formation alluded to above, while also noting that identities are context-dependent. The latter leads to another assumption, namely that identities continuously evolve through the process of so-called

“identity work” (Brown, 2015, 2017). Although identity work is arguably constant, it becomes more intense when individuals face tensions in relation to their sense of self (Beech et al., 2012; Caza et al., 2018); which brings me again to the plurality of managerial identities and the likelihood of their collision. Finally, for the purposes of this dissertation, identities are considered discursive constructs that are formed through language use (Coupland & Brown, 2012; Ybema, Keenoy, et al., 2009), and therefore the format of identity work of interest is referred to as “discursive identity work” (Brown, 2017, p. 302).

Against the background of these postulations, the overarching question I aim to answer in this dissertation is how AMMs discursively construct their managerial identities. To answer this question, I seek to explore the nature of AMMs’ varied discursive contexts, on the one hand, and the managers’ use of the multiple available discursive resources in the process of their discursive identity work on the other. Given the heightened intensity of identity work in times of identity struggles and the likelihood that AMMs experience them, I examine AMMs’ discursive identity work by focusing on the forms of identity tensions that AMMs experience and their responses to them.

1.3 ... Organizational Ethnography

In order to answer the above research (sub)questions, I conducted a so-called “organizational ethnography,” as detailed in chapter 4 of this dissertation (Neyland, 2008; Ybema, Yanow, et al., 2009a). Organizational ethnography is a research methodology that aims to provide a contextualized understanding of people’s lived experiences in a set organizational context, central to which is the researcher’s presence in the studied setting, usually over an extended period of time.

The nearly six-month organizational ethnography I conducted in the academic years 2014/15 and 2015/16 focused on three Heads of Department (HoDs) in the

Faculty of Political and Social Sciences¹ (the Faculty) of an English university, hereafter referred to as New University (NewU). In order to gain deep insights into both the HoDs' discursive environments and their discursive identity work, I used several data generation techniques: "shadowing" (Czarniawska, 2007; McDonald, 2005), that is continuous observation of the studied HoDs in their daily activities; semi-structured interviews with the shadowed HoDs and numerous other organizational members across multiple echelons; and the collection of organizational documentation supplemented by relevant documents relating to the broader higher education context.

1.4 ... the Study Context

As opposed to examining the HoDs' discursive contexts, discursive identity work and identity tensions in relation to the aforementioned, rather broadly defined challenges often faced by AMMs, the theoretical and methodological approaches I chose allowed for an in-depth exploration of specific challenges faced by the HoDs studied. One set of issues in particular stood out to me as a locus of evident identity tensions among all three HoDs, namely the management of their departments' – and in some cases, their own, the Faculty's and NewU's – research-related activities and performance. Although the dissertation offers some general insights into the meanings that the shadowed HoDs ascribed to their managerial roles, considerable portions of the analyses are dedicated to exploring the discursive environments of the HoDs studied and their discursive identity work in relation to research management.

This focus was influenced, at least in part, by national and university developments that occurred relatively shortly before and during my fieldwork, which

¹ All names of institutions and persons mentioned in this chapter and throughout the dissertation are pseudonyms.

related to increased attention to the institution's research efforts during my time at NewU. First, shortly prior to my fieldwork, the results of the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF), the UK's national periodic research assessment scheme, were published. As I explain in detail in chapter 5 of this dissertation, the REF – an example of a managerialism-inspired instrument – defines research as a performance to be managed, the results of which determine the allocation of a proportion of government research funding to a university (HEFCE [Higher Education Funding Council for England] et al., 2011) and feed into national research rankings (Jump, 2014; The Guardian, 2014). The REF 2014 results – and their implications for the HoDs studied and their departments – were given added weight by the NewU's recently appointed Vice-Chancellor, who had begun to place more emphasis on research and the institution's performance in the REF than had been the case under the university's previous senior leadership.

Against this background, significant parts of the analyses focus on the HoDs' discursive environments, discursive identity work and identity tensions in relation to the above developments, as well as the HoDs' identity struggles associated with research management in the years preceding my fieldwork. In examining the forms of identity tensions experienced by the HoDs and their responses to them, the analyses consider a wide range of elements whose combinations had caused challenges to their managerial sense of self in the past and/or at the time of my data generation. These include, but are not limited to, the NewU's traditionally dominant teaching orientation, related to the institution's former polytechnic status (Pratt, 1997); the past and/or then leadership and priorities of the university and the Faculty; the departments' research cultures, performance and/or status in relation to other organizational units within and beyond the Faculty; the experiences and perspectives of department staff in relation to research; the HoDs' attitudes to their academic or professional disciplines, to research and/or to the REF; and the HoDs' organizational roles beyond their departments.

1.5 ... Envisioned Contributions

Although AMM is a well-researched topic, as detailed in chapter 2 of this dissertation, the existing literature leaves some knowledge gaps – and related conceptual and methodological gaps – inadequately addressed. This project presents an innovative approach to the study of AMMs that promises novel insights into the lived experiences of this group of university managers.

In analysing the different approaches AMMs take to their jobs, while the AMM literature as a whole provides an extensive list of possible influences on AMMs (sections 2.2.4.1, 2.2.4.2), individual studies rarely explore this plurality and the resulting potential challenges in detail. In this regard, research examining the embeddedness of AMMs in managerialist environments often lacks the contextual detail that would allow for an in-depth understanding of how the various personal and contextual factors in practice inform AMMs' responses to managerialist influences (section 2.4.1). This knowledge gap is related to some conceptual omissions in the study of AMMs' identities. That is, while numerous researchers nominally adopt definitions of identities as multifaceted, socially constructed through an interplay between an individual and their environment, context-dependent, and fluid, few provide accounts of AMMs' identities that focus on the multiplicity of evolving personal and environmental elements that influence AMMs as they undertake their jobs, as well as the dynamic interplay between them (section 2.4.2). This is related to the common methodological choices made in the study of AMM, particularly the lack of observational research. The prevailing survey, semi-structured interview and document analysis approaches limit the possibilities of open-ended research that offers insights into ever-changing, context-specific behaviours of AMMs. In addition, most studies speak of AMMs' experiences in rather general terms rather than focusing on specific issues. Furthermore, data on AMM are rarely presented in a way that provides deep, detailed insights into the realities of individual AMMs, but

rather offers mostly synthesized accounts of (dis)similarities between the AMMs studies (section 2.4.3).

Given these knowledge gaps and conceptual and methodological shortcomings, this dissertation aims to provide a more nuanced, complex, dynamic and comprehensive picture of the lived experience of AMMs. As suggested above, drawing on “managerial identity” (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008), which emphasizes the multiplicity of identities and the potential for tensions between them, and “identity work” (Brown, 2015, 2017) – which conceives of identities as ever-evolving and context-dependent – allows for an open-ended exploration of the multiple personal, organizational and broader contextual elements that feed into AMMs’ sense of self and the changing interactions between them. In this way, the study aims to uncover the real-life intricacies and subtleties behind the often generalized insights into AMMs’ experiences of struggles that emerge from their – in many ways – in-between position in the context of managerialism. Crucial to these aims is the chosen organizational ethnographic approach (Neyland, 2008; Ybema, Yanow, et al., 2009a), which allows for open-ended, in-depth, context-rich and processual insights; the aforementioned focus on research management as a concrete matter of concern; and the presentation of detailed data in relation to each individual AMM studied (section 2.4.4).

1.6 ... the Remainder of the Dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 provides a literature review that focuses on AMMs, the tensions they often face in their role, and the factors that influence the way AMMs do their jobs. It concludes by introducing the identified knowledge gaps that this dissertation aims to address.

- Chapter 3 establishes the theoretical orientation of the present study, by exploring in more detail the concepts and premises central to this research, namely managerial identity, the possibility of managers holding multiple identities, and the potential for identity tensions arising from this multiplicity of identities; identity as socially constructed through the interplay of agentic and structural forces; and identity as an ongoing discursive process. The chapter concludes by introducing research (sub)questions that I aim to answer in this dissertation.
- Chapter 4 details the methodological choices I have made. It introduces the field site and the characteristics of the research participants; organizational ethnography in general and the particular form thereof I undertook; my approach to data analysis; and reflections on researcher positionality and ethics.
- Chapters 5 to 8 present the data according to the chosen analytical framework. They depict the discursive contexts of the HoDs studied and illustrate the processes of the HoDs' discursive identity work, focusing on their experiences of identity tensions and their responses to them. Specifically, chapter 5 outlines the HoDs' shared national, university and faculty discursive environments relevant to the subsequent analysis of the discursive identity work of these AMMs. Chapters 6 to 8 present additional relevant discourses, such as individual HoDs' biography- and department-specific ones, and explain how the HoDs drew on a variety of discursive identity resources in constructing their managerial identities. These three chapters – each dedicated to examining the discursive identity work of one HoD – first introduce the department in question and its HoD, with a more general examination of the HoD's perceptions of themselves in relation to their organizational role and approach to managing the department, and then examine in detail the HoD's research management-related activities and their discursive identity work in relation to

the latter. Chapters 6 to 8 are organized chronologically, in the order in which I shadowed the three HoDs.

- Chapter 9 concludes the dissertation with a discussion of the findings in relation to the research (sub)questions posed. It also outlines the study's contributions to the literature and its limitations, and suggests some ideas for future research.

2 The Knowns and the Unknowns of Academic Middle Management

In this chapter I identify the main literature and contributions in the field of academic middle management (AMM) studies. The chapter begins with a general introduction to the topic and then describes the tensions AMMs face and the elements that influence them as they go about their job, as recognized in the existing literature. I then provide an overview of the theories and methodologies used in existing AMM research, as well as the research foci examined, before identifying the knowledge gaps that I will address in the remainder of this dissertation.

2.1 Who Are Academic Middle Managers?

University managers representing the focus of this dissertation are commonly referred to as ‘academic middle managers.’ This term is used to draw a distinction between

university top executive officers and academic managers below middle management level, such as course coordinators. The terminology and individual positions referred to as ‘middle manager’ in universities vary depending on the national and/or organizational contexts, but are most commonly used in reference to faculty deans, department or school heads/chairs, and research directors (Meek, Goedegebuure, et al., 2010b). The basic units in which AMMs work form the operational base of universities. This brings AMMs close to the main activities of universities such as teaching and research, and consequently they are “best placed for implementing institutional policies and strategies” (Meek, Goedegebuure, et al., 2010a, p. 1; see also Degn, 2013; Kekäle, 2003).

Given this important role of AMM, it is not surprising that the literature on AMM has been growing rapidly. However, this increase in research, especially in the last two decades or so, has in many cases been inspired by changes in the nature of the role of AMM and the characteristics of higher education institutions in general. Although the situation varies depending on the national higher education systems and even on individual institutions within a system (Meek, Goedegebuure, & De Boer, 2010), AMM positions have changed significantly in many countries due to pressures related to broader developments characteristic of a number of higher education systems around the globe. These changes are sometimes referred to as the “managerial revolution” (Amaral, Meek, & Larsen, 2003) or more commonly as ‘New Public Management,’ “soft” or “hard managerialism” (Trow, 1994) or “new managerialism” (Amaral, Magalhães, & Santiago, 2003; Deem, 2001; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Deem et al., 2007; Trowler, 2010). For the purposes of this dissertation, the term ‘managerialism’ is used broadly to refer to higher education institutions adopting a number of features characteristic of private sector organizations, which have often been perceived as disruptive to existing collegial academic structures (Deem & Brehony, 2005; Deem et al., 2007; Parker & Jary, 1995). The shift towards a more efficient and effective higher education sector has included, among other things, increased budgetary constraints, the

promotion of “competition” between universities “for students and research funding,” the introduction and/or higher tuition fees which had the effect of transforming students into “consumers,” the development of research and teaching performance metrics and their review, the “concentration of funds in the highest performing” universities, and the strengthening of managerial positions at senior and middle management levels (Ferlie et al., 2008, pp. 335–336).

Managerialist developments have thus strongly influenced the position of AMMs in a number of countries, including the Netherlands, Australia, the UK, Norway and Denmark (De Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009). Traditionally, the middle level of organization in professional bureaucracies such as universities was weak, as it was assumed that direct control of highly specialized professionals such as academics was hardly necessary (Mintzberg, 1983). As a result, AMM roles were commonly perceived as *primus inter pares*, that is first among equals, and they were seen mainly as “scholarly leaders” (Rosser et al., 2003, p. 2). More recently, however, AMMs have increasingly taken on managerial responsibilities which include strategic, operational, human resource, academic and external relationship management or stakeholder relationship management (De Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009; Meek, Goedegebuure, & De Boer, 2010). This has often been associated with the process of “centralized devolution” whereby several academic and financial responsibilities have been shifted to the faculty and department/school levels, which are increasingly treated as separate cost centres (Meek, Goedegebuure, et al., 2010b; Santiago et al., 2006). Thus, what governments and funding agencies demand from universities in terms of “accountability, effectiveness, goal specification and measurable outputs,” senior university management demands from AMMs in departments and faculties (Santiago et al., 2006, p. 221). To fulfil these responsibilities, AMMs have in some cases been appointed by higher-level governing bodies rather than elected by collegial bodies, for example in some institutions in Australia, the Netherlands (Meek, Goedegebuure, & De Boer, 2010), Denmark (Degn, 2015) and the UK (Fulton, 2003; Smith, 2002; Trowler, 2010). In addition, they have

been professionalized in some cases, for example at certain universities in Australia (Meek, 2003), the UK (Clegg & McAuley, 2005) and the USA (Bray, 2012).

Arguably, similar to middle managers in the private sector (Balogun, 2003; Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Huy, 2001; Rouleau, 2005; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011), AMMs have emerged as important strategic actors with the potential to influence developments in their units and can therefore play an active role in shaping university policies (Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; Degn, 2015; Kallenberg, 2015; Meek, Goedegebuure, et al., 2010b; Prichard, 2000; Prichard & Willmott, 1997; Ruby, 2021; Whitchurch & Gordon, 2017). However, their agency depends on the context in which they find themselves (Branson et al., 2016; Machovcová et al., 2019; Whitchurch & Gordon, 2017) and can sometimes be quite limited (Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020; Middlehurst, 1993; Ruby, 2021; Saunders & Sin, 2015; Sotirakou, 2004). Some AMMs complain about the increased responsibility combined with the lack of authority in managing their tasks (Henkel, 2000; Jackson, 1999). While they are responsible for implementing policies that come from the top, their authority does not always extend upwards to effectively influence the strategic development of those policies (Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; Saunders & Sin, 2015; Sotirakou, 2004). Adding to these limitations is the perception that their roles are not clearly defined and are sometimes ambiguous (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Gonaim, 2016; Jackson, 1999; Montez et al., 2003; Ruby, 2021). Consequently, individual AMMs embedded in different organizational contexts may interpret and perform their job in very different ways (Boyko & Jones, 2010; Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; Floyd, 2016; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011). Further, despite the complex and often uncertain position of AMMs in the university structure, very few of these managers receive training (da Motta & Bolan, 2008; Gonaim, 2016; Jackson, 1999; Ruby, 2021). Those who do receive training often find the forms of professional development unhelpful, not adapted to the specific responsibilities and contexts in which they work, or not appropriate to their specific developmental needs (Floyd, 2016; Johnson, 2002; Preston

& Floyd, 2016; Seale & Cross, 2016). In addition, the aforementioned difficulties faced by AMMs are often exacerbated by their heavy workloads (Deem et al., 2007; Smith, 2007; Thornton et al., 2018).

2.2 Academic Middle Management Positions Fraught With Tension

Given the increasingly prominent – but also ambivalent and ever more complex – role of AMMs in university governance, a significant body of literature has focused on understanding their positions and roles. Much of this literature addresses various factors that influence the way individuals perform this role, and most studies emphasize in one way or another the potential for tensions, conflicts and ambiguities involved (cf. Wald & Golding, 2020). In the following subsections, I identify and describe some of the main features of AMM positions and struggles that AMMs encounter, which may stem from various personal, organizational and/or societal pressures and which place AMMs in a position of “liminality” (Freeman et al., 2020; Gigliotti, 2021) in terms of how they seek to fulfil their roles and what is expected of them by the various interested stakeholders. First, I explore the tensions that arise from AMMs simultaneously maintaining their careers as academics and managers. Then I turn to the potential conflicts that relate to AMMs’ position between different interest groups, including with regard to their dual role as managers and colleagues in their organizational units. I then address AMMs’ experiences of conflicting pressures in the context of broader discussions of managerialism and collegiality as opposing sets of values that characterize contemporary academia. The latter are critically assessed before I conclude the section by identifying and describing a broad range of factors to consider when examining AMM positions and AMMs’ struggles in the ever-changing context of higher education.

2.2.1 Academics and Managers

A tension often experienced by AMMs, referred to by Sotirakou (2004) as “Janusian” conflict, is related to the discrepancy between AMMs’ responsibilities related to their role as managers and their personal academic pursuits, such as research, teaching and supervision; in general, AMMs are expected to be both managers and active academics (Deem et al., 2007; Degn, 2015; Machovcová et al., 2019; Meek, Goedegebuure, & De Boer, 2010; Sotirakou, 2004; cf. Heffernan, 2021). Despite the changing nature of AMMs’ roles due to the managerialist developments described above, it has been argued that academic leaders must first and foremost be acclaimed academics in their respective fields (Kekäle, 1998); only then can they expect the support and respect of their faculty (Bryman, 2007; Meek, Goedegebuure, & De Boer, 2010). Indeed, some have argued that the lack of a strong research profile among AMMs can lead to additional tensions in their interactions with the academics they manage (Heffernan, 2021). Moreover, research has shown that the faculty who perceive their AMMs as “strong researchers” are more satisfied and show lower intention to quit their jobs (Bäker & Goodall, 2020).

Although academic predispositions remain important for AMMs (Carvalho & Santiago, 2010b; Deem et al., 2007; Machovcová et al., 2019) and can be seen as closely linked to their management roles (Stratford, 2012; Thomas-Gregory, 2014), it has been shown that it is difficult to maintain a successful academic profile while performing managerial responsibilities. AMMs often report that they struggle to balance managerial and academic activities (Bessant & Mavin, 2016; Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; de Guzman & Hapan, 2014; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Gmelch & Parkay, 1999; Knight & Trowler, 2001; Sotirakou, 2004; Thornton et al., 2018). This could be particularly problematic for those seeking promotion along the academic lines (Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Thornton et al., 2018) and may lead to difficulties in career progression in cases where AMMs hold their management roles on a temporary basis; their low engagement

in academic endeavours during this period could lead to their academic careers stalling after they complete their term as AMMs (Jackson, 1999).

2.2.2 Managers and Colleagues

In relation to AMMs as located within the organizational structure, their position and roles have been described as “multi-dimensional” (Sotirakou, 2004, p. 350) and “multi-faceted” (Branson et al., 2016, p. 142), with authors emphasizing the importance of the relationships that AMMs develop downwards, upwards, horizontally and diagonally (Branson et al., 2016; Freeman et al., 2020; Kallenberg, 2015). First, as acknowledged in the general management literature (Down & Reveley, 2009; Sims, 2003; Thomas & Linstead, 2002), the term ‘middle management’ – and by extension ‘academic middle management’ – suggests inbetweenness, indicating the position of AMMs between senior management above and the faculty members below them (Carvalho & Santiago, 2010a; Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020; Gonaim, 2016; Hancock & Hellawell, 2003; Meek, Goedegebuure, & De Boer, 2010; Middlehurst, 1993; Santiago et al., 2006; Whitchurch & Gordon, 2017). AMMs must simultaneously represent both the university to their unit and their unit to the university (Smith, 2005). This is by no means an easy task, as AMMs often have to “advocate for opposing sides of issues” (Montez et al., 2003, p. 244). As a result, they are sometimes perceived as representing different sets of values, that is administrative, managerial or institutional values versus faculty, professional or disciplinary values (Bolden et al., 2008; Bray, 2010, 2012; Del Favero, 2005; Machovcová et al., 2019; Sotirakou, 2004). This is also related to the tension between AMMs’ dual role as both line managers and colleagues of their faculty members (Branson et al., 2016; Freeman et al., 2020; Gonaim, 2016; Kallenberg, 2007; Parker, 2004) and raises questions about AMMs’ loyalty to their units and academic discipline versus loyalty to the university as a whole (Degn, 2013; Santiago et al., 2006; Smith, 2002).

In addition to these potential conflicts, there are a number of other internal groups whose interests may diverge, such as students or subgroups within the bodies of faculty, administrators or management (Sotirakou, 2004). For example, the work of AMMs may be further complicated by horizontal relationships, that is relationships with other AMMs holding the same hierarchical position. Although such collaboration and exchange can be beneficial (Branson et al., 2016), relationships of this kind are sometimes fraught with competing interests (Hancock & Hellawell, 2003; Prichard & Willmott, 1997). Further, some authors recognize that AMMs are not only stuck between different groups of management, faculty and students, but are also accountable to a range of groups outside the university, such as external agencies (Sotirakou, 2004), professional and accreditation bodies (Davies & Thomas, 2009) and the public at large (Birds, 2014; Montez et al., 2003). It is therefore not surprising that AMMs are described as “the meat in the sandwich” or “between a rock and a hard place” (Meek, Goedegebuure, & De Boer, 2010, p. 43), which sometimes leads AMMs to feel “that they must be all things to all people” (Montez et al., 2003, p. 254).

2.2.3 Champions of Collegiality or Messengers of Managerialism?

As noted above (section 2.1), AMM positions and related tensions have been in many countries significantly affected by the introduction of managerialist reforms, both through changes in AMM roles themselves and the contexts in which they are performed (Deem et al., 2007; Meek, Goedegebuure, et al., 2010a). Thus, the considerations outlined above are often contextualized in discussions of managerialism and its impact on the former (supposedly) collegial arrangements characteristic of academic organizations.

As mentioned earlier (section 2.1), the term ‘managerialism’ is used to describe the values of today’s university senior management teams, which are associated with efficiency, performance management of academic activities and strong top-down

management. The preceding “period of ‘collegiality’” (Trowler, 2010, p. 202), on the other hand, can be broadly understood as shorthand for the importance of academic self-governance, the professional autonomy of academics and the values of particular academic disciplines. The two are commonly presented as opposite sides of the pole, and AMMs as having a responsibility to navigate the tensions arising from this opposing relationship (Bessant & Mavin, 2016; Carvalho & Santiago, 2010a, 2010b; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Deem et al., 2007; Degn, 2015; Hellowell & Hancock, 2001; Henkel, 2000; Machovcová et al., 2019; Meek, Goedegebuure, & De Boer, 2010; Santiago et al., 2006). Consequently, it has been argued that AMMs are caught between two different and often contradictory, “increasingly disparate cultures” (Schuster, 2010, p. 226): a managerialist and an academic one.

2.2.3.1 Between Ideal Types and Hybrids

Acknowledging this context, some studies have developed typologies of AMMs based on their commitment to managerialist versus collegial and academic ideals, values, goals and identities. Deem et al. (2001; 2007), for example, distinguish between three different pathways through which UK academics tend to become engaged in managerial activities. “Good citizens” are characterized by managers’ feelings of obligation to give back to their organization by taking on a management role. “Reluctant-managers” take on the position only temporarily, often either through coercion from colleagues or so that a ‘worse’ candidate does not take it. They usually refuse to accept the label ‘manager.’ “Career track” route into management is identified when academics decide early on to pursue a management career and feel comfortable with the role of a manager and being referred to as one. In the context of Danish higher education, Degn (2013, 2015) outlines three types of department heads based on their commitment to and acceptance of managerialist change. “Shielders” avoid change and identify mainly with their faculty. “Co-ordinators” try to balance the relationship between continuity and change, being (semi-)loyal to both the faculty and the higher management. “Agenda

setters” advocate for change and “have a mainly positive view on university management” (Degn, 2013, p. 206). Similarly, Gjerde and Alvesson (2020) divide AMMs in UK business schools into what they argue are three stable categories, according to their perceptions of agency and identification with either subordinate academic colleagues or senior university management. “Umbrella carriers” or “protectors” mainly identify with their profession and colleagues below them and use their agency to protect the latter from top-down pressures. “Impotent” managers perceive their role as lacking in agency and do not identify strongly with either the university senior management or the academics they lead. “Performance drivers” have a strong sense of agency, which they use to align with and amplify the performance pressures coming from above, identifying primarily with their superiors and their role as manager and leader.

While such categorizations are helpful in understanding the different extents to which AMM positions are influenced by managerialist as well as collegial and academic principles, some of their authors acknowledge, first, the hybrid nature of certain ideal types as such (for example Degn’s (2013, 2015) “co-ordinators”) and, second, the likelihood of fuzzy boundaries between categories (Degn, 2013, 2015). Therefore, I would argue that ideal types are just that, ideal: AMMs are not necessarily either “corporate lackeys” or “academe’s champions” (Mignot-Gérard, 2010; Trowler, 2010). At times, some AMMs are both and sometimes they are neither (Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; Mignot-Gérard, 2010; Ruby, 2021). The work of Deem and colleagues (Deem & Brehony, 2005; Deem et al., 2007) recognizes that individual academic managers may draw on both values informed by managerialism and the more traditional ideas of academia and/or the values of their disciplines, and portrays academic managers as “bi-” or “tri-lingual.” Thus, AMMs often appear as a kind of hybrid, simultaneously holding and moving between multiple – sometimes contradictory – sets of beliefs (Meek, Goedegebuure, et al., 2010b; Prichard, 2000; Trowler, 2010).

This suggests that managerialism has fully “captured” very few academics and AMMs (Trowler, 2010, p. 204), leaving universities “multivocal” (Trowler, 2010, p. 206). Although there is considerable variation across countries and institutions in the extent to which managerialism has affected AMMs (Santiago et al., 2006), some believe that the impact of managerialism has been overstated (Meek, Goedegebuure, & De Boer, 2010; Santiago et al., 2006). Even in countries that were pioneers in introducing managerialism into higher education, such as the UK, a number of academics and academic managers continue to “resist, reconstruct or displace” (Trowler, 2010, p. 203) these developments, and the implementation of managerialism is likely to be “patchy” and “incomplete” (Prichard & Willmott, 1997, p. 311; see also Barry, Chandler, & Clark, 2001; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Prichard, 2000).

2.2.3.2 The Ambivalence of Managerialist and Collegial Values

Furthermore, managerialism and collegiality must themselves be understood as ideal types whose aspects may in practice play out in uncharacteristic, unexpected or unplanned ways and combinations. For example, referring to the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework, Saunders and Sin (2015) show how AMMs involved in implementation perceived the process as top-down, despite the policy’s explicit “messages of ownership and collegiality” (p. 136). The policy was thus perceived as no different from other institutional or national directives typically characterized by managerialist values. In the context of the Czech national research assessment, Machovcová et al. (2019) present cases of congruence between managerialist and academic professional values. They show that department heads were largely supportive of quantitative measurement of research performance, since they believed that increased research productivity – as measured in the assessment – was “a sign of good science” (p. 725). Moreover, the heads of department that were more likely to succeed in research assessment were also better able to support their faculty and protect them from some of the drawbacks of this managerialist directive. Similarly, an example from the UK

shows that some AMMs in applied, vocationally oriented units adopted managerialist directives related to staff appraisal and research performance in order to improve the academic status of their departments (Henkel, 2000). In another example from the UK, Deem and Brehony (2005) explain how some academic managers relied on the managerialist value of ‘student as consumer’ to promote student-centred approaches or widen participation in higher education. Thus, they show that managerialist reforms can support a range of very different managerialist goals, some of which are not per se detrimental to the groups concerned. In a study of academization and marketization in culturally different departments at a Swedish university, Ek et al. (2013) show that department heads perceived the two developments very differently depending on the nature of their department. Heads of academically strong, discipline-based departments saw marketization as the main disruptive force and perceived it as a threat to their autonomy. Conversely, heads of vocationally oriented departments felt more burdened by the pressure of academization to shift the emphasis of their departments’ work from professional skills “towards academic meritocracy” (p. 1305; cf. Henkel, 2000).

These examples highlight the ambivalent nature of both managerialism and collegiality and support the idea that we should not view them along the lines of “old collegiality good, new managerialism bad” (Trowler, 2010, p. 203). For one, although some authors insist that academic managers may uphold managerialist power relations even if the values underpinning their efforts come from a different source (Deem & Brehony, 2005), it is important to emphasize the contested nature of at least certain aspects of collegiality. In relation to the academic ideal of self-governance, it has been argued that the golden era of collegiality never really existed, as universities were typically run by the ‘old boys’ clubs’ that often excluded women and temporary faculty from decision-making. As a result, agendas could easily be manipulated and certain groups of faculty disempowered (Trowler, 2010; see also Deem et al. 2007; Tight, 2014). In addition, due to the fragmentation of universities as organizations, it is hard to speak of collegiality at the central level (Clark, 2001). Moreover, even if collegiality is more in

line with traditional academic values, it may prove “slow and inefficient” in today’s fast-changing academic world (Trowler, 2010, p. 202; see also Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Henkel, 2000).

The often assumed inherently negative nature of managerialism and the positive attributes of collegial and academic values, and the resulting oppositional relationship between managerialism and collegiality, should therefore be questioned, as should suggestions that this dichotomy is “natural” (Santiago et al., 2006, p. 245). For example, as shown above, managerialism can be used to bring about changes that benefit students and disadvantaged groups (Deem & Brehony, 2005). On the other hand, the principles characteristic of academic professionalism may be perceived as a threat in certain contexts (Ek et al., 2013). In other cases, managerialism and collegiality may overlap and appear to reinforce each other (Henkel, 2000; Machovcová et al., 2019), or one may overshadow the other despite explicit efforts to prevent this (Saunders & Sin, 2015).

2.2.3.3 Looking Deeper Into – and Beyond – Managerialism and Collegiality

These findings caution us against generalizations about managerialism as an important source of influence on AMM roles and, more generally, on the contexts in which they operate, and draw our attention to the recognition that managerialism is not “a monolithic ideology” (Deem & Brehony, 2005, p. 220). Even when academic managers adopt managerialist initiatives, the way they interpret and implement them can vary considerably from one manager to another and the specific context in which they find themselves (Deem & Brehony, 2005; Prichard, 2000; Prichard & Willmott, 1997; Trowler, 2010). It is therefore not helpful to speak of “managerialists” and “collegialists” (Trowler, 2010, p. 207), as individuals’ positions and attitudes may change over time and space. If we want to understand the experience of managerialism as lived by individual AMMs, research should try to shed light on the specific historical (Deem

& Brehony, 2005), “cultural and political circumstances” (Santiago et al., 2006, p. 227) as well as “environmental complexity, institutional type, size, and prestige” and “disciplinary background” of individual AMMs and their units (De Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009, p. 360). Only in this way can we move the discussion on managerialism and the role of AMMs in it from abstract, generic statements to specificity (De Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009).

Moreover, persisting to analyse AMMs’ experiences in the context of the often ideologically tinged debate of ‘managerialism versus collegiality’ may limit our understanding of the actual roles and commitments of AMMs (Clegg & McAuley, 2005). Clegg and McAuley (2005) encourage us to consider AMMs not only as champions of collegiality or/and messengers of managerialism, arguing that they can also be, for example, “self-interested agent[s] of control” and/or “repositories of organisational wisdom” (p. 19). These calls for a more nuanced portrayal of AMMs set the tone for the following exploration of the multitude of personal and contextual factors that can influence how AMMs interpret and fulfil their responsibilities, be they managerialist, collegial or otherwise.

2.2.4 Elements Influencing Academic Middle Managers

Given the many different ways in which AMMs may perform their jobs (Degn, 2015; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020; Huang & Pang, 2016; Kekäle, 1999), in this subsection I outline a number of elements potentially relevant to the roles and experiences of AMMs as recognized in the existing literature. I explore both the more personal and the contextual aspects, the latter represented by broader organizational and societal circumstances. I conclude the subsection by examining how the multiplicity of potentially influential elements has been addressed in the AMM literature in relation to levels of analysis.

2.2.4.1 Personal Factors

I begin with influences that can be considered part of the AMMs' personal particulars, although some of these lie at the intersection of and are relevant to several levels of analysis. As indicated earlier (section 2.2.1), AMMs' performance of the role may be influenced by their dedication to *personal academic endeavours* such as research and teaching (Davies & Thomas, 2009; Deem et al., 2001; Sotirakou, 2004) and their *disciplinary background* (Birds, 2014; Bobe & Kober, 2020; Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; De Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Deem et al., 2001; Ruby, 2021). In addition, there is the influence of "parallel" and "historical hierarchies" (Branson et al., 2016, p. 134; see also Carvalho & Santiago, 2010a; Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; Freeman et al., 2020). Parallel hierarchies denote the level of academic appointment of an individual AMM – for example Professor or Associate Professor – suggesting that an individual's academic seniority may have an impact on how they perform their management role. For example, difficult situations may arise when an AMM is responsible for managing faculty who are academically senior to them. Historical hierarchies refer to the time an AMM has spent at the institution. They can strongly influence an AMM's standing among their colleagues, as long presence at a university is likely to lead to strong, influential connections and networks. More generally, the ever-changing *power positions* between AMMs and other organizational members play an important role (Kekäle, 1998). *Time spent in academia* (Bobe & Kober, 2020), *time in the AMM role* (Degn, 2013, 2015) and *previous experience in the same role at a different institution* (Gmelch, 2000) may be another set of explanatory factors for differences between AMMs. The latter is also related to whether an AMM was *elected or appointed* – and for how long (Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; Jackson, 1999), and whether an AMM comes *from within or outside the institution* (Gmelch, 2000).

In addition, AMMs' *personal values, commitments and identities* can play an important role and sometimes lead to discrepancies with the values and commitments expected of

their role as AMMs (de Guzman & Hapan, 2014; Floyd, 2009, 2012; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Freeman et al., 2020; Gmelch, 2000; Mackay, 2021; Montez et al., 2003; Parker, 2004; Prichard, 2000; Ruby, 2021; Shipley, 2000; Sotirakou, 2004; Wolverton et al., 2000). On the other hand, AMMs may use their authority to defend and promote their *self-interests and agendas* (Clegg & McAuley, 2005; De Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009; De Boer et al., 2010). Connected to this is the influence of a range of closely related and often overlapping factors associated with AMMs' *career aspirations and trajectories* (Campbell & Ampaw, 2016; Davies & Thomas, 2009; Deem et al., 2007; Floyd, 2009, 2012; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011), and more broadly with their *skills, qualities, experiences, preferences, priorities and developmental needs* (Bolden et al., 2008; Branson et al., 2016; Carvalho & Santiago, 2010a; Floyd, 2012, 2016; Griffiths, 2012; Knight & Trowler, 2001; Middlehurst, 1993; Ryan, 1980). In addition, there are the AMMs' *networks and relationships* (Bolden et al., 2008; Branson et al., 2016; Thomas-Gregory, 2014), *personalities* (Branson et al., 2016; Griffiths, 2012; Middlehurst, 1993), *personal biographies and life trajectories* (Deem et al., 2001; Deem et al., 2007; Floyd, 2009, 2012; Griffiths, 2012; Mignot-Gérard, 2010; Prichard, 2000; Thomas-Gregory, 2014), *personal styles and political skills* (Knight & Trowler, 2001). Another factor influencing AMMs' experiences and attitudes is *gender*, with women more likely to face additional pressures due to personal, organizational, and/or broader societal circumstances (Barry et al., 2006; Deem, 2003; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Griffiths, 2009, 2012; Prichard, 2000; Ruby, 2021). Other elements that might differentiate the experiences of AMMs include *ethnicity* (Deem & Brehony, 2005; Gmelch, 2000; Griffiths, 2012; Knight & Trowler, 2001), *age* (Bobe & Kober, 2020; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Griffiths, 2012; Knight & Trowler, 2001), *class and sexuality* (Griffiths, 2012).

2.2.4.2 Contextual Factors

AMMs can also be influenced by a range of *organizational factors*, such as *organizational strategies, statutes, systems, processes and structures*, including *finances, human resources, information*

systems and physical space (Bolden et al., 2008; Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; Degn, 2015; Kekäle, 1998; Knight & Trowler, 2001; Machovcová et al., 2019; Mignot-Gérard, 2010; Ryan, 1980) as well as *organizational culture, ethos, history, priorities and values* (Bolden et al., 2008; Branson et al., 2016; Deem et al., 2007; Degn, 2015; Floyd, 2012; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Griffiths, 2012; Mignot-Gérard, 2010). Related to this is the relevance of the *institution's prestige or attempts to enhance its reputation* (De Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009; Thomas-Gregory, 2014) and its *type* (for example former polytechnics versus charter universities in the UK [Deem & Brehony, 2005; Deem et al., 2007; Smith, 2002, 2005; Sotirakou, 2004], see also section 5.1.4.2, and research institutions versus liberal arts institutions in the US [Bray, 2008, 2010]). The *size of the university and the specific organizational unit* have also been identified as important factors in how AMMs approach their position (Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; Del Favero, 2005; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Middlehurst, 1993; Ryan, 1980; Way, 2010).

In addition, there is the importance of the *academic (sub)discipline or subject and/or the specific (funding, decision-making) structures, cultures and organization of the unit* (Bolden et al., 2008; Carvalho & Santiago, 2010a; Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; De Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009; Deem, 2003; Del Favero, 2005, 2006; Floyd, 2012; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Kekäle, 1998, 1999, 2003; Machovcová et al., 2019; Middlehurst, 1993; Prichard & Willmott, 1997; Ryan, 1980; Way, 2010). AMMs are also inevitably influenced by a range of internal organizational factions: by the *leadership above them* (Middlehurst, 1993; Sotirakou, 2004) as well as by *faculty members below them* (Kekäle, 1998; Middlehurst, 1993; Ryan, 1980) – among whom there may be *different groups* – and also by *administrators, business managers and students* (Sotirakou, 2004). Similarly, AMMs can be influenced by *colleagues who hold management positions at the same level of the hierarchy* (Branson et al., 2016; Hancock & Hellawell, 2003; Prichard & Willmott, 1997; Ryan, 1980). Additionally, for department heads, the *climate and culture of the department* (Campbell & Ampaw, 2016; Ek et al., 2013; Floyd, 2012, 2016; Gonaim, 2016; Knight

& Trowler, 2001; Middlehurst, 1993), the *divisions within a department* (Middlehurst, 1993), and the *history of these subgroups* (Knight & Trowler, 2001) may be important.

Furthermore, AMMs may be accountable to *external agencies* (Sotirakou, 2004), such as *professional and accreditation bodies and institutions responsible for quality assurance and research assessment* (Davies & Thomas, 2009). Moreover, together with the universities to which they belong, they are embedded in broader *local, regional and national communities*, as well as in *society at large* (Birds, 2014). They are therefore influenced by *external social, cultural and political processes* (Bolden et al., 2008; Mignot-Gérard, 2010; Ryan, 1980; Santiago et al., 2006), such as *managerialism* (Deem et al., 2007; Meek, Goedegebuure, et al., 2010a) and *various notions of management and leadership* (Bolden et al., 2008; Kekäle, 2003; Saunders & Sin, 2015), and are subject to *formal laws* (Kekäle, 1998). Recently, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the response to a *public health crisis* has come to the fore as another contextual factor with a significant impact on the role of AMMs (Dumulescu & Muțiu, 2021; Gigliotti, 2021).

2.2.4.3 *Analysing the Influences on Academic Middle Managers*

As already indicated, different authors have dealt with different aspects of AMMs' jobs and the factors influencing them. In some cases, selected factors are examined in detail, while in several cases potentially influential elements are mentioned in passing but not elaborated analytically. While some studies focus on system-level insights (Boffo, 2010; De Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009; Larsen, 2010; Montez et al., 2003; Ngo et al., 2014; Pechar, 2010), others combine such analyses with research into the characteristics of different organizational units within the same university (Ek et al., 2013) or across multiple universities and disciplines (Machovcová et al., 2019). Some look at system-level characteristics through the lens of (dis)similarity between different types of institutions (Carvalho & Santiago, 2010a; Deem et al., 2007; Degn, 2013, 2015; Jackson, 1999; Smith, 2002, 2005; Verhoeven, 2010). In addition, the study of different

institutional types is sometimes associated with disciplinary influence (Bray, 2008, 2010), while others focus on the role of the academic discipline as such (Del Favero, 2005, 2006; Kekäle, 1999). Another line of work analyses the influence of AMMs' personal circumstances in combination with organizational factors (Floyd, 2012; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Gmelch & Parkay, 1999; Thomas-Gregory, 2014; Trembath & Mewburn, 2017). Some texts focus predominantly on a range of personal experiences or elements (Gmelch, 2000; Lyons, 2008), of which some concentrate largely on one selected aspect, for example gender, although the latter has also been associated with organizational and/or broader social circumstances (Barry et al., 2006; Deem, 2003; Griffiths, 2009, 2012). A minority of studies address multiple analytical levels simultaneously, offering insights into the interplay between different personal, organizational and societal circumstances (Birds, 2014; Bolden et al., 2008; Mason, 2017).

2.3 Approaches to the Study of Academic Middle Managers

The literature on AMMs employs a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches that have provided insights into the issues discussed above in relation to AMM positions and roles. I begin this section with an overview of the concepts and theories employed in this area of research before describing the methodologies used and the research foci examined.

2.3.1 Concepts and Theories

To begin with, the literature review shows that several studies on AMMs do not use a specific conceptual or theoretical framework. Some draw on a selected concept in very general terms or mention it only in passing but do not apply it. Others contextualize their analyses within a broader discussion of AMM by comparing their data with the

work of other researchers, rather than analysing the data with reference to a specific theory. Although they offer important – and in many cases original – insights, a significant number of texts in the field remain predominantly descriptive (Bessant & Mavin, 2016; Boyko & Jones, 2010; da Motta & Bolan, 2008; Griffiths, 2009; Jackson, 1999; Smith, 2007; Smith, 2002, 2005). However, the rest of the extensive AMM literature uses a variety of theories and concepts. While I do not intend to provide an exhaustive overview of the theoretical and conceptual approaches used in the study of AMM, I identify and describe some of the most prominent among them: managerialism, leadership and identity. I conclude the subsection with an overview of a selection of other analytical frameworks applied in AMM research.

2.3.1.1 Academic Middle Managers and Managerialism

As indicated in some of the previous subsections of this chapter, the concept of managerialism provides an important focus and context for the study of AMMs. A seminal source of insights into the extent to which managerialist reforms have affected – among other – AMM positions are publications based on the *New Managerialism and the Management of UK Universities* project (Deem et al., 2001; Deem et al., 2007). Some of the texts published by Deem and colleagues link managerialism to other concepts such as gender (Deem, 2003), ideology (Deem & Brehony, 2005) and different conceptualizations of students (Johnson & Deem, 2003). The findings of the project offer deep insights into managerialism in UK universities and paint a complex picture in which managerialism interacts with collegial and academic professional values. Another project looking at the impact of managerialism on AMMs was the seminar *The Manager-Academic: Corporate Lackey or Academe's Champion?* which resulted in an international compilation of texts published in the edited volume *The Changing Dynamics of Higher Education Middle Management* (Meek, Goedegebuure, et al., 2010a). The volume features studies of AMMs in eleven countries and paints an intricate picture revealing

numerous variations of managerialism as manifested in different higher education systems and the institutions within them.

In addition to these two major efforts to show the impact of managerialism on AMMs, there are a number of individual studies that use managerialism as one of the core concepts (Barry et al., 2001; Carvalho & Santiago, 2010b; Machovcová et al., 2019; Prichard & Willmott, 1997; Ruby, 2021; Santiago et al., 2006). Many other publications contextualize their analyses in relation to managerialist reforms, even if they do not apply managerialism as an analytical concept (Barry et al., 2006; Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; Degn, 2013, 2015; Ek et al., 2013; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020; Jackson, 1999; Prichard, 2000; Saunders & Sin, 2015; Sotirakou, 2004; Thomas-Gregory, 2014).

2.3.1.2 Academic Middle Managers as Leaders

Given the increasing importance of AMMs' role as leaders in universities, it is not surprising that another frequently used concept in the study of AMMs is leadership (de Guzman & Hapan, 2014; Kekäle, 1998, 1999; Knight & Trowler, 2001; Wisdom, 2007). Several publications have addressed issues related to functional (Scholkmann, 2011) or effective leadership (Bryman, 2007; Gonaim, 2016; Rosser et al., 2003). Among those, some apply a specific framework, the Competing Values Framework, which offers insights into different leadership styles (De Boer et al., 2010; Kallenberg, 2007, 2015; Ngo et al., 2014). Other leadership-related conceptualizations are also used, such as distributed leadership (Bolden et al., 2008; Thornton et al., 2018), which emphasizes leadership as an activity exercised by a range of different actors, rather than something done exclusively by individuals appointed to leadership positions; leadership as a relational phenomenon (Branson et al., 2016), which focuses on leadership as something constructed through the leader's relationships with other relevant actors; and strategic (Mason, 2017) and transformational leadership (Quinn, 2007), both of which

explore whether and how AMMs can achieve meaningful organizational change. As indicated above, some texts in this body of literature take a functionalist stance on leadership, focusing predominantly on its functionality and effectiveness (Bryman, 2007; Ngo et al., 2014; Scholkmann, 2011), while others emphasize the constructed, subjective nature of how one understands and performs their leadership activities (Bolden et al., 2008; Branson et al., 2016; Knight & Trowler, 2001).

2.3.1.3 Academic Middle Managers' Identities

Finally, several AMM studies have drawn on the concept of identity and focused their attention on the potentially different meanings that individual AMMs ascribe to their roles (Bolden et al., 2008; Degn, 2015; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020). Different authors have taken different, albeit related, approaches to identity. To give some examples, highlighting the meaning-making inherent in identity construction, Degn (2013, 2015) draws on the concept of “sensemaking” and explores how AMMs make sense of their position. Henkel (2000) uses “academic identity” to illuminate the connections between the individual, the academic discipline and the university as an organization. Bolden et al. (2008) speak of “social identity” and examine AMMs’ sense of group membership in relation to other university managers. Several studies explore the “professional identities” of AMMs and define identity in relation to an AMM’s profession and work (Floyd, 2009, 2012; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Machovcová et al., 2019; Thomas-Gregory, 2014). Some of them link professional identity to “personal identity” (Floyd, 2009, 2012; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011) or the “self” (Thomas-Gregory, 2014), referring to the connections and/or possible conflicts between one’s sense of self in relation to one’s role at work and outside the workplace. “Role identity” explores the meanings AMMs ascribe to the variety of different roles they perform as part of their position as AMMs (Huang & Pang, 2016). Brown et al. (2021) explore the discursive construction of “preferred identities,” that is AMMs’ narratives about who they “want to be, and to be seen to be” (p. 824).

Overall, most studies on the identities of AMMs acknowledge that each individual has multiple identities (Brown et al., 2021; Deem et al., 2007; Floyd, 2009, 2012; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Huang & Pang, 2016; Machovcová et al., 2019; Prichard, 2000; Thomas-Gregory, 2014; Trembath & Mewburn, 2017), which are fluid and unstable (Barry et al., 2006; Brown et al., 2021; Deem et al., 2007; Degn, 2013, 2015; Parker, 2004; Prichard, 2000; Prichard & Willmott, 1997; Thomas-Gregory, 2014), context-dependent (Barry et al., 2006; Brown et al., 2021; Deem et al., 2007; Degn, 2015; Prichard, 2000) and socially constructed through the continuous interplay between structural and agentic forces, that is between societal, organizational and personal pushes and pulls (Bolden et al., 2008; Brown et al., 2021; Deem et al., 2007; Thomas-Gregory, 2014), where AMMs can be both targets and agents of change (Degn, 2013, 2015; Prichard, 2000; Prichard & Willmott, 1997). In addition to the above studies, several other authors refer to identity, but without positioning it as a central concept in their analyses (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Del Favero, 2006; Gmelch & Parkay, 1999; Knight & Trowler, 2001).

2.3.1.4 Academic Middle Managers Through the Lens of Other Concepts

Adding to the three analytical frameworks described above, several AMM studies link their findings to insights from theories of middle management in settings outside higher education (Clegg & McAuley, 2005; De Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009; Hancock & Hellawell, 2003). Others contextualize their studies within the frameworks of institutional or organizational cultures (Del Favero, 2005; Ek et al., 2013; Griffiths, 2012). Some apply career transition theories, often in combination with the concept of (organizational) socialization (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Campbell & Ampaw, 2016; Del Favero, 2006; Floyd, 2009, 2012; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Gmelch, 2000; Gmelch & Parkay, 1999). In addition, there are studies that draw on role theory, particularly concepts of role conflict, role ambiguity and/or role expectations (Montez

et al., 2003; Ryan, 1980; Sotirakou, 2004). Finally, AMM positions and roles have also been analysed in relation to norms (Bray, 2008, 2010, 2012).

2.3.2 Methodologies and Research Foci

AMM researchers have employed various methodological techniques, some of which I present below. Following this, and closely related to the methodologies used, I describe the research foci and types of data presentation chosen by AMM scholars.

2.3.2.1 Methodological Approaches to the Study of Academic Middle Managers

Three methodological approaches dominate studies on AMM: surveys, interviews and document analysis. Several authors conducted surveys of AMMs on a range of different topics related to AMMs' perceptions of their position and role (Bessant & Mavin, 2016; Bobe & Kober, 2020; Campbell & Ampaw, 2016; Del Favero, 2005, 2006; Gigliotti, 2021; Kallenberg, 2015; Montez et al., 2003; Ngo et al., 2014; Santiago et al., 2006; Scholkmann, 2011; Smith, 2002; Sotirakou, 2004; Verhoeven, 2010). Others surveyed faculty and administrative staff to explore their perspectives on AMMs (Bray, 2008, 2010; Rosser et al., 2003).

Another important source of data is interviews with AMMs, usually semi-structured (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Barry et al., 2006; Barry et al., 2001; Bolden et al., 2008; Brown et al., 2021; Carvalho & Santiago, 2010a, 2010b; Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; Degn, 2013, 2015; Dumulescu & Muşiu, 2021; Ek et al., 2013; Floyd, 2016; Freeman et al., 2020; Hancock & Hellawell, 2003; Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Huang & Pang, 2016; Jackson, 1999; Machovcová et al., 2019; Meek, Goedegebuure, & De Boer, 2010; Mignot-Gérard, 2010; Prichard, 2000; Prichard & Willmott, 1997; Ruby, 2021; Stratford, 2012; Thomas-Gregory, 2014; Wald & Golding, 2020). Fewer researchers base their analyses on interviews with both AMMs and their managers, faculty and/or support staff (Deem et al., 2001; Deem et al., 2007; Gjerde & Alvesson,

2020; Kekäle, 1998, 1999; Seale & Cross, 2016; Smith, 2005; Thornton et al., 2018; Whitchurch & Gordon, 2017). Only a few studies use more in-depth, life history interviews (Floyd, 2009, 2012; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011) or multiple interviews with selected AMMs over a longer period of time (Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020; Gmelch & Parkay, 1999). Focus groups as a form of group interview have also been conducted in the study of AMMs (Saunders & Sin, 2015; Thornton et al., 2018).

Several studies rely on document analysis as one of the main sources of data (Boyko & Jones, 2010; Huang & Pang, 2016; Jackson, 1999; Meek, Goedegebuure, & De Boer, 2010; Mignot-Gérard, 2010; Thornton et al., 2018). A number of studies combine several of the above methodological techniques, for example interviews and surveys (Seale & Cross, 2016), focus groups and interviews (Deem et al., 2001; Deem et al., 2007), interviews and document analysis (Gmelch & Parkay, 1999; Huang & Pang, 2016; Jackson, 1999; Meek, Goedegebuure, & De Boer, 2010), survey, interviews and document analysis (Mignot-Gérard, 2010) or a combination of survey, interviews, focus groups and document analysis (Thornton et al., 2018).

Fewer studies use observational techniques. Some of these rely on observation and reflection on the authors' own practices as AMMs, either in combination with interviews with other actors involved (Birds, 2014) or with interviews with AMMs, that is authors themselves, conducted by another researcher (Branson et al., 2016; Gmelch, 2000). A few analyses supplement the core data collection techniques of interviews and document analysis with observations (Prichard, 2000; Wisdom, 2007). In addition, few studies were found where authors relied on shadowing a single AMM (Trembath & Mewburn, 2017) or ethnography (Peacock, 2013, 2016) as the main method of data collection.

2.3.2.2 Research Foci and Data Presentation in Academic Middle Management Studies

In terms of research focus, many AMM studies concentrate on managerialism and related changes, in fairly general terms (Barry et al., 2001; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Deem et al., 2001; Deem et al., 2007; Degn, 2013, 2015; Meek, Goedegebuure, et al., 2010a). Others offer analyses of the complex position and roles of AMMs, but often with limited insights into the context specifics that influence their experiences (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Branson et al., 2016; da Motta & Bolan, 2008; de Guzman & Hapan, 2014; Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020; Gmelch, 2000; Stratford, 2012; Thornton et al., 2018). Fewer texts provide detailed insights into the activities of AMMs in relation to one or more specific topics, narrowing and deepening the focus of the research. These topics include: managing research performance (Jackson, 1999; Machovcová et al., 2019; Prichard & Willmott, 1997), implementing a quality enhancement framework (Saunders & Sin, 2015), managing people and relationships (Whitchurch & Gordon, 2017), using technology (Trembath & Mewburn, 2017) and change management (Birds, 2014). The work of Knight and Trowler (2001) provides an overview of a number of important roles performed by department heads specifically: leading assessment, learning and teaching, research and scholarship, and professional staff development. In addition to these texts, the monographic format of some of the broader studies enables insight into more specific behaviours of AMMs. For example, Deem et al. (2007) among other look at the day-to-day activities of AMMs, such as resource and people management, Henkel (2000) examines AMMs' roles in relation to appraisal and performance management, and Lucas (2006) addresses the engagement of department heads and their influence on research management and strategy development.

The choice of methods and research focus is also linked to the choice of the format of data presentation. In reference to this, it is important to note that the vast majority of literature illustrates the perceptions and experiences of AMMs by offering

accounts that blend the stories of a number of AMMs (Bolden et al., 2008; Degn, 2013, 2015; Floyd, 2012; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011), rather than presenting the data in a way that would allow a fuller understanding of the accounts and circumstances of individual AMMs (for exceptions, see Birds, 2014; Floyd, 2009; Gmelch, 2000; Gmelch & Parkay, 1999; Trembath & Mewburn, 2017).

2.4 Identifying the Knowledge Gaps

In the final section of this chapter, I summarize what is known and what is not yet understood in the study of AMM. Following the presentation of the existing conceptual and methodological shortcomings, I explain how this study addresses the identified knowledge gaps.

2.4.1 What Do We Know – and What Do We Not Know?

The literature review recognizes the important yet highly complex and constantly evolving role that AMMs play in university governance as individuals who manage the basic units of universities. It points out that AMMs are likely to face various tensions in the performance of their roles, including tensions related to the expectation that AMMs simultaneously maintain both their academic credentials and career and their managerial credentials and career (Deem et al., 2007; Degn, 2015; Sotirakou, 2004), potential conflicts arising from AMMs representing both the university top management and their department colleagues (Hancock & Hellowell, 2003; Montez et al., 2003; Smith, 2005), and the broader debate around AMMs being situated between managerialist ideas on the one hand and collegial and academic values on the other (Carvalho & Santiago, 2010a; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Machovcová et al., 2019).

Despite the extensive knowledge of AMM that previous research has produced, there are still some limitations to our understanding of the phenomenon.

Overall, much of the existing research provides rather general and abstract accounts of AMM positions. Although, as shown earlier (sections 2.2.4.1, 2.2.4.2), several studies acknowledge that perceptions and practices of AMMs may depend on numerous personal and contextual elements, these are rarely explored in their multiplicity and interaction. Studies of AMMs as embedded in managerialist settings – a context relevant to the present study – often reflect this trend. Thus, if we want to better understand AMMs’ commitment to managerialist endeavours, we should pay more attention to the specific circumstances in which individual AMMs find themselves (Creton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; De Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Santiago et al., 2006). Such an approach would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of AMMs, the factors that influence them, and the role of AMMs in potentially transforming the organizations to which they belong. Moreover, it would facilitate further exploration of the often quite generalized debates about managerialism and collegiality as opposing value systems, including by recognizing the potential for a variety of more diversified attitudes and roles of AMMs (Clegg & McAuley, 2005).

2.4.2 Conceptual Shortfalls

Some of the most commonly used concepts in the study of AMM – that is some conceptualizations of leadership and even more of identity – recognize the multiplicity, fluidity, context-dependence and socially constructed nature of AMMs’ positions and roles through the continuous interplay of personal, organizational and societal forces (Barry et al., 2006; Brown et al., 2021; Knight & Trowler, 2001; Prichard, 2000; Prichard & Willmott, 1997; Thomas-Gregory, 2014). Nevertheless, these theoretical insights sometimes seem to be used in a rather unsystematic or limited way, limiting access to deeper, more complex knowledge about AMMs’ experiences. Accounts of AMMs’ identities sometimes remain under-theorized (Deem et al., 2007; Machovcová et al., 2019) or do not sufficiently analytically develop some of the theoretical assumptions they make (Deem et al., 2007; Degn, 2013, 2015; Knight & Trowler, 2001).

Despite some exceptions (Bolden et al., 2008; Floyd, 2009; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Knight & Trowler, 2001; Trembath & Mewburn, 2017), discussions of the multiplicity of AMMs' positions or orientations in practice often focus on a limited number of dualisms, such as being an academic or being a manager, being a manager or being a colleague, and/or holding managerialist or collegial values (Deem et al., 2007; Degn, 2013, 2015; Machovcová et al., 2019). Regarding the fluidity of an AMM's experience, while several authors accept this view, few present the data in a way that reveals the processual nature of the phenomenon under study (Floyd, 2009, 2012; Gmelch, 2000; Gmelch & Parkay, 1999; Prichard, 2000; Thomas-Gregory, 2014; Trembath & Mewburn, 2017). Instead, most accounts read rather statically, seemingly offering only a glimpse of a particular moment in the life of an AMM (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Barry et al., 2006; Bolden et al., 2008; Deem et al., 2007; Degn, 2013, 2015; Prichard & Willmott, 1997; Santiago et al., 2006; Stratford, 2012; Thornton et al., 2018). Closely related to fluidity are both the context-dependent and socially constructed nature of AMM positions. Although this view is nominally held (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Bolden et al., 2008; De Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009; Knight & Trowler, 2001; Middlehurst, 1993; Mignot-Gérard, 2010), there are few studies that provide comprehensive and context-rich accounts that involve simultaneous analysis of multiple analytical levels and the interplay between them. Aside from a few exceptions (Birds, 2014; Mason, 2017), there is a lack of AMM studies that combine in-depth knowledge of the personal circumstances of individual AMMs with comprehensive insights into the organizational and societal context in which AMMs are embedded.

2.4.3 Limitations of Method and Research Focus

Many of the conceptual knowledge gaps mentioned above are closely related to the choice of methodology and research focus. In terms of data collection methods, as mentioned earlier, most studies rely on surveys, semi-structured interviews and/or document analysis. Such methodological approaches are often designed to explore pre-

selected elements of one's experience related to, for example, academic discipline (Del Favero, 2005, 2006) or gender (Barry et al., 2006; Griffiths, 2009, 2012). This is not to say that the categories of analysis chosen are insignificant, but such approaches may overlook other relevant issues. Further, while several researchers who use survey or interview techniques suggest that these methods enable insights into the practices of AMMs (Deem et al., 2007; Degn, 2015; Del Favero, 2005; Ngo et al., 2014), others acknowledge another limitation of such methodological choices: findings can offer insights into AMMs' "perceptions, opinions and intentions" but not into their concrete, ever-changing, context-dependent behaviours (Santiago et al., 2006, p. 246; see also Verhoeven, 2010). Thus, there remains a knowledge gap about the behaviours of AMMs and the changing personal, organizational and societal contexts in which they operate. Despite calls for observational and ethnographic research on AMMs and related phenomena (Bolden et al., 2008; Ryan, 1980), such studies remain scarce.

With the exception of Peacock (2013, 2016) and Trembath and Mewburn (2017), which draw on an in-depth ethnography of the Max Planck Society research organization and a week-long shadowing of a single AMM at an Australian university, respectively, studies of AMM lack, to my knowledge, detailed insights into the daily work of individual AMMs. In other studies where observational techniques were used to complement interviews and document analysis, the observation time was often very limited. In Wisdom's (2007) study, for example, interviews were supplemented by one-day visits to each of the three institutions studied. In another case, the scope of observations was not clearly stated, with four visits to one college and only "observation" – with no time specified – mentioned in relation to another institution studied (Prichard, 2000, p. 203).

In addition to the lack of observational studies of AMMs that would allow for an in-depth, contextualized and processual account of their behaviours, the choice of research focus and the format of data presentation have further obscured certain aspects

of the lived experience of AMMs. As shown earlier (section 2.3.2.2), most studies have taken a rather broad approach, resulting in abstract representations of AMM positions (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Barry et al., 2001; Meek, Goedegebuure, et al., 2010a; Stratford, 2012; Thornton et al., 2018). Some studies have partially mitigated the level of abstraction by adopting a more specific and narrow research focus, for example the role of AMMs in performance, people or change management (Jackson, 1999; Knight & Trowler, 2001; Saunders & Sin, 2015; Whitchurch & Gordon, 2017). These studies provide more detailed accounts of AMMs' attitudes towards the topics explored and thus bring the reader closer to the daily reality of AMMs, but few of them convey the dynamic interplay between the specific personal and (extra-)organizational circumstances that influence the actual work of AMMs (Birds, 2014; Trembath & Mewburn, 2017).

This last point relates to the way the data are presented. While more mainstream in studies of managers outside the higher education sector (Beech, 2008; Down & Reveley, 2009; Reedy, 2009; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008, 2009), accounts centred around individual AMMs and the details of the particular and evolving characteristics of their experiences remain rare. Exceptions include the work of Birds (2014), Floyd (2009), Gmelch (2000), Gmelch and Parkay (1999), and Trembath and Mewburn (2017), which offer comparatively deep insights into the lived experience of individual AMMs over an extended period of time. In other cases, even where detailed accounts were likely generated in the course of data collection, for example through life history interviews (Floyd, 2012; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011), findings are usually presented in such a way that interviewees' stories are mainly used to summarize the (dis)similarities between a number of research participants rather than to present the details of individual stories (Bolden et al., 2008; Degn, 2013, 2015; Floyd, 2012; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011).

2.4.4 Steps Forward

In view of the knowledge gaps identified above, this dissertation aims to present a more detailed and complex picture of AMM positions than is currently drawn. While acknowledging that the individual studies discussed above have merit in terms of our understanding of AMMs, the present assessment of what remains to be learned relates to the totality of AMM studies. Therefore, the present study aims to add to the existing body of knowledge on AMMs by providing a more nuanced description of AMM positions by analysing multiple potential sources of influence on them and the conflicts that arise from this multiplicity. This will be achieved by delving deeper into conceptual assumptions related to AMMs' identities by taking into account multiple, flexible, context-dependent and socially constructed nature of AMM positions in a more systematic way.

Theoretically and analytically, I use the concepts of “managerial identity” (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Thomas & Davies, 2005; Watson, 2008) and “discursive identity work” (Brown, 2017, p. 302). The former emphasizes the plurality of managerial identities and the likelihood of numerous tensions arising from this multiplicity. The latter highlights identities as ever-evolving, context-dependent constructs that emerge from language use, rather than assuming that identities are static or represent an easily definable, fixed end result. Methodologically, in order to capture the complexity and contextual contingency of individual AMMs' identities as they evolve under specific organizational and societal circumstances, I employed a rarely used combination of ethnographic techniques consisting of “shadowing” (Czarniawska, 2007; McDonald, 2005) and repeated semi-structured interviews with AMMs over an extended period of time, as well as interviews with the shadowed AMMs' colleagues hierarchically situated above and below them. These two core data generation techniques were complemented by the collection and analysis of organizational

documents and a review of literature on national higher education system developments that proved relevant to the analysis.

The theoretical framework and methodological choices just described allow for an open, bottom-up exploration of the lived experience of individual AMMs. First, the open-ended, exploratory nature of the research design, combined with the concept of managerial identity, allows for deep insights into the multiplicity of AMMs' identities and the tensions between them. Rather than limiting the discussion by focusing on pre-selected analytical categories, such an approach allows for the consideration of almost countless potential influences on AMMs' identities that originate in their personal, organizational and societal contexts. Second, the fluid nature of one's AMM position is taken seriously through insights into the processes in which AMMs engage, thus avoiding a static portrayal of AMMs. This is made possible by the explicit commitment to theoretically and methodologically explore the behaviour of AMMs in their everyday activities through the use of the concept of discursive identity work and a combination of observation, interviews and document analysis, which allows the potential gap between perception and behaviour to be bridged and provides the opportunity to gain a more diverse range of insights. Third, the theoretical and methodological choices emphasize the significance of context and its impact on individual AMMs, while also taking into account the individual circumstances of AMMs. Further, in order to avoid abstract and generalized accounts, the focus of the analysis is on individual AMMs dealing with a particular issue, namely research management, which itself was not selected before the study was conducted. Rather, it emerged as one of the most visible and contested issues during data generation and analysis. Fourthly, this leads to a clear recognition of the socially constructed nature of AMM positions and roles through the interplay between the individual and their environment, characterized by the organizational and broader societal circumstances. This approach not only provides insights into the elements of influence on individual AMMs, but also illuminates AMMs' attempts to shape these same factors of influence and their sources.

In the following two chapters I present the details of my theoretical (chapter 3) and methodological approach (chapter 4).

3 Conceptualizing Academic Middle Managers' Identities

In this chapter, I outline the central theoretical premises and related analytical guidelines that I applied to the present study of academic middle managers' (AMMs') identities. First, I provide the definition of 'identity' as found in a large body of organization and management literature, on the basis of which I conceptualize identity in this dissertation. I then address the key characteristics of identity as defined in this study. I conclude the chapter with a summary of the theoretical framework in relation to its application in the forthcoming analysis and an introduction to my research (sub)questions.

3.1 Identity in Organizations

At its core, 'identity' refers to one's notion of who one is and consequently how one should act (Alvesson et al., 2008). Although this sounds like a self-explanatory description of a term that permeates our everyday lives, it has proved contested among identity scholars. This should not be surprising, as the concept has been adopted and developed by a range of humanities and social sciences, including sociology,

anthropology, philosophy, psychology and psychoanalysis. Even within these disciplines, there are different understandings of what identity stands for or what identity research should primarily focus on (Brown, 2015, 2017, 2022; Caza et al., 2018; Corlett et al., 2017). Is an individual's identity best understood as the result of internal, unconscious processes or is a person primarily to be understood as a member of social groups such as race, gender, ethnicity? Is it we who define and create our identity or is our identity defined by others, by the social system in which we live? Are we unique as individuals or are we more alike than we realize? Does a person have a fixed, stable identity or does their identity change over time? Is identity constructed through interaction, actions, speech and/or thought processes? Should we speak of identity in the singular or does each of us carry several different identities?

In this study of AMMs' identities, I draw primarily on the identity literature from organization and management studies, where identity is recognized as one of the central phenomena for understanding the processes of organization and management at the individual and collective levels. In other words, identities are "implicated in, and thus key to understanding and explaining, almost everything that happens in and around organizations" (Brown, 2015, p. 20; cf. Alvesson & Robertson, 2016). On the one hand – although the development of the "gig economy" and "the virtualization of work," both recently accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, challenge this assumption (Ashforth, 2020) – organizations have been recognized as a significant source of identity for individuals (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Collinson, 2003; Gubrium & Holstein, 2001a; Jenkins, 2008; Webb, 2006): the organizations of which we are part to a greater or lesser extent define our identity, that is who we see ourselves as in the context of the organizations to which we belong (Alvesson et al., 2008; Brown, 2015). On the other hand, since the identities of organizational members are influenced by the organization, this simultaneously implies the process of organizing: an organization that is a source of identity with certain characteristics for its organizational members is, so to speak, one of the ways in which the organization organizes itself (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004;

Alvesson et al., 2008; Coupland & Brown, 2012; Kärreman & Alvesson, 2001; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Identity studies conducted in organizational contexts are therefore seen as potentially rich sources of insight into multiple organizational levels simultaneously: they allow us to grasp the individual in relation to multiple intra- and extra-organizational levels (Alvesson et al., 2008; Brown, 2001, 2015).

For the purposes of this study, I define identity in terms of several features:

- First, in relation to the role that AMMs occupy in their organizations, namely that of a manager, the focus of the analysis is outlined in terms of the so-called *managerial identity* (Andersson, 2010; Beech, 2008; Down & Reveley, 2009; Ellis & Ybema, 2010; Harding et al., 2014; Reedy, 2009; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Thomas & Davies, 2005; Watson, 2008).
- Second, I argue that identities pertaining to individual AMMs should be understood in the *plural*, that is identities are *multiple* (Clarke et al., 2009; Coupland & Brown, 2012; Jenkins, 2008; Parker, 1995, 1997; Thomas & Davies, 2005).
- Third, identity is described as *socially constructed*, implying that identity, like other aspects of social reality, is constructed through interactions between people (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Jenkins, 2008; Thomas & Linstead, 2002; Ybema, Keenoy, et al., 2009).
- Fourth, the latter implies that identity is characterized as an *interplay between structural and agentic forces*, that is individuals' identities are influenced by the social structures in which they find themselves, but people also have the agency to influence the construction of their identities (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Jenkins, 2008; Webb, 2006; Ybema, Keenoy, et al., 2009).
- Fifth, the above reference to 'interplay' suggests that identities are not fixed, but are better understood as a *process* commonly referred to as "identity work."

That is, identities are fluid and can change across time and space (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Brown, 2015, 2017, 2022; Down & Reveley, 2009; Ellis & Ybema, 2010; Jenkins, 2008; Snow & Anderson, 1987; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008).

- Sixth and finally, I interpret identities as *constructed through discourse*, that is individuals engaging in the production of various forms of texts, such as written or spoken (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Coupland & Brown, 2012; Ellis & Ybema, 2010; Kärreman & Alvesson, 2001; Ybema, Keenoy, et al., 2009).

While it is almost impossible to explain a single aspect of identity without reference to the other defining characteristics, in the following, for the sake of clarity, I will explain each of these aspects in turn, presenting them in pairs. First, I introduce *managerial identity* and the potential for a *multiplicity* of managerial identities. I then address the *socially constructed* nature of identity and its formation through the *interplay of structure and agency*. Finally, incorporating all the above defining characteristics of identity as conceptualized in this dissertation, I explain the *processual, discursive* nature of identity. Where appropriate, I supplement these descriptions with literature on the identities of AMMs and academic identities more broadly to account for the specific context in which this study is situated.

3.2 Managerial Identity – or Identities?

3.2.1 Defining Managerial Identity

In terms of the job AMMs perform as managers in their organizations, this research focuses on the so-called *managerial identity* (Andersson, 2010; Beech, 2008; Down & Reveley, 2009; Ellis & Ybema, 2010; Harding et al., 2014; Reedy, 2009; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Thomas & Davies, 2005; Watson, 2008). Broadly speaking, managerial

identity can be defined as “organizationally situated” and refers to “individuals constructing a sense of self that relates to performing a role or a job, in relation to others, within the organizational structure” (Atewologun et al., 2017, p. 276). More specifically, managerial identity can be seen as a person’s “sense of self in the context of doing managerial work that is influenced by organizational and social discourses concerning what managers do and what they are like” (Atewologun et al., 2017, p. 285). This managerial work may consist of an individual manager taking on multiple roles or positions within the organizational structure, and the performance of each of these roles may influence and feed into their sense of self as manager differently (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Adding to this, and thus going beyond Atewologun et al.’s (2017) definition, the next subsection acknowledges that managerial identity can be influenced by numerous additional sources of identification, creating a more comprehensive picture of who managers are (Watson, 2009).

However, before listing the many potential sources of managerial identity for AMMs, it is first necessary to discuss the use of such conceptualization of identity. Given the often negative or at least controversial undertones of managerialism in the context of higher education (Deem & Brehony, 2005; Deem et al., 2007; Parker & Jary, 1995), the choice of terminology used, that is ‘managerial’ identity, might be perceived as counterintuitive. Nevertheless, terms such as “higher education middle *managers*” (Amaral & Maassen, 2010, p. vi; emphasis added) or “academic middle *managers*” (Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Pechar, 2010; Verhoeven, 2010; emphasis added) seem to be increasingly accepted in the higher education literature. Recognizing the variety of possible ways in which AMMs perform their jobs as managers (Deem et al., 2007; Degn, 2013, 2015; Machovcová et al., 2019), these terms can be understood as neutral, referring to the position and role of AMMs in the organizational structure (Atewologun et al., 2017), rather than suggesting that a manager necessarily undertakes actions inspired by managerialist developments (Henkel, 2000; Ruby, 2021).

In the context of the above, and of particular relevance to the analysis of AMMs' identities as managerial – rather than as “academic” (Deem et al., 2007; Degn, 2015; Henkel, 2000) or “professional” (Floyd, 2012; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Machovcová et al., 2019), both of which imply that AMMs are primarily seen as members of the academic profession – is that managerial identity, as conceptualized by Atewologun et al. (2017), is an inclusive concept. Although they acknowledge that a professional identity can be at odds with a managerial identity (for AMM examples, see Degn, 2013, 2015; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011), they emphasize that investigations of professional identity need not be separate from those of managerial identity, but that professional identity can be seen as constitutive of managerial identity (Atewologun et al., 2017; see also e.g. Iedema et al., 2003; Thomas & Davies, 2005). In summary, I use the term ‘managerial identity’ as an umbrella term for one’s perceptions of self as a manager, which is likely to be influenced by one’s professional background, but also by a variety of other identity resources, which I describe in more detail below.

3.2.2 The Multiplicity of Managerial and Academic Identities

The *multiplicity of managerial identities* can be explained by the recognition that managers draw on numerous identity sources rather than just one as they perform their jobs (Alvesson et al., 2008; Beech, 2008; Bresnen et al., 2019; Brown, 2017; Webb, 2006; Ybema, Keenoy, et al., 2009). Although managerial identity is defined here as “organizationally situated” (Atewologun et al., 2017, p. 276), the organization “as a formal, abstract entity” in which managers are employed may not be the only source of their identity (Alvesson et al., 2008, p. 13; see also Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Watson, 2009). While I do not aim to reconstruct the full life histories of the AMMs studied (Reedy, 2009; Watson, 2009), in the present research I attempt to identify a range of relevant sources of identity that may stem from within or from outside the organization in which AMMs operate. AMMs are thus seen as “whole person[s]” (Watson, 2009, p. 426) and not just as embedded in an organizational context and embodied by a

managerial position within the organizational structure. As indicated in chapter 2 (section 2.4.4), this study therefore avoids establishing categories of identity before closely examining the empirics (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003).

3.2.2.1 *Managerial Identities and Their Sources*

Broadly speaking, studies of managerial identities have examined identity sources at three analytical levels: personal (micro-level), organizational (meso-level), and societal or historical (macro-level). In general, two types of analyses of managerial identities can be found: those that focus mainly on the interplay between personal and organizational factors (Clarke et al., 2009; Down & Reveley, 2009; Parker, 1995, 1997; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003), and those that consider extra-organizational or macro influences in addition to the two (Beech, 2008; Bresnen et al., 2019; Ellis & Ybema, 2010; Thomas & Davies, 2005; Thomas & Linstead, 2002; Watson, 2008, 2009).

Possible identity resources for managers include: *age and generation* (Parker, 1995, 1997; Reedy, 2009), aspects of one's *biography, personal history and life* (Parker, 1995, 1997; Reedy, 2009; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Thomas & Linstead, 2002; Watson, 2009), including *family life and/ or parenthood* (Reedy, 2009; Thomas & Linstead, 2002; Watson, 2009), *career trajectory* (Bresnen et al., 2019), *professional background* (Bresnen et al., 2019; Parker, 1995, 1997; Thomas & Davies, 2005; Thomas & Linstead, 2002) and *professional identity* (Bresnen et al., 2019; Thomas & Davies, 2005; Thomas & Linstead, 2002), which in turn can have multiple meanings (Parker, 1997), *organizational role* (Bresnen et al., 2019; Parker, 1995, 1997; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008), its *hierarchical status and managers' time in the role* (Bresnen et al., 2019), *organizational characteristics*, including *organizations' specialisms, client groups, service provision differentiation, vulnerability to various external pressures and organizational strategies* (Bresnen et al., 2019), and managers' *attitudes towards the organizational history, mission and vision, the spatial and geographical location of the unit in relation to other units, the department and the technologies used* (Parker, 1995, 1997),

a variety of often conflicting *organizational guidelines and values*, such as *professionalism versus unprofessionalism*, *concern for people versus concern for the business* (Clarke et al., 2009) or *command-and-control management versus self-responsibility* (Down & Reveley, 2009), *broader organizational and societal trends* such as *New Public Management* (Bresnen et al., 2019; Thomas & Davies, 2005; Thomas & Linstead, 2002), *management and leadership discourses*, with the former typically associated with administration and operations and the latter characterized by notions of vision and strategy (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003), *management concepts* such as *Lean* (van Grinsven et al., 2020) and other *political and cultural developments* (Reedy, 2009; Watson, 2009), *cultural stereotypes* (Watson, 2008) and *social categories such as class, ethnicity and gender* (Thomas & Linstead, 2002; Watson, 2008).

3.2.2.2 Sources of Academic Middle Management and Academic Identities

In relation to AMMs' managerial identities specifically, chapter 2 (sections 2.2.4.1, 2.2.4.2) provides an extensive list of factors that may, in one way or another, influence how AMMs go about their job and, in the process, construct their identities as managers. The variety of elements listed there suggests that AMMs' identities (Floyd, 2012; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Huang & Pang, 2016; Machovcová et al., 2019; Prichard, 2000; Thomas-Gregory, 2014; Trembath & Mewburn, 2017) and academic identities more broadly are plural (Clegg, 2008; Musselin & Becquet, 2008; Pick et al., 2017; Winkler, 2013; Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013), with the academic profession becoming increasingly diversified and fragmented (Clark, 1983, 1987; Deem et al., 2007; Henkel, 2000, 2009, 2010). The selected literature on academic and AMMs' identities discussed below adds to the general managerial identity literature by outlining a selection of potential identity sources for AMMs, some of which are closely related to those mentioned above, while others are specific to academia and universities as organizations.

Academic and AMM identities can be influenced by factors that include: *life history, including childhood experiences, education, family and parenthood* (Clegg, 2008; Floyd, 2012; Pick et al., 2017; Prichard, 2000; Thomas-Gregory, 2014; Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013), *career background, path and experience* (Degn, 2013, 2015; Floyd, 2012; Humphreys & Brown, 2002; Musselin & Becquet, 2008; Pick et al., 2017; Thomas-Gregory, 2014), *age* (Archer, 2008; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011), *personal values and beliefs* (Degn, 2015; Pick et al., 2017), *contract status* (Archer, 2008; Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013), *position in the academic hierarchy* (Branson et al., 2016; Deem et al., 2007; Degn, 2018; Musselin & Becquet, 2008; Winkler, 2013), *personal networks* (Clegg, 2008; Degn, 2018), *technologies used* (Trembath & Mewburn, 2017), (the types of) *activities and roles* performed, such as *research, teaching, administration and/or management* (Bamber et al., 2017; Clarke & Knights, 2015; Clegg, 2008; Deem et al., 2007; Harley, 2002; Henkel, 2000; Huang & Pang, 2016; Humphreys & Brown, 2002; Jawitz, 2009; Musselin & Becquet, 2008; Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013), for academics in management roles, the status of *election or appointment* (Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020), and the *nature of motivation for taking on a management role* (Deem et al., 2007; Floyd, 2012), and in cases where academics originally come from a different professional background, their *activities and identities as practitioners* (Clegg, 2008; Ennals et al., 2016; Harley, 2002; Jawitz, 2009; Thomas-Gregory, 2014).

Although *disciplines* are internally fragmented, subject to different interpretations (Clegg, 2008; Henkel, 2000; Jawitz, 2009; Musselin & Becquet, 2008; Winkler, 2013) and some are increasingly becoming part of inter- and transdisciplinary communities (Henkel, 2009), they are known to significantly influence academic and AMM identities (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Clark, 1983; Clegg, 2008; Deem et al., 2007; Degn, 2013; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Henkel, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2012; Humphreys & Brown, 2002; Musselin & Becquet, 2008; Pick et al., 2017; Välimaa, 1998; Winkler, 2013). *Organization* is usually a less dominant source of identity than disciplinary background (Clark, 1983; Degn, 2013; Henkel, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2012; Musselin & Becquet, 2008), however *institution type, organizational values, cultures, policies, strategies and*

plans are potentially relevant factors in identity formation (Clegg, 2008; Deem et al., 2007; Degn, 2015, 2018; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Henkel, 2000; Jawitz, 2009; Musselin & Becquet, 2008; Pick et al., 2017; Thomas-Gregory, 2014; Välimaa, 1998). Given the importance of academic disciplines to academic and AMM identities, *departments* – as basic organizational units representing individual disciplines (Henkel, 2000, 2009) – and *departmental cultures* also serve as strong identity sources (Clegg, 2008; Deem et al., 2007; Degn, 2018; Floyd, 2012; Henkel, 2000, 2005, 2009; Musselin & Becquet, 2008). In addition, other organizational units such as *schools and faculties* (Floyd, 2012; Humphreys & Brown, 2002; Pick et al., 2017), as well as *intra-departmental divisions such as research groups, pathways, subject groups and modules* (Clegg, 2008; Deem et al., 2007; Humphreys & Brown, 2002; Winkler, 2013) can be important sources of identity. Another potential component that plays a role in academic identity construction is the *physical organizational space* in which academics are located (Cox et al., 2012). Furthermore, collaboration with *external organizations* feeds into the identity of some academics (Henkel, 2012).

As noted in several places in chapter 2, many of these contextual factors and the dynamics between them have changed due to *societal, political and economic developments*, such as *managerialist reforms* of higher education and specific aspects of it, for example an increased focus on academics' research performance and its measurement, leading to changes in AMM and academic identities (Archer, 2008; Barry et al., 2006; Clarke et al., 2012; Clarke & Knights, 2015; Clegg, 2008; Degn, 2018; Harley, 2002; Henkel, 2000; Knights & Clarke, 2014; Prichard, 2000; Prichard & Willmott, 1997; Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013), and the advancement of *leadership discourses* in academic contexts (Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020). Finally, as in the case of managerial identities, AMM and academic identities can be shaped by *social categories such as class* (Clegg, 2008; Pick et al., 2017; Välimaa, 1998), *gender* (Archer, 2008; Barry et al., 2006; Clegg, 2008; Deem et al., 2007; Pick et al., 2017; Prichard, 2000; Välimaa, 1998), *race* (Archer, 2008; Pick et al., 2017; Välimaa, 1998), *nationality* and *ethnicity* (Deem et al., 2007; Välimaa, 1998; Winkler, 2013).

3.2.2.3 Identity Tensions and Contradictions

Returning to the studies of managerial identities more generally, Atewologun et al. (2017) note that the latter are most often analysed by interpretivist and critical organizational scholars, who tend to focus on a variety of tensions experienced by managers and emphasize the multidimensional and sometimes contradictory nature of managerial identities (Andersson, 2010; Bresnen et al., 2019; Clarke et al., 2009; Down & Reveley, 2009; Ellis & Ybema, 2010; Harding et al., 2014; Parker, 1997; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Thomas & Davies, 2005; Thomas & Linstead, 2002; Watson, 2008). These authors argue that the multiplicity of identities is likely to lead – to a lesser or greater extent – to disintegrated managerial identities (Andersson, 2010; Down & Reveley, 2009; Thomas & Linstead, 2002; Watson, 2008). In certain cases, some parts of a manager’s identity are fragmented and flexible, while others are more integrated and secure (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). In other cases, managerial identities may include unresolved “antagonistic” positions while remaining relatively stable (Clarke et al., 2009), or managers may experience a temporary or permanent sense of “liminality” where they are caught between multiple sources of identity (Beech, 2011; Ellis & Ybema, 2010; Ybema et al., 2011).

Such tensions between different identities have also been recognized among AMMs (Degn, 2013, 2015; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Huang & Pang, 2016) and academics in general (Bamber et al., 2017; Clarke et al., 2012; Clarke & Knights, 2015; Clegg, 2008; Di Napoli & Barnett, 2008; Knights & Clarke, 2014; Learmonth & Humphreys, 2012; Pick et al., 2017). Building on the research tradition of managerial identity studies, I aim to make a further contribution to uncovering identity tensions and struggles that individual AMMs experience in the performance of their jobs. To this end, as with the identification of multiple identity resources (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003), the sources and extent of identity tensions and consequently the

(in)coherence and (dis)integration of a manager's identities will be established on an empirical basis rather than assumed in advance (Brown, 2017).

3.3 Socially Constructed, Structurally-Agentive Identities

3.3.1 The Social Construction of Identity

The idea of social construction, popularized by Berger and Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality*, assumes that social reality – and identities as elements of it – are *socially constructed*. This process takes place through interactions between people, suggesting that there is no social reality outside these interactions (Alvesson et al., 2008; Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Following classics of symbolic interactionism such as Mead's *Mind, Self, and Society* (1934) and Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956), viewing identities as socially constructed means that all identities are necessarily social, as they are always constructed through social interaction. Without interaction with others, one would not be able to think about or reflect on one's own identity, suggesting that even our own reflections on who we are are always social in nature (Alvesson et al., 2008; Gubrium & Holstein, 2001a; Jenkins, 2008; Knights & Clarke, 2017; Watson, 1997; Webb, 2006). In this sense, there is no “core” (Watson, 1997, p. 141) or “absolute self,” an “essential,” “real you” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, pp. 3–4); identities are always subject to change due to the shifting demands of the context in which one finds oneself (Alvesson et al., 2008; Gubrium & Holstein, 2001a; Thomas & Linstead, 2002). At the same time, however, such an approach does not deny the existence of an individual's “biographical particulars” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001a, p. 9; see also Jenkins, 2008; Thomas & Linstead, 2002; Webb, 2006), which can be understood as “a recurrent theme in a story which we have built over time in the light of the material, biological and other circumstances through which we have lived” (Watson, 1997, p. 141).

Much of the existing literature on individuals' identities in the context of organizations, however, continues to distinguish between what is often referred to as the difference between personal and social identity (Alvesson et al., 2008; Coupland & Brown, 2012; Webb, 2006), self and person (Jenkins, 2008), self and (social) identity (Webb, 2006) or self-identity and social-identity (Watson, 2008, 2009). Self(-identity) or personal identity is understood as one's own sense of self, an "individual's private experience of herself or himself" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 50). The latter is often presented as "notionally unique" (Coupland & Brown, 2012, p. 1), particular (Webb, 2006), something of one's own, "internal" (Watson, 2008, 2009) and rather "stable" (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003, p. 1166), "coherent" (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003, p. 1178), "fundamental and solid" (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003, p. 1185). (Social-) identity or person, on the other hand, refers to who an individual is as a member of different social groups and categories (Alvesson et al., 2008; Coupland & Brown, 2012). It emphasizes the existence of a multiplicity of fluid and often contradictory social identities that may be more or less pronounced in different situations (Webb, 2006).

Although this duality is central to the conceptualization of identity, most authors recognize the purely "pragmatic" (Webb, 2006, p. 10) and "analytical" (Watson, 2008, p. 121) nature of this distinction. Alvesson et al. (2008) point to "the often arbitrary clarity of such divisions" (p. 10) and suggest that it is almost impossible to draw a clear line between the 'personal' and the 'social' elements of our identity; individuals simultaneously construct "their personal identities as human beings and their public identities as social actors" (Ybema, Keenoy, et al., 2009, p. 300). This requires recognition of "dual presence of personal and social" (Alvesson et al., 2008, p. 10). Moreover, although at first glance some identity resources may fit into one of the analytical categories of the micro/meso/macro division presented above (section 3.2.2.1), in reality they may play out at multiple analytical levels, whether simultaneously or at different levels in different situations (see for example the discussions of gender identities in Barry et al., 2006; Watson, 2008; or generation in Reedy, 2009).

3.3.2 Identities Between Agency and Structure

Following the notion of social construction and continuing the arguments presented above, identity is understood here as an essential bridge between the individual and society, and thus as constructed through the *interplay between agency and structure* (Alvesson et al., 2008; Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Brown, 2015; Coupland & Brown, 2012; Ybema, Keenoy, et al., 2009). In other words, identities are formed through the interaction between an individual's "self-construction" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001b, p. vi) and "circumstantial demands, restraints, and resources" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001a, p. 9). Such an understanding develops a balanced view of identity construction processes, hence opposing the perception of dominance of either structural or agentic forces and thus an either "oversocialized" or "undersocialized" picture of individuals' identities (Wrong, 1961, as cited in Jenkins, 2008, p. 51).

Identity construction, as defined here, thus assumes that individuals' identities are always constrained by the social structures in which they are embedded. At the same time, however, these structures may also enable the individuals' agency to shape the ways in which these influences come into play in the construction of their identities, thus simultaneously constraining and enabling them (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Brown, 2015, 2017; Watson, 1994; Webb, 2006). Therefore, despite being deeply embedded in historical and social circumstances, identity construction is always to some extent "indeterminate and open-ended" (Webb, 2006, p. 10; see also Prichard, 2000; Prichard & Willmott, 1997). Moreover, in forming their identities, individuals simultaneously shape the structures that are the sources of their identities: while individuals are likely to end up reproducing the social structures despite trying to contradict them (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996; Jenkins, 2008; Webb, 2006), they carry the agentic potential required to transform their environments (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Collinson, 2003; Creed et al., 2010; Sampson, 1989; Watson, 1994; Webb, 2006).

In the context of managers and managerial identities specifically, managers are usually perceived as having a greater agentic potential than ‘ordinary’ organizational members. Therefore, when managers construct their identities, they are more likely to simultaneously shape the organizations to which they belong, which further underlines the importance of studying managerial identities (Watson, 1994).

3.4 Identity Construction as a Discursive Process

3.4.1 Identity Work

As indicated above, I define identity as a context-dependent, socially constructed phenomenon that emerges through the co-constitution of structural and agentic forces, and argue that identities are better viewed as *processes* of “‘being’ or ‘becoming’” (Jenkins, 2008, p. 17; see also Alvesson et al., 2008; Coupland & Brown, 2012; Watson, 1994) rather than conceptualized as fixed. These processes are commonly referred to as “identity work” (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Beech et al., 2012; Beech et al., 2016; Brown, 2015, 2017, 2022; Pick et al., 2017; Snow & Anderson, 1987; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 1997, 2008, 2009). In the present study, I draw on two fairly broad definitions of identity work that take into account the multiple activities individuals potentially engage in during this process. Brown (2017) defines it as “the many ways in which people create, adapt, signify, claim and reject identities from available resources” (p. 298), and Caza et al. (2018) describe the goal of identity work as “forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, revising, or rejecting” identities (p. 7).

Overall, the concept of identity work draws our attention to identities as “workable” (Brown, 2015, p. 30), “always provisional, temporary, negotiated and contested” (Brown, 2015, p. 27) rather than as “notional end states” (Brown, 2015, p. 33) or “final or settled matter[s]” (Jenkins, 2008, p. 17). Identities are not something one has, they

are “something that one does” (Jenkins, 2008, p. 5; see also Knights & Clarke, 2017). Therefore, they are continuously shaped by and dependent on various contextual elements (Barry et al., 2006; Gubrium & Holstein, 2001a; Pick et al., 2017; Ybema, Keenoy, et al., 2009). Interpreted in this way, identity work can involve a number of different processes. Most authors define it in terms of individuals’ efforts to construct a coherent identity, focusing on the congruence and integrity sought between personal and social identities (Alvesson, 2010; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Snow & Anderson, 1987; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 1997). Some of them explicitly emphasize that individuals’ identity work may lead to adjustments in the social identities associated with them in different social contexts (Watson, 2008, 2009). Others, however, acknowledge that the ultimate goal of identity work is not necessarily to achieve a “coherent, distinct and positively valued” sense of self (Alvesson et al., 2008, p. 15). Rather than seeking solutions to their identity struggles, some individuals instead engage in ongoing “self-questioning” identity work to maintain a conflicted identity that enables them to continue to perform their jobs (Beech et al., 2016).

However, common to all the above types of identity work is the presence of some form of tension that causes and brings about identity work (Caza et al., 2018). On the one hand, identity work draws our attention to the fact that it is an ongoing and sometimes even mundane activity. Although we cannot always be sure whether individuals are consciously engaging in identity work, they are nevertheless making statements about their own identities and the identities of their organizations (Coupland & Brown, 2012; Iedema et al., 2003; McInnes & Corlett, 2012; Winkler, 2013). Identity work, however, tends to occur more intensively and visibly when one’s sense of self is challenged in some way, either as a result of a specific occurrence or because of inhabiting environments characterized by complexity and fragmentation, where identity work may occur in a more continuous form (Alvesson et al., 2008; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). This brings me back to the recognition that there are a multiplicity of managerial identities and that they are likely to be in conflict with

each other (section 3.2.2.3): while sometimes very conscious and sometimes not necessarily so, identity work can be seen as a response to identity tensions (Beech et al., 2012; Beech et al., 2016). It is therefore likely that managers engage in identity work when faced with a contradiction between different identities, which may be linked to the need to respond to a “heterogeneous audience” (Ellis & Ybema, 2010; Iedema et al., 2003). Identity work thus sensitizes us not only to the processual, context-dependent nature of identities, but also to the identity tensions and struggles it is likely to cause, and to managers’ responses to them.

3.4.2 Identity and Discourse

In conjunction with the socially constructed nature of identities – assuming that identities are constructed through social interactions – the final assumption is that identities are constructed through *discourse*. By this I mean that identities are formed through the use of language (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Coupland & Brown, 2012), that is through individuals engaging in the production of texts of different forms, such as written or spoken (Ybema, Keenoy, et al., 2009). Therefore, identities as understood here can be referred to as “discursive identities” (Coupland & Brown, 2012, p. 1) and the process through which they are formed as “discursive identity work” (Brown, 2017, p. 302).

Behind the premise that identity work is a discursive phenomenon is the broader argument that characterizes the idea of social construction, that is that language not only *describes* but also *constructs* social reality (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004; Grant et al., 1998; Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Phillips & Oswick, 2012); in other words, it *does* things (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 6). For this reason, while I do not claim that language and discourse are the only components of identity work – symbols, dramaturgy, materiality and our bodies are equally important (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Brown, 2017; Caza et al., 2018; Coupland & Brown, 2012; Knights & Clarke, 2017; Ybema, Keenoy, et al.,

2009) – studies of discourse in organizational contexts are powerful in revealing the details of individual and collective social life (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Grant et al., 2004), as organizations are seen as constructed through discourse (Boje, 1995; Brown, 2006; Humphreys & Brown, 2002).

However, discourse as such and its analysis can be interpreted in different ways. On one side of the spectrum, some authors focus on the details of language in use, while on the other, writings that often draw on Foucauldian perspectives emphasize the embeddedness of these texts in broader social discourses and see individuals as subjects of various discourses (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004; Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Phillips & Oswick, 2012). Discourse is therefore usually defined not only as a concrete text, whether written or spoken, but also, on a more abstract level, as a set of texts regarding a certain issue that in turn construct how that issue is thought about, spoken about and acted upon (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004; Grant et al., 2004; Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Watson, 1994).

In the present analysis of discursive identity work, I develop a middle position in which identities are seen as constructed under the influence of certain “institutional discourses” that characterize particular environments, but also in relation to “the practical contingencies of interaction” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001a, p. 13). Defined in this way, discourse analysis holds the potential to reveal the ways in which individuals are embedded in different “discursive contexts” (Watson, 1997, p. 142) or “discursive environments” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001a, p. 13) and draw on a variety of sometimes contradictory “discursive resources” (Watson, 1997, p. 142) in the process of identity work. As indicated earlier, the discursive resources mobilized can come from both the more ‘personal’ and ‘social’ aspects of one’s managerial position (Beech, 2008; Pick et al., 2017), and the micro, meso and macro elements of an identity resource can overlap (section 3.3.1).

3.5 Developing the Research Questions

In the final section of this chapter, I summarize the theoretical premises I adopted in this research and outline how I employed them in analysing AMMs' identities. I then explain the development of the research questions and subquestions to be answered in this study.

3.5.1 The Study of Identities – in a Nutshell

The six theoretical premises just outlined serve as analytical guideposts for the analyses presented in the following chapters. The concept of *managerial identity*, defined as a manager's sense of self in relation to their position in the organizational structure (Atewologun et al., 2017), simultaneously accommodates the exploration of managers' potential multiple roles (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003) and their professional identity (Atewologun et al., 2017). It thus encourages the analyst to pay attention to managerial identities as embedded in organizational and professional structures and hierarchies. Further urging us to shed light on the complex constitution of managerial identities is the recognition of their *multiplicity*, which results from the fact that managers draw on multiple available identity sources. In order to provide deep analytical insights into the construction of managerial identities, an analyst must empirically determine these multiple sources and, furthermore, look for tensions that may arise from this plurality.

Recognizing the *socially constructed* nature of managerial identities and the inherently connected – indeed, often overlapping – aspects of the 'personal' and the 'social,' I emphasize the importance of examining the more individualistic as well as the contextual dynamics that influence one's managerial identities. In doing so, I stay close to the data and my research participants' own categorizations, recognizing that elements of identity can play out and reinforce each other at multiple analytical levels, rather than attempting to artificially reify different identity sources along the lines of 'personal' or

‘social,’ or in terms of micro, meso and macro distinctions. Moreover, this study acknowledges the importance of the *interplay between agency and structure* in the process of identity formation. Analytically, this draws our attention to the ways in which social and organizational structures influence individuals’ managerial identities and the ways in which managers use their agentic potential in the process of identity construction and (attempt to) shape these structures.

The above assumptions lead us to the premise that identity should not be understood as something fixed, but as a continuous *process*, often referred to as ‘identity work.’ This allows for an examination of the development of managerial identities in the context of ever-changing personal and organizational contexts. Since identity work can be explained as a response to identity tensions, it also allows for a focus on these conflicts and individuals’ responses to them as they are played out through identity work. Finally, I have argued that the process of identity construction can be defined as a *discursive* process, that is a process constituted through linguistic means. This encourages using managers’ language use as an analytical tool and starting point for exploring their identity work processes by paying attention to both the specific context and the broader discursive frames.

3.5.2 Introducing the Research (Sub)questions

The theoretical premises just summarized and the related analytical guidelines led me to adopt an exploratory approach that aimed to focus on three main empirical issues: 1) the plurality of identity sources available to AMMs; 2) the nature of the possible identity tensions that arise from this multiplicity; and 3) the process of identity work as it unfolds in particular contexts in response to the multiple identity sources and identity tensions. I now turn to the main research question and subquestions that guided this research, together with an explanation of their development and the reasoning behind them in relation to the knowledge gaps and theoretical assumptions identified earlier.

At the most basic level, the question I aim to answer in this dissertation is:

1 How do AMMs discursively construct their managerial identities?

To answer this question, we need to understand well two main aspects of identity work processes: 1) the context in which they take place, linked to the availability of specific identity sources, and 2) individuals' engagement in the process of constructing their identities (Beech, 2008; Gubrium & Holstein, 2001a; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). The first subquestion therefore relates to understanding the contexts in which AMMs are situated and the discourses embedded in these environments that can serve as identity resources:

1.1 What discourses characterize AMMs' discursive contexts?

As indicated in chapter 2 (section 2.2.4.3), the individual existing studies on AMMs' identities generally examine a rather limited number of identity sources. The first two theoretical premises outlined above – that is the use of the concept of managerial identity and the recognition of multiple managerial identities and their sources – draw our attention to an almost unlimited range of potential identity resources and commit the present study to empirically defining the discourses present in AMMs' personal, organizational and social contexts in as much detail as possible to identify those that play a role in AMMs' identity work (see chapters 5 to 8). This endeavour emphasizes context-dependency of identity work processes while recognizing the socially constructed nature of identity and thus the interplay and potential overlap of multiple discourses originating from different levels.

This relates to the second element of identity work, that is AMMs' use of these discursive resources in the process of managerial identity formation. This leads to the second subquestion:

1.2 How do AMMs employ available discursive resources in the process of identity work?

This second subquestion directs our attention to the ways in which individual AMMs engage in processes of identity construction. At its most basic, the question explicitly draws our attention to identity work as a discursive process, which requires a discourse analytic approach to the issue. Moreover, it implies that, as I argued earlier, the multiplicity of discursive resources available is likely to lead to identity tensions. Indeed, the literature review has shown that AMMs have an increased potential for conflicts of this kind, which leads us to investigate this phenomenon further. I have suggested that these identity tensions are inherent in and signify the process of identity work, which is concerned with the ways in which AMMs respond to these tensions (see chapters 6 to 8). The questions that remain open to answer the main research question are therefore the nature of the identity tensions experienced by AMMs and the AMMs' responses to these tensions. To allow for an open-ended, empirically guided investigation of these questions, I formulated two additional subquestions:

1.2.1 What forms of identity tensions do AMMs experience?

1.2.2 How do AMMs respond to identity tensions?

The theoretical and analytical premises and research (sub)questions outlined in this section elucidate the tools that enable an open-ended, in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of AMMs. In doing so, I address the identified knowledge gaps by paying explicit attention to the plurality of identities and the tensions arising from this multiplicity, as well as the fluid and context-dependent nature of identities, which is achieved by paying attention to the processes of social construction and the dynamics between structural and agentic forces inherent in them. With the research (sub)questions just presented in mind, I now turn to the methodological tools I employed to address them.

4 Into the Field and Out Again

Having outlined knowledge gaps, theoretical premises and research (sub)questions, in this chapter I discuss the methodological choices made to explore the issue at the heart of this study, academic middle managers' (AMMs') identities. First, I explain the selection of research participants and the field site, and briefly introduce these. I then turn to the broad research approach I chose – interpretive organizational ethnography – including a discussion of its core premises, underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions, and the evaluation standards associated with it. Next, I introduce the specific form of organizational ethnography and data generation techniques I employed in this study – shadowing AMMs, interviewing AMMs and other organizational members, and compiling and reviewing documents – and describe their general features and how I applied them specifically. I then introduce the nature and application of discourse analysis as a data analysis technique that was used in this research. I conclude with some additional reflections on the research process, particularly in relation to my position in the field and research ethics.

4.1 Selection of the Research Participant Group and the Field Site

In this section, I first discuss the choice of a specific set of participants. I then describe the more practical process of participant and field selection. Finally, I briefly introduce the field site and key research participants.

4.1.1 Focus on Heads of Department at a Single University

Before selecting a field site, I decided to focus on a particular group of AMMs, namely Heads of Department (HoDs) as a subgroup whose position is representative of the characteristics and tensions experienced by AMMs in general. In doing so, the intention was not to exaggerate the specificity of the HoD position in comparison to other AMM roles; aspects of departmental leadership are arguably comparable to the leadership of departmental subunits (Knight & Trowler, 2001) as well as to the position of dean (Meek, Goedegebuure, et al., 2010b). Nor was it the intention to generate generalizations about AMMs or HoDs as nominally uniform groups of academic managers; individual AMM roles can vary considerably across national and organizational contexts (Meek, Goedegebuure, & De Boer, 2010), with a range of personal and contextual factors influencing how individual HoDs interpret and perform their roles (Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; Degn, 2015; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011). Emphasizing the extent of this variation and variability in HoDs' experiences, the approach that seemed most appropriate was to focus on a small number of HoDs at a single university. This allowed for a simultaneous in-depth analysis of HoDs as individuals and of their organizational and social environments, which was crucial for developing analytical, theoretically embedded accounts of HoDs' discursive identity work.

4.1.2 Choice of Field Site and Research Participants

In selecting the HoDs as the main research participants, the first step was to select the organization to which they belonged. Given the exploratory nature of the study, this choice was quite open; the proposed research questions could be explored among HoDs in almost any organizational context. Therefore, I took a largely pragmatic approach to the selection of the field site, one of the main criteria being – besides a sufficient number of HoDs willing to participate – my knowledge of the official language of the university under study. Based on these practical considerations, my doctoral supervisor approached three higher education institutions, one in Ireland and two in the UK. Through the mediation of a senior academic manager, one English university agreed to host me. In terms of HoDs as the main research participants, I initially approached six HoDs in two faculties at my host institution, but then decided to focus on three HoDs and their departments in a single faculty as the fieldwork progressed. The main reason for this change in research design was rather practical; the process of data generation proved to be more time-consuming than expected and generated a large amount of rich data.

4.1.3 A Brief Introduction to the Field Site and the Main Research Participants

Without going into too much detail – as I discuss comprehensively the characteristics of the field site and its various organizational units in chapters 5 to 8 – the organization under study, New University (NewU), is a comprehensive multi-campus university in England. The institution is a former polytechnic which became a university in 1992. At the time of my fieldwork, NewU had several thousand students and thousands of employees. In terms of academic structure, NewU was divided into several academic units. The academic units were organized into multiple faculties, which in turn were grouped into departments.

I conducted most of my fieldwork among the academic managers and academics of the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences (the Faculty), a faculty located in one of the academic units of NewU. The Faculty consisted of four academic departments: Visionary, Reinvigorated, Different and Small Department. The departments differed significantly in terms of the disciplines represented, the number of students and academic staff, and the educational and professional background of the staff. In addition, the departments also differed in terms of the characteristics of the HoDs who headed them. Without going into further differences here – chapters 5 to 8 contain detailed information on this – a brief look at the HoDs shows that they represented, among other things, different genders, age groups, disciplines and levels of academic appointment, and had worked at NewU and in their function as HoDs for different lengths of time.

4.2 Introducing Organizational Ethnography

In order to conduct an exploratory, yet in-depth and contextualized study of HoDs' managerial identities, I carried out an organizational ethnography. In this section, I first outline the general features of such an approach to organizational research. I then explain the ontological and epistemological premises of the specific form of organizational ethnography I conducted, that is “interpretive organizational ethnography” (Ybema, Yanow, et al., 2009b, p. 9). The last subsection discusses the evaluation standards suitable for such an approach.

4.2.1 Defining Organizational Ethnography

Ethnography can be understood as a set of techniques for generating data, analysing it and writing about the lives of a selected group of people (Rosen, 1991; Van Maanen, 2011; Watson, 2011). More specifically, the ethnographer's interest is in people's “*behaviours and attached meaning systems,*” with the aim of “*decod[ing], translat[ing], and*

interpret[ing],” that is, making sense of them (Rosen, 1991, p. 12; emphasis in original). In organizational contexts, then, the aim of ethnography is to “uncover and explicate the ways in which people in particular work settings come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situation” (Van Maanen, 1979, p. 540).

Crucial to the development of an ethnographic understanding of an organization and its members is the presence of the researcher in the studied environment, usually over an extended period of time. Traditionally, this involves ‘participant observation,’ that is simultaneously participating in and observing activities under study (Neyland, 2008; Watson, 2018; Watson, 2011). However, organizational ethnographers have also engaged in ethnographic observations that do not necessarily involve participation, but still result in the researcher “liv[ing] among” (Rosen, 1991, p. 5) and “hanging out” (Ybema, Yanow, et al., 2009b, p. 1) with organizational members (see also Van Maanen, 1979). In addition to various forms of observation (participant or non-participant), ethnographers also seek to engage in conversations, interviews and/or organizational documents and statistical analysis. While these additional forms of data cannot “replace close involvement with people in their ‘natural’ setting” (Watson, 2012, p. 16), they are essential for enriching the datasets generated during observations by providing insights into people’s perceptions or contextual information about the organization and its broader social environment (Neyland, 2008; van der Waal, 2009; Watson, 2018; Watson, 2011).

This combination of methods enables the organizational ethnographer to immerse herself in and develop a deep understanding of the everyday organizational life, processes and routines (Bate, 1997; Schwartzman, 1993; van der Waal, 2009; Ybema, Yanow, et al., 2009b), whether she focuses on the organization as a whole or (a) particular (group of) organizational members, practices or objects (Ybema, Yanow, et al., 2009b). In particular, the strength of organizational ethnography lies in its ability

to produce both “extreme close-ups” as well as “wide-angle” or “long shots” by simultaneously generating an empathic understanding of the “lifeworlds” of organizational members as perceived by the participants themselves, and contextually framing and explaining these perspectives, usually through the use of various “theoretical categories” (Ybema, Yanow, et al., 2009b, pp. 6–8).

4.2.2 Organizational Ethnography as an Interpretive Endeavour

The present study was designed more specifically as what Ybema, Yanow, et al. (2009b) refer to as “*interpretive* organizational ethnography” (p. 9; emphasis added), embedded in the constructivist or interpretivist research paradigm. As such, it is based on relativist ontological premises – assumptions about the nature of the world – which assume that realities are multiple and intersubjective, that is dependent on our experiences as social beings. Epistemologically – in terms of the premises of what constitutes knowledge and how it can be acquired – this implies a subjectivist approach, which assumes that knowledge is co-created through social interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Lincoln et al., 2011; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012).

Ethnographic knowledge, then, cannot be “collected” or “accessed;” it is “generated” between ethnographers and their research participants (Ybema, Yanow, et al., 2009b, p. 9). Whether ethnographic observations or interviews, both data generation techniques represent “social events” in the process, narration and interpretation of which we as ethnographers take an active role (Atkinson & Coffey, 2003, p. 426). Ethnographic accounts are therefore always “partial” as they are developed from a particular perspective (Rosen, 1991, p. 2); another researcher would end up generating a rather different set of data and analysis from it (Emerson et al., 1995; Rosen, 1991; Van Maanen, 1979). A research participant’s or ethnographer’s interpretation is just that: one of several possible interpretations based on “meaning-making” in the context of their own “lived experience” (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 42).

4.2.3 Evaluating Interpretive Organizational Ethnography

The “meta-goal” of interpretive research is the criterion of “trustworthiness,” which describes whether a study, its analyses and conclusions are worthy of trust (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2009, p. 63; see also Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the present ethnographic study, I aimed to describe my – sometimes serendipitous or accidental – methodological decisions in as much detail as possible, taking into account the length of the dissertation and my commitment to the anonymity of the research setting and participants. The methodological choices involved various aspects: gaining access, time and exposure in the field, silences in the data, and my role and positionality in the field, the latter referring to my position in relation to the research setting and participants based on my characteristics, identities and attitudes towards the topics under study (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2009, pp. 63–69).

Providing these details – at various points in this text – the goal was to meet the standards for a transparent and trustworthy ethnographic account (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2009, pp. 58–63). These include: providing an “audit” of the steps taken in the research process; the development of “thick description[s]” (Geertz, 1973), that is detailed, contextualized accounts of the organization and its members, interactions, and so on; and engaging in the practice of “reflexivity,” that is acknowledging and reflecting on my role as an individual and researcher in data generation and analysis. In addition, I paid attention to sources of evidence and silences, which is crucial for two further evaluation criteria of trustworthiness: “triangulation” and “negative case analysis.” Triangulation was enhanced by drawing on various data sources and engaging in multiple data generation techniques to generate richer, more comprehensive accounts of the phenomena under study (Flick, 2018). Negative case analysis, which refers to challenging the researcher’s assumptions and sensemaking, was conducted by seeking multiple perspectives on the issues under study during the fieldwork and during the

analysis, and by “member checking,” that is seeking feedback from research participants on the data presented (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2009, pp. 58–63).

4.3 An Organizational Ethnography of Managerial Identities

To generate ethnographic insights into HoDs’ managerial identities, I did not conduct an ethnography of a university as a whole, but I followed in the footsteps of organizational ethnographers who focus on managers as a specific group of organizational members (Watson, 2018; Watson, 1994, 2008, 2009). This led to nearly six months of ethnographic fieldwork during which I focused largely on three HoDs and their environments. I employed several forms of data generation: shadowing HoDs, interviewing the shadowed HoDs as well as many other organizational members, and collecting organizational documents. These data generation techniques were complemented by a compilation of ‘extra-organizational’ documents relevant to the selected themes of analysis.

Following the principles of triangulation (Flick, 2018), the aim of this combination of techniques was to generate rich accounts of the phenomena under study through 1) access to multiple sites of HoDs’ discursive identity work and the contexts in which it took place (via shadowing, interviews with HoDs and organizational documents produced by the HoDs); 2) an exploration of other organizational members’ accounts and perspectives on the organizational and broader discursive environment (via shadowing, interviews with other organizational members and documents produced by organizational members other than the HoDs); 3) an investigation of the broader, national discursive environment (via a review of relevant ‘extra-organizational’ texts); and 4) an examination of a variety of discursive forms (interactions between the HoDs and other organizational members, interactions with me as the researcher, and (extra-)organizational documents).

In the remainder of this section, I present the details of my engagement in each of the data generation techniques: as a shadow, as an interlocutor, and as a documentalist.

4.3.1 The Shadow²

Shadowing, as defined for the purposes of this research, is a form of non-participant observation that entails the researcher following and observing a selected person in their daily activities, usually over an extended period of time (Czarniawska, 2007; McDonald, 2005). In doing so, shadowing aims to gain insights into the lifeworld of one or more individuals and is therefore sometimes referred to as “one-on-one ethnography” (Gill, 2011, p. 116). In the process of shadowing, the researcher ideally not only observes the shadowee but also induces a “running commentary” (McDonald, 2005, p. 456) by asking for explanations and meanings of actions taken and conversations held. Therefore, it has been argued (Bartkowiak-Theron & Sappey, 2012; Czarniawska, 2007; McDonald, 2005, 2018) that shadowing enables a holistic, deep, first-hand understanding of an individual’s daily life, roles and personality, as well as their social relations and surroundings (Gorup, 2016, p. 136).³

This makes shadowing a very appropriate data generation technique for the study of HoDs’ managerial identities in relation to the knowledge gaps identified earlier (section 2.4). Unlike the methods commonly used in the study of AMMs, such as interviews, surveys and document analysis, shadowing not only captures how things

² ‘The Shadow’ in the title of this subsection refers to the nickname given to anthropologist Harry Wolcott by his research participants while shadowing an elementary school principal (Wolcott, 2003, p. 2).

³ This paragraph uses extracts from Gorup (2016). Quotation marks have been omitted due to some changes in the text.

should be done or how things are *said* to be done, but also provides insights into what research participants *actually* do (Czarniawska, 2007; McDonald & Simpson, 2014), thus bridging the potential gap between individuals' perceptions and behaviours by allowing for insights into both (McDonald, 2005, 2018). Moreover, because shadowees are necessarily embedded in a social environment, shadowing promises deep insights into both individual and contextual aspects of individuals' lives and the discourses they draw upon (McDonald, 2018; Quinlan, 2008), making it particularly useful for the study of identities as phenomena that transcend multiple analytical levels. In addition, shadowing – as an explicitly mobile method (Czarniawska, 2007) – allows the researcher to examine process and continuity (McDonald & Simpson, 2014; see also Gill et al., 2014; McDonald, 2018). Such an approach is crucial if identities are to be analysed as fluid rather than static (see also Gorup, 2016). Finally, this exploratory and emergent nature of shadowing allows to empirically determine the multiplicity of HoDs' managerial identities and the potential tensions that can arise from this plurality.

4.3.1.1 Shadowing the Heads of Department

I shadowed a total of three HoDs at the Faculty during academic years 2014/15 and 2015/16: Ryan Quinn in Visionary Department (shadowed primarily in the academic year 2014/15), Karen Fowler in Reinigorated Department, and Dave Garner in Different Department (both shadowed in the academic year 2015/16; see Table 1 on p. 77 for more details on shadowing). As is common in shadowing research, I negotiated access on a continuous basis (Czarniawska, 2007, 2018; McDonald, 2018). Although this sometimes meant that I did not attend confidential or sensitive meetings, I was still able to observe a variety of meetings, interactions and activities, and often solicit the HoDs' reflections. I 'hung out' (Ybema, Yanow, et al., 2009b, p. 1) with the HoDs and took detailed notes on activities and interactions at meetings with their personal assistants; department management teams and individual senior department members; members of the Faculty management, individually and collectively; academic staff,

individually and in groups; students, individually and in class; representatives of other NewU faculties; Academic Unit-level representatives; the HoDs’ internal and external research partners; and external partners of the departments and the Faculty. The topics discussed at these meetings and the activities that took place varied extensively: from workload arrangements to staff performance reviews, staff issues, hiring of new academic and administrative staff, teaching arrangements and curriculum development, student enquiries and complaints, quality assurance, strategic planning, research strategy, development of research projects, doctoral supervision, external partnerships, funding distribution, marketing, event planning, internationalization, the HoDs’ agendas and scheduling, and much more.

Table 1: Shadowing details.

	Period	Days	Total Hours	Average/Min/Max Hours per Day
Ryan Quinn	4 non-consecutive weeks	10	50h 50min	5h 5min/1h 50min/8h 10min
Karen Fowler	4 consecutive weeks + 1 non-consecutive week	13	64h 50min	5h/40min/10h
Dave Garner	3 consecutive weeks + 1 non-consecutive week	11	57h	5h 40min/1h/8h 35min

In addition to shadowing, I observed many meetings where one or more HoDs attended without explicitly shadowing any of them, as well as some public university events where the shadowed HoDs played a visible role in some cases, but less so in others. I was present at some meetings where the shadowed HoDs did not attend, for example a faculty committee meeting where no HoDs attended, and a department-level meeting in the absence of the HoD. I was also given a desk in the office of the Faculty’s administrative assistants for a short period of time. This brought the total number of shadowing and observation hours to approximately 200. Although not all observations outside the shadowing context were treated as data to be analysed for ethical reasons

(section 4.5.2.2), they were important in enhancing my understanding of the context in which the shadowed HoDs worked.

4.3.2 The Interlocutor

The understanding of the activities we observe as ethnographers “is grounded largely upon what members have to say about what such activities mean to them” (Van Maanen, 1979, p. 543; see also McDonald & Simpson, 2014; Neyland, 2008; Watson, 2018). Conversations in one form or another with our participants are therefore indispensable and will enrich the observational data (Neyland, 2008; van der Waal, 2009; Watson, 2011, 2012; Ybema, Yanow, et al., 2009b). For this reason, in addition to the “running commentary” that accompanies shadowing (McDonald, 2005, p. 456), I also conducted interviews with the shadowed HoDs and a selection of other organizational members.

Specifically, the aim of conducting the interviews was to provide a platform for research participants to share their backgrounds and perspectives on the organization and, in the process, to gain knowledge of the interviewees’ personal, organizational and broader discursive environments (McDonald & Simpson, 2014). The form of interview chosen for this purpose was semi-structured. This meant that in advance of each interview I designed an interview guide with a set of general questions relevant to my study, but at the same time I tried to give the interviewees the freedom to raise issues important to them that went beyond the scope of the initial interview questions. Consequently, interviewees sometimes shared accounts relevant to the research that I had not originally intended to explore, and some interviews developed into rather informal conversations (Hermanowicz, 2002; Neyland, 2008; van der Waal, 2009).

I conducted a total of 45 interviews, seven with the shadowed HoDs and 38 with other organizational members. With the exception of one interview, I conducted all interviews in person at the locations chosen by the interviewees. Due to time

constraints, I conducted one interview via Skype shortly after completing my field visit. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim using F4 software. However, some of the quotations used in this text were adapted to the standards of written language. In addition to the verbatim transcripts, I noted metadata about the interviews, including the interview code (for example I10), the pseudonym of the interviewee, the time, length and location of the interview, the rationale for the choice of interviewee, the context of the interview, general impressions and a summary.

The following two subsections elaborate on the rationale and details of conducting interviews with the shadowed HoDs and other organizational members.

4.3.2.1 Interviewing the Heads of Department

Although interviewing is the most commonly adopted approach in identity research (see for example Alvesson & Robertson, 2016; Ellis & Ybema, 2010; Reedy, 2009; Thomas & Davies, 2005), some have argued that conducting interviews “divorced from concrete activity” is insufficient to capture identity construction “as a situated organizational practice” (Alvesson et al., 2008, p. 21; see also Watson, 2011). While I agree with this view – which is why I opted for shadowing in the first place – interviews conducted as part of a larger field study can provide crucial insights about the observed identity work (Watson, 2018; Watson, 2011).

The interviews with the HoDs thus served to gain additional insights into their histories and perceptions of their organizational and broader discursive environment. These were rarely accessible through observation alone, so interviews greatly enhanced my understanding of the identity construction activities observed. Furthermore, interviews invited the HoDs to reflect on their identities and actions – sometimes more, sometimes less explicitly – creating an additional platform for their discursive identity work with me as a curious audience (Alvesson et al., 2008; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

I interviewed the three shadowed HoDs on two or three occasions. I conducted the first interview with each of them before the start of the shadowing and another interview towards the end or shortly after the shadowing period. I interviewed one HoD a third time a few months after the shadowing (see Table 2 below for details of the interviews with the HoDs). At the beginning of the first interviews, I asked the HoDs to complete a drop-off survey (Stevens, 2015) that included general questions such as gender, age, time at NewU, time as HoD and academic discipline. I continued with questions about their careers; becoming HoDs; perceptions of organizational units such as NewU, the Faculty and their respective departments; recent organizational changes and planned developments; activities and challenges as HoDs; and their perceptions of the HoD role. In the middle of these introductory interviews, I encouraged the HoDs to engage in reflective identity work by discussing their perceptions of various identity categories that I had developed based on the AMM literature review (Stevens, 2015), such as HoD; leader; manager; academic; educator; administrator; researcher; department, faculty, academic unit or university employee/member; as well as categories related to specific disciplines represented by the HoDs and their respective departments. In addition, I asked them to add and discuss other identity categories relevant to them.

Table 2: Details of the interviews with the shadowed HoDs.

	Interview 1 Length	Interview 2 Length	Interview 3 Length
Ryan Quinn	≈ 1h 31min	≈ 59min	≈ 47min
Karen Fowler	≈ 1h 23min	≈ 1h 4min	/
Dave Garner	≈ 1h 44min	≈ 1h 36min	/

The second and, in one case, also the third interview explored in more depth the challenges of being an HoD, mainly through probing interviewees about specific issues that I had observed during the shadowing or that had been brought to my

attention by other research participants. Some of the topics covered in these interviews related to details and challenges associated with the various initiatives developed and/or implemented by each HoD, although I also asked some more general questions, for example, about HoDs' perceptions of the national higher education environment.

4.3.2.2 Interviewing Other Organizational Members

Although shadowing and talking to HoDs enabled important insights into their contexts (McDonald, 2018; Quinlan, 2008), these accounts sometimes tended to be rather “one-sided” (Gorup, 2016, p. 145) and fell short of providing other members' first-hand perspectives on the discursive environments in which HoDs were embedded (McDonald & Simpson, 2014). To address these potential “absences” and “silences” (Neyland, 2008; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2009) in my understanding of the discursive resources available to HoDs, I conducted a series of interviews with organizational members other than the shadowed HoDs (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

In 38 interviews, I interviewed a total of 37 other organizational members at different levels of the hierarchy, fourteen women and 23 men (one interviewee was interviewed twice due to scheduling constraints). The interviewees included two people belonging to organizational units above/outside the Faculty, seven members of the Faculty management and administrative team, six academic staff in Visionary Department, nine academic staff in Reinvigorated Department, ten academic staff in Different Department and three academic staff in Small Department (the latter mainly with the aim of learning about certain faculty-wide developments, although no shadowing took place in Small Department). Within the departments, I interviewed a combination of organizational members from across the spectrum of Senior and Principal Lecturers, Readers and Professors. Most of them had significant administrative, managerial and/or leadership responsibilities for various aspects of teaching, research, and student- and staff-related matters, with some working very

closely with the shadowed HoDs. The thinking behind interviewing this group of organizational members was that they would be familiar with the HoDs as people and/or with broader issues of change, management and leadership in their respective units (see Table 3 below for more details on the interviews with the non-shadowed university members). Six people from the four departments either did not reply or stopped replying to my emails in the process of arranging the interview.

Table 3: Details of the interviews with the non-shadowed organizational members.

Total Interview Length	≈ 42h 44min
Average Interview Length	≈ 1h 7min
Shortest Interview	35min 27s
Longest Interview	1h 49min 30s

As with the interviews with the HoDs, I began the interviews with a drop-off survey (Stevens, 2015) on the interviewees' general information. As the interview progressed, my questions related to the interviewees' careers and organizational roles; perceptions of organizational units such as NewU, the Faculty and/or their respective departments; organizational changes; and perceptions of their HoD and/or the HoD role in general. Over time, I included some questions about specific events and issues, but also continued to combine them with questions aimed at interviewees' more general reflections.

In addition to the interviews, I had informal conversations with organizational members on several occasions. Although I did not consider these as data in the formal sense for ethical reasons (section 4.5.2.2), these conversations significantly shaped my understanding of the organization.

4.3.3 The Documentalist

To enrich the data generated through observation and interviews, organizational ethnographers usually also draw on various organizational documents and statistics (Neyland, 2008; van der Waal, 2009; Watson, 2018; Watson, 2012). In this study, the collection and analysis of such materials enhanced the dataset in three ways. First, the organizational documents offered insights into “official” organizational discourses (Prichard, 2000, p. 205). Second, some of the documents collected were authored by the shadowed HoDs themselves. As such, they provided another observable site of their discursive identity work (Alvesson et al., 2008). Finally, the organizational documents and communications helped in the reconstruction of past events and provided me with an information channel on current organizational developments.

The organizational documents I collected were a combination of documents issued by NewU, Academic Unit, the Faculty and individual departments. Specifically, these were various newsletters, operational and strategic plans, promotional brochures, research strategies, organizational charts, job advertisements, staff appraisal form templates, annual reports, and meeting agendas and presentations. In addition, various organizational statistical data were collected, for example staff and student numbers, student satisfaction data, and budget and research funding information. As I was granted visiting scholar status at NewU and thus had access to some of the university’s internal portals, intranet and mailing lists provided an additional source of contextual information. However, there was at least one clear silence in my document-based data, as I only had access to a very limited amount of email traffic involving the shadowed HoDs.

In addition to collecting the aforementioned organizational documents, I continued to compile ‘extra-organizational’ texts relevant to the topics of my analyses throughout my research – before, during and after the fieldwork. These were intended

to help me further explore the national higher education discursive environment in which the shadowed HoDs and their institution were embedded. The documents collected included selected academic literature, news stories, government policies and reports, and various statistics and rankings.

4.4 Making Sense of the Data

Having described the details of my data generation techniques, in this section I elaborate on the data analysis technique I used, namely discourse analysis. Discourse is broadly understood as “all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, and written texts of all kinds” (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 7). Accordingly, “discourse analysis” describes the analytical activity that involves the study of these various discursive forms (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 7). Although all discourse analysis typically involves some form of searching for patterns and organizing data into categories – ‘coding’ – there is no single or strictly prescribed way of doing it (Wood & Kroger, 2000). The way in which data are defined, selected and analysed depends on the analyst’s theoretical choices in relation to the concept of discourse as such, as well as the specific research questions (Taylor, 2001).

In the remainder of this section, I first briefly introduce the general principles of discourse analysis as I applied them in this organizational ethnography. This is followed by a detailed description of my discourse analytic practice.

4.4.1 An Ethnographic Approach to Discourse Analysis

For the purposes of this study, I developed a discourse analytical approach that is consistent with an ethnographic attitude to analysis. In terms of defining the concept of discourse – as explained in the theoretical framework (section 3.4.2), reflected in the research (sub)questions (section 3.5.2) and in line with a common ethnographic focus

(section 4.2.1) – I adopted an approach that focuses on both context-specific language use and the ways in which the latter can represent broader discourses.

In terms of the interplay between theory and data in developing the research focus and (sub)questions, I followed a common ethnographic practice of combining theoretical and empirical insights. Although ethnography is necessarily emergent and thus “open-ended” and “flexible” (van der Waal, 2009, p. 26), it can benefit from a deep knowledge of potentially relevant theories and the formulation of research questions before entering the field (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2000; van der Waal, 2009; Van Maanen, 2011; Watson, 2018). These then need to be further developed and adjusted to the issues relevant to the setting under study, with the ethnographer engaging in an iterative process of analysis that combines deduction and induction (Emerson et al., 1995; Watson, 2012).

4.4.2 The Details of Discourse Analytic Practice

Although I presented the data generation techniques in a separate section, some initial steps of data interpretation necessarily already took place during the fieldwork (Emerson et al., 1995; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2000; Watson, 2012). In the process of data generation, I was guided from the outset by a conceptual focus on identity work; initially specifically on identity work as a way of individuals influencing broader structures, and later on identity work in general. This meant that my analytical attention was primarily focused on the instances of visible identity tensions and discursive identity work among HoDs, which subsequently influenced the development of my research focus in relation to the specific activities of HoDs that were of analytical interest. During the fieldwork, the HoDs’ engagement in research management emerged as an obvious – though certainly not the only – cause of identity tensions and discursive identity work among all three HoDs. This was likely related in part to the timing of my fieldwork relatively shortly after the announcement of the results of the UK’s most recent national

research assessment exercise, the Research Excellence Framework 2014 (more on this in chapter 5, section 5.1.3), which meant that NewU and its organizational units, including individual departments, were actively engaging with the implications of these results. In addition, a new Vice-Chancellor was appointed relatively shortly before I began my fieldwork, and they were more committed than their predecessor to strengthening research at NewU (more on this in chapter 5, section 5.2.2). However, the choice of topic was also influenced by my prevailing personal interest in the research mission of universities. Thus, while I was careful to keep the shadowing and interviews open-ended throughout the fieldwork, some of my interview questions over time related more explicitly to research-related issues.

Other early analytical work included editing and annotating the field notes, transcribing the interviews, and familiarization with some of the collected documents. Using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo, I continued the analysis with a detailed re-reading and annotation of the dataset. I initially focused on the transcripts of the seven interviews with the three HoDs and the entire dataset of field notes based on shadowing and observation. This process confirmed the importance of research management-related issues to the discursive identity work of all three HoDs and guided the refinement of the theoretical framework and research (sub)questions, all of which informed the next steps of analysis, that is a more selective, focused and detailed interpretation of all materials (Emerson et al., 1995; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2000). In the largely chronological analysis of the bulk of the dataset – field notes based on shadowing and observation, interviews with HoDs and interviews with organizational members other than the shadowed HoDs – I proceeded in the following steps:

- 1) To further sensitize myself to possible answers to research subquestion 1.1 *What discourses characterize AMMs' discursive contexts?*, I first read and coded each text. The codes were largely “data-driven” (Gibbs, 2007), meaning that I drew mainly on categories used by the research participants themselves to categorize

the data. The individual codes were categorized into several broader groups, for example ‘activities, events and issues;’ ‘identities, roles and tasks of HoDs;’ ‘perceptions of organizational roles;’ ‘perceptions of organizational units;’ ‘perceptions of external organizations and environment;’ ‘research;’ ‘external work and impact;’ and ‘students and teaching.’ This coding process allowed the dataset to be easily searchable by codes in step 3 of data analysis and writing (see below).

- 2) To answer the research subquestion 1.2 *How do AMMs employ available discursive resources in the process of identity work?* and more specifically 1.2.1 *What forms of identity tensions do AMMs experience?* and 1.2.2 *How do AMMs respond to identity tensions?*, I engaged in two further analytical steps when analysing the field notes based on shadowing and the interviews with the shadowed HoDs.
 - a. As I re-read the now coded documents, I highlighted and numbered virtually all (sets of) utterances of the three HoDs.
 - b. The next step of analysis was carried out with the aim of avoiding the risk of data reduction and decontextualization that can result from organizing the data into small chunks during the coding process described in the step 1 above (Bansal & Corley, 2011; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2000). To retain contextual detail, the text extracts selected in step 2a were analysed by forming analytical narratives, a process largely inspired by the work of Jarzabkowski and colleagues (Jarzabkowski, 2017; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). At this point, the analysis shifted to a more “concept-driven” approach and I began to look at the data using categories proposed by the chosen theoretical framework (Gibbs, 2007), although the extracts were not strictly speaking coded.

The process involved formulating analytical narratives, that is describing what had happened in the particular utterance(s) by drawing

on the perspective of discursive identity work. The narratives were then summarized to highlight, among other things, the individuals and/or groups involved/indicated, that is who was involved in the interaction and/or mentioned in the utterance(s), for example the HoDs themselves, other university members or the NewU's organizational units; the nature of the tensions (if any), for example where an HoD expressed negative or uncertain feelings or opinions about something/someone, or suggested conflict or disagreement between different people/entities/roles, implying the presence of conflicting and competing discourses characteristic of identity tensions and discursive identity work; and outcomes of identity work, where I noted the process and content of the HoDs' discursive identity work, for example how they positioned themselves in relation to the discursive resource(s) they drew on, for instance whether they were in alignment or opposing somebody/something and on what grounds, which implied the construction of their managerial identities in relation (a) particular discursive resource(s) and their drawing on it.

Although this step led to a more analytical consideration of the data in terms of identifying some salient discursive resources drawn upon by the HoDs and examples of the HoDs' identity tensions and discursive identity work, the narratives and their analyses remained close to the data and some analytical concepts remained implicit. However, this process served as a basis for selecting extracts from the field notes and interview transcripts for further analysis and incorporation into the dissertation.

- 3) The next analytical step – repeated in the writing of chapters 6, 7 and 8, in which the specifics of each of the shadowed HoDs and their discursive contexts are explored in more detail – involved the selection of texts to be used

for the data analysis presented in the dissertation, and the subsequent structuring and writing of the dissertation. This was done, as mentioned above, on the basis of the analytical step 2b, which facilitated the compilation of the HoDs' use of discursive resources relevant to their experiences of identity tensions and discursive identity work. In addition, the analytical step 1 enabled a search of other research participants' use of discourses that were drawn upon to further detail the HoDs' departmental and broader discursive contexts. Additionally, I paid attention to any research-related organizational documents mentioned or alluded to by the HoDs and other research participants, and reviewed my organizational document library to ensure that I considered all relevant documents adding to the understanding of the HoDs' discursive identity work and/or their discursive environments. This mainly included documents related to relevant aspects of research and research management, for example research strategies, research bulletins and job advertisements.

- 4) The analytical step 3 also fed into the writing of chapter 5, which presents a selection of the Faculty and university discourses. This was complemented by a review of the aforementioned 'extra-organizational' documents, which served to further explore and report on the relevant aspects of the UK higher education system as a broader discursive context in which the shadowed HoDs and their institution were embedded.
- 5) Next, the text was prepared for "member checking," that is seeking participant feedback on the data presented (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2009). This was done in two steps:
 - a. Relevant quotes from interviews and/or observations appearing in the dissertation were initially sent to research participants other than the shadowed HoDs who had previously opted to review the data. Two research participants requested minor changes to their quotes; one

requested the deletion of a sentence and another one requested a change in wording that did not affect the content of the quote.

- b. After the requested changes were made, each of the three shadowed HoDs was sent the chapter focused on them and their department (except for the analytical paragraphs to conclude the chapter subsections, which were to be finalized after member checking), in addition to the quotes from interviews and/or observation referred to elsewhere in the dissertation. Apart from a minor factual correction pointed out by one HoD, the shadowed HoDs did not ask for any adjustments to the texts that concerned them and their respective departments.
- 6) As indicated above, after completing the member checking, I began finalizing the dissertation, including revisions to chapters 5 to 8, which involved final adjustments to the analysis based on another detailed examination of the AMM literature presented in chapter 2 and theoretical departure points introduced in chapter 3. This process also fed into the writing of the final analytical discussion and conclusions in chapter 9.

4.5 Further Methodological Considerations

In the final section of this chapter, I address the selected features of my research approach that required further consideration during the research process: my positionality as a researcher and research ethics.

4.5.1 Researcher Positionality

As indicated earlier (sections 4.2.2, 4.4.2), data generation and analysis were influenced by my own disciplinary, theoretical and personal inclinations (Emerson et al., 1995; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2009). However, the co-constructed nature of the research

process was also determined by my presence and the nature of my position in the field. These inevitably affected the environment studied and the relationships I developed with my research participants, and consequently influenced the process of data generation.

When I entered the field, I was a foreign doctoral student in my late twenties, joining a group of academic managers, administrators and academics. Although I was there in a researcher role, in ‘real-life’ situations my participants would most likely have been either my academic advisors or managers, but certainly not my colleagues. I felt that this sometimes led to a positive attitude towards me, at least among some research participants: when arranging shadowing periods, for example, shadowees supported me and conveyed their understanding of the importance of this research to me. Sometimes they engaged in conversations with me about various theoretical, methodological, ethical or practical aspects of my study, thus building what felt like a supervisor-student relationship. I had a similar experience with many of my interviewees: they were curious about my doctoral research, my methodological and analytical approaches and my plans for the future. My shared academic background also influenced the level of my participation to some extent: I was sometimes asked for my opinion on research-related issues discussed by the participants, which at times resulted in rather collegial relationships. At the same time, I felt that my junior status – probably reinforced by my gender identity as a woman – led to my position sometimes being shaped in reference to the HoDs’ personal assistants. Every now and then, I was asked to pass on information to the HoDs by their colleagues or personal assistants, or reminded the HoDs of their upcoming meetings and tasks (see also Gorup, 2016).

Although some field relations were spontaneously more informal and friendly than others, overall I developed a sense of empathy towards my participants and especially towards the shadowed HoDs with whom I spent a lot of time. I did not agree with all their views – and sometimes I felt comfortable enough to tell them so and ask

them to elaborate – however my intention was not to judge them as individuals but rather to try and understand them. I am therefore confident that this dissertation conveys my aim of balancing “sympathetic proximity” and “critical distance” by developing a “critical proximity” approach (Gilliat-Ray, 2011) that simultaneously allows for a thorough understanding of shadowees’ perspectives and an academic analysis of them.

4.5.2 Cultivating Ethical Research Practice

Another important consideration throughout the research process was research ethics. While the interviews were not exempt from ethical decision-making, ethical issues arose most frequently in the context of shadowing. The latter implies close proximity between shadowers and shadowees and often provides the researcher with intimate insights into the participants’ lives. At the same time, shadowing is highly unpredictable, as the shadower’s access and exposure depend on the shadowees. This intimate and emergent nature of shadowing can raise numerous ethical issues, including those related to obtaining ethical approval, ensuring voluntary and informed consent, and maintaining privacy, confidentiality and anonymity (Gorup, 2020, pp. 475–476).⁴

4.5.2.1 Obtaining Ethical Approval

As with most research projects involving human participants, ethnographers must usually obtain approval from one or more ethics committees to ensure that an ethnographic study meets ethical standards. Before I started the fieldwork, I sought and obtained ethical approval from my home institution. After arriving at my host university, I was instructed to also approach the ethics committee there to ensure that

⁴ This paragraph uses extracts from Gorup (2020). Quotation marks have been omitted due to some changes in the text.

I adhered to somewhat stricter ethical regulations than those required by my home university.

However, after the initial approval was granted and I could proceed with the study, I had to approach the ethics committee several more times. Due to the emergent nature of shadowing, I was unable to anticipate some of the situations I would find myself in; in particular, the shadowed HoDs interacted with categories of people I had not originally listed as potential research participants (see also Quinlan, 2008). This led to several amended applications for ethical approval, with a number of participant groups being added to the list (see also Gorup, 2016, 2020). The application had to be submitted one last time before I started collecting unpublished organizational documents.

4.5.2.2 *Ensuring Voluntary and Informed Consent*

To ensure voluntary and informed consent from *all* research participant groups, I developed three variations of participant information sheets and consent forms (see appendix): one for the HoDs to be shadowed and interviewed, one for other people to be observed in the process of shadowing, and one for people to be interviewed. The emphasis on *all* research participants is especially important in the context of shadowing because, as Bartkowiak-Theron and Sappey (2012) point out, the principle applies not only to the shadowees who are the focus of the study, but also to other people who are observed during the shadowing process (Gorup, 2020, p. 480).⁵

As mentioned earlier (section 4.1.2), potential shadowees were approached through a senior academic manager at NewU. The manager was indirectly superior to

⁵ This paragraph uses extracts from Gorup (2020). Quotation marks have been omitted due to some changes in the text.

the HoDs, but my supervisor and I assessed that the HoDs would feel sufficiently empowered to decline the manager's invitation if they so wished. All three HoDs I contacted at the Faculty responded positively almost immediately. However, as mentioned in the previous subsection, my ethical provisions had to be modified when I arrived at NewU, which included a revision of the participant recruitment process. In addition to significantly adjusted participant information sheets and consent forms, the senior academic manager who had initially approached the HoDs had to provide a statement that non-participation would not be detrimental to the HoDs. In addition to these provisions, I paid close attention throughout the fieldwork to ensure that the HoDs' consent was not given indefinitely (Johnson, 2014; Quinlan, 2008); they could ask me "to pause the observations at any time" (Gorup, 2020, p. 480).

Following Johnson's (2014) guidelines, members of each department were informed of my research via email before I began shadowing their HoD. Once shadowing began, before the scheduled meetings – especially if they involved individuals whom I had not observed earlier – attendees were provided with participant information sheets and consent forms via email by the HoDs' personal assistants. Nevertheless, it occasionally happened that attendees joined the meetings without knowing about the study. In these cases, I followed my routine for observing unscheduled meetings: I introduced my research and, whenever possible, asked attendees to familiarize themselves with and sign the consent form before the meeting. If this was not possible, I approached attendees after the meeting; in some cases they had already verbally consented to my presence beforehand, but sometimes I had to obtain their consent afterwards. Although rare, I sometimes observed people who were not aware of my presence at all (see also Johnson, 2014, McDonald, 2018), for example when someone arrived late to a meeting and left it early. To mitigate this unintentional covert research, I generally did not include the data generated in such cases – as well as the notes I took at public events at NewU – in my research reports.

4.5.2.3 *Managing Privacy, Confidentiality and Anonymity*

Another cornerstone of research ethics is the protection of participants' privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. Full compliance with these principles, however, can be challenging, particularly in the conduct of shadowing (Gorup, 2020, p. 481).⁶

To begin with privacy – “the participants’ right to keep selected information about themselves private” (Gorup, 2020, p. 481) – while I felt that interviewees could control rather well what they wanted to keep to themselves, this posed a greater challenge during shadowing when I sometimes found myself unintentionally in situations where personal or sensitive issues were discussed. As such circumstances are difficult to foresee (McDonald, 2018), I found them challenging and felt that interrupting a personal or difficult conversation by leaving the room could be as intrusive as staying in the room. Generally, I did not stop the observation unless asked to do so; however, as indicated earlier (section 4.4.2), I followed Johnson’s (2014) guidelines to give the shadowees an opportunity to review my research reports before public dissemination “to ensure not to publicly discuss potentially sensitive or harmful topics” (Gorup, 2020, p. 482). As mentioned earlier, this step was followed not only with the shadowees but also with all other research participants.

Closely related to the protection of privacy is the preservation of the interrelated principles of confidentiality and anonymity. Confidentiality refers to the responsibility to keep data sources confidential, and ensuring the anonymity of participants – that is removing their identifying information – helps to achieve this. To meet these principles, I began by securely storing all data on storage systems provided by my home institution, and locked and anonymized many of the data files. In reporting

⁶ This paragraph uses extracts from Gorup (2020). Quotation marks have been omitted due to some changes in the text.

on the fieldwork, in relation to the interviewees and organizational members observed in addition to the HoDs, I avoid detailing who was interviewed and/or observed and do not specify most individuals' organizational roles. Apart from the shadowed HoDs, all personal pseudonyms used are gender neutral and I refer to individual research participants with the personal pronouns they/them/their. To enhance the research participants' internal confidentiality within the organization, some research participants – whose both interviews and observations I reported on – were assigned two pseudonyms, and in some cases I used a combination of pseudonyms and more general identifiers (for example a department member, an interviewee, a research participant). However, given the relatively small organizational setting in which I conducted my fieldwork, research participants might still be able to recognize each other due to specific language use and/or opinions shared. Moreover, achieving internal confidentiality was an even greater challenge in the case of the shadowed HoDs. While I did my best to anonymize these research participants to the 'external' world – by using pseudonyms for the individual HoDs, selected organizational terminology, and units, buildings and locations, and by vaguely describing potentially identifying personal and organizational information – internally it was virtually impossible to keep the HoDs' identities anonymous because so many people in the Faculty and beyond knew who the shadowees were. While I could arguably not achieve full internal confidentiality, I was careful in selecting the topics I reported on and, as mentioned above, shared my research reports with the HoDs prior to publication to ensure that they agreed with my selection in case they were identified.

5 Setting the Scene

Before going into detail in chapters 6 to 8 about the developments and discourses in the individual departments of the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences (the Faculty) at New University (NewU) and the discursive identity work of the three shadowed Heads of Department (HoDs), drawing on existing academic literature, government policies, reports and documentation, organizational documents and the data generated among my research participants, I present in this chapter a selective account of the national and broader organizational features that significantly shaped the HoDs' discursive environments, focusing on those featuring in the analyses that follow. First, I provide a general description and discursive characteristics of the UK national higher education system, before moving on to consider the HoD role in the UK and the country's university research assessment scheme, the Research Excellence Framework (REF). I then examine these national characteristics and discourses in relation to the case study university's status as one of the country's 'new' universities (section 4.1.3). Thereafter, I address the developments at NewU and the Faculty. I begin each of these two sections by outlining some general features and dominant discourses at NewU and the Faculty respectively, and then present a selection of research-related events and discourses that are particularly relevant to the subsequent analyses of the shadowed

HoDs' approaches to research management and their discursive identity work. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

5.1 Introducing Select National Higher Education Features

At the very beginning of my fieldwork, as I was browsing through the daily news in the online version of a British newspaper, I remember my attention being grabbed by an article about the salaries of Vice-Chancellors (VCs) at UK universities. An examination by a trade union representing university employees found that heads of universities earned on average around a quarter of a million British pounds, with some VCs' salaries and benefits reaching several hundred thousand. The report also revealed that the salaries of some university heads had increased by more than ten per cent in the previous academic year, despite government representatives calling on university leaders the year before to limit the growth of their salaries, especially in the face of public budget cuts to higher education. When I finished reading the news article – although I do not remember the details of the action – I must have copied parts of it quite matter-of-factly into my field journal, as I made not further annotations. I suppose what I read did not surprise me too much; news like this fitted perfectly into the general picture of the UK higher education sector I had formed based on the literature and sources I had previously examined.

In the remainder of this section, I briefly describe the managerialist transformation of the UK higher education sector in recent decades. After a general outline of this transition, I examine how these changes have affected the HoD role in UK universities. I then turn to national trends in the management of university research performance and present the REF and its impact on university research management practices, as

well as the effects this has had on individual academics and academic endeavours more broadly. Next, I describe the specific features and implications of managerialist transformation on the UK's so-called new universities, of which my case study institution was one. I then elaborate on how this 'new' status has affected the HoD role and the management of research activities in these types of universities.

5.1.1 The Managerialist Transformation of UK Higher Education

Although a comprehensive overview of the history of higher education in the UK is beyond the scope of this dissertation, in this subsection, I briefly introduce some of the changes that the UK higher education system and its institutions have undergone in recent decades, particularly since the late 1970s. As indicated in chapter 2 (section 2.1), many of these developments – in the UK and beyond – have taken place with the aim of making public higher education institutions more efficient and effective, and aligning them with organizational and management forms typical of the private sector. The UK in particular is considered a pioneer in the design and implementation of such managerialist reforms (Ferlie et al., 2008). Indeed, managerialist transformation in UK higher education began more than four decades ago. Since the late 1970s, higher education institutions have been increasingly subject to managerialist policies that influence many aspects of academic organization and life (Deem et al., 2007; Parker & Jary, 1995). As a result, the UK higher education system at the time of my fieldwork in the mid-2010s looked very different from what it did before the so-called “managerial revolution” (Amaral, Meek, & Larsen, 2003).

First, as Deem et al. (2007) summarize, higher education institutions in the 1960s and 1970s formed “an elite system” (p. 38). In the mid-1960s, higher education participation among those between the ages of eighteen and 20 was in single digits and rose only slowly until the early 1970s. This was despite a considerable expansion of the sector during these two decades, when the number of universities almost doubled to 45

by the end of the 1960s, and 30 polytechnics were established in England by the early 1970s,⁷ which also offered “degree-level work” (p. 38). After a pause in expansion in the 1980s, partly due to government funding cuts to higher education, the sector experienced significant growth from the 1990s onwards (Deem et al., 2007). At the time of my fieldwork, in the academic year 2014/15, the proportion of seventeen to 30 year olds enrolling in higher education in England reached almost 50 per cent (Department for Education, 2016). In the same academic year, the number of UK higher education institutions reached over 170 (Scott & Callender, 2017).

As for the funding of higher education, in the 1960s and 1970s, government funding of universities was stable and there were no tuition fees for most students. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, the situation changed drastically and public spending decreased significantly. Moreover, the massive increase in student numbers mentioned above eventually led to the introduction of tuition fees (Deem et al., 2007). In England, the initial annual tuition fee was increased from GBP 1,000 in the late 1990s to GBP 3,000 in the mid-2000s, with fees seen as a supplement to, rather than a replacement for, state funding (Anderson, 2016). However, in 2012, there was a further increase in annual tuition fees to a cap of GBP 9,000, after which most institutions raised their fees to the maximum amount or close to it (Hubble & Bolton, 2018).⁸ Fees were now intended to cover the full cost of teaching, replacing state funding for teaching (Anderson, 2016). In addition to the changes in funding for teaching, there has been a

⁷ There are some differences between the higher education systems in the four countries of the UK, that is England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (Deem et al., 2007). As NewU is based in England, I focus on the characteristics of the English system, and/or facts and figures relating to it, where relevant.

⁸ Following the introduction of the so-called Teaching Excellence Framework or the TEF (more on this later in this section), institutions can further increase their tuition fees to GBP 9,250 if they receive a “TEF award” (Office for Students, 2021).

system of selective allocation of research funding since the mid-1980s, which is discussed in more detail later (section 5.1.3). Furthermore, over the decades, there has been an increasing expectation that research conducted in universities will also benefit UK economy, and higher education institutions have been encouraged to seek research funding from sources other than the public purse, such as business (Deem et al., 2007).

In terms of their governance systems, in the 1960s and 1970s, universities relied on collegial arrangements such as committees at various levels of the organization (Deem et al., 2007). Although, as noted in chapter 2 (section 2.2.3.2), collegiality has been to some extent an idealized concept – as certain categories of faculty were excluded from decision-making (Deem et al., 2007; Trowler, 2010) – the changes to nonetheless more collegial organizational approaches introduced since the mid-1980s should be acknowledged. As noted by Deem et al. (2007), the 1980s brought the devolution of budgets from the university’s centre to “smaller units” such as faculties and departments; a more prominent role for “corporate governance” that now includes not only academic members but also “lay governors” and “administrators;” and – illuminating the context of the news article mentioned at the beginning of this section – the transformation of VCs from “leading academics” into “Chief Executives” (p. 44), who have since been paid significantly more than academics, as is common for Chief Executives in other fields (Deem et al., 2007, pp. 87–88; see also Jack, 2023). Developments of this kind – reinforced by other managerialist advances described above and in the continuation of this subsection – meant that, by the time of my fieldwork in the mid-2010s, the formerly relatively collegial forms of academic “self-governance” were giving way to more explicit and bureaucratized forms of management of academic activities (Deem et al., 2007, p. 41; see also Parker & Jary, 1995; Reed, 2002), underpinned by growing numbers of staff in universities’ administrative and professional services (Hogan, 2014). In addition, “many more academics” – at multiple organizational levels – have taken on management responsibilities that require them to monitor, among other things, their units’ budgets and “academic performance,” making

these roles more overtly managerial (Deem et al., 2007, pp. 42–43; see also Deem & Brehony, 2005). Furthermore, with the increasing regulation of academic activities – discussed in more detail in the following paragraph – new management roles such as “Directors of Teaching Quality” and “Directors of Research and Enterprise” emerged (Deem et al., 2007, p. 63).

Another aspect that has changed drastically is the nature of regulation of academic activities. Whereas in the 1960s and 1970s this task was left to the universities themselves and was not monitored by external bodies, since then activities such as teaching and research have been subject to close public scrutiny, making higher education institutions and academics more accountable for their work. In terms of monitoring and evaluation of teaching activities, the early 1990s saw the introduction of audits of teaching quality and standards. In the late 1990s, the Quality Assurance Agency was established to assess higher education institutions’ academic standards and quality (Deem et al., 2007). Moreover, the National Student Survey (NSS) was introduced in the mid-2000s to monitor undergraduate student experience and satisfaction based on student evaluations (Ipsos MORI, 2021). In addition, in the years following my fieldwork, the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) was introduced, which assesses higher education institutions’ teaching excellence and student outcomes, the latter relating to whether students enrol in further study after graduation or are employed in graduate-level jobs (Office for Students, 2021). On the research side, as discussed in more detail later (section 5.1.3), universities’ performance has been periodically assessed since the mid-1980s via a national research evaluation exercise, currently in the form of the so-called Research Excellence Framework or the REF (UKRI [UK Research and Innovation], 2020). More recently, in 2020, the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) was launched to evaluate higher education institutions’ engagement with various external partners (Research England, 2021). Developments of this kind are consistent with an increased focus on performance indicators, some of which feed into various university rankings, including the national league tables (Cave

et al., 2006; Deem et al., 2007; Wilsdon et al., 2015) compiled annually by several publications (The Complete University Guide, n.d.; The Guardian, 2021; The Times & The Sunday Times, 2021).

This brief literature and document review suggests that – although the managerialist developments described above have not completely overtaken pre-existing notions of how higher education and academics should operate (Tight, 2014; Trowler, 2010), and some UK academics have furthermore noted the positive effects of managerialism “as a facilitator of enhanced performance, professionalism and status” (Kolsaker, 2008, p. 522) – UK higher education institutions and academic life have become infused with managerialist notions, practices and discourses in recent decades (Deem et al., 2007; Parker & Jary, 1995), including with those italicized below. Students are now referred to as “*consumers*” or “*customers*” choosing between different *products* and *providers* in the higher education *market* (Molesworth et al., 2011), rather than “learners” (Molesworth et al., 2009) or “citizens exercising a social right” to higher education (Anderson, 2016). In order to be competitive in the market, many higher education institutions have embraced the discourse of *student satisfaction* (Sabri, 2013; Thiel, 2019) and *graduate employability* (Boden & Nedeva, 2010; Tomlinson, 2017), as these are seen as important *performance indicators* for attracting potential students. The discourse of *competition* between universities for resources and reputation is further fuelled by national research assessment evaluations, which inform the *selective allocation* of public research funding and establish national research *rankings*. As a result, research is increasingly referred to as a “*game*” that academics play (Lucas, 2006; Townsend, 2012) – they need to produce the right quality and quantity of research outputs to ensure their units perform well in the REF – as opposed to a “private” endeavour that used to be “of interest only to other academics” (Deem et al., 2007, p. 42; see also Henkel, 2000). Overall, with the increased attention paid to numerous performance indicators, such as those just mentioned, the overt management of academics and their activities has become more widespread (Deem & Brehony, 2005; Deem et al., 2007). Higher

education institutions and their managers are now often adopting *performance management* discourses and practices, such as regularly appraising academics' performance to determine whether they are meeting set targets (Franco-Santos et al., 2014), thereby reducing academics' autonomy and turning them into performance managed "*knowledge workers*" (Deem et al., 2007).

To sum it up in the words of many of my research participants – although in line with the research mentioned above, the degree of endorsement and interpretations of these transformations varied from interlocutor to interlocutor – at the time of my fieldwork, English higher education was often described in terms of the discourses of “marketization,” “commercialization,” “commodification,” “consumerism,” “corporatization,” “business” and “competition.” A couple of my research participants referred to today’s universities as “factories,” while others noted the transformation of students into “customers” or “consumers.” Moreover, several brought up the fact that the university and academics have become more “managed” and “accountable,” and there were numerous references to national league tables and various performance indicators such as student satisfaction as measured in the NSS and research quality as assessed in the REF. This suggests that, as is also shown in the existing literature, managerialism-inspired discourses had become an integral part of the discursive environment characterizing UK higher education at the time of my fieldwork.

Having outlined some general developments and discourses that characterize the contemporary UK higher education sector, in the next subsection, I look more closely at one of the aspects of change in UK universities that is particularly relevant to the subsequent analyses, namely the managerialist transformation of the HoD role.

5.1.2 Features of the Head of Department Position in UK Universities

As mentioned earlier, managerialist reforms in the UK higher education sector have led to more managerial elements and responsibilities being demanded of academic

managers at multiple organizational levels. With regard to HoDs specifically, the so-called *Jarratt Report* issued in 1985 – which was commissioned to investigate the efficiency of UK universities’ management – proposed the idea of an HoD who “should be both a manager *and* an academic leader” (Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, 1985, p. 28; emphasis added). Moreover, the report suggested that “managerial capabilities” should take precedence over academic credentials in the selection of HoDs (Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, 1985, p. 28), with HoDs being assigned “clear duties and responsibility for the performance of their departments and their use of resources” (Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, 1985, p. 36). In line with the recommendations of the *Jarratt Report*, the post of HoD was to be given an explicit managerial character; indeed, the said report has been seen by some as a “catalyst” for defining the HoD role in the UK higher education as one of a manager (Bessant & Mavin, 2016, p. 916).

In addition, and in the view of some with greater impact than potential institutional-level policies on the nature of the HoD role, HoDs in the UK have been significantly affected by the wider managerialist changes within the system to which universities have had to respond (Fulton, 2003; Jackson, 1999), as described in the previous subsection. In an increasingly managerialist environment, HoDs were not only given additional responsibilities (Sotirakou, 2004) and a more prominent standing within their institutions (Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Thomas-Gregory, 2014), but also became responsible for an increasing number of managerialism-infused tasks (Deem & Brehony, 2005; Deem et al., 2007; Jackson, 1999). While the definition and perception of the HoD role varies across UK universities and departments within them (Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Smith, 2007), existing research suggests that HoDs across the sector have become responsible for, among other things, managing their units’ budgets (Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; Deem et al., 2007; Henkel, 2000; Sotirakou, 2004; Trowler, 2010), for the performance of their staff (Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Jackson, 1999; Sotirakou,

2004), for their units' teaching quality and, particularly important in the context of this dissertation, for departmental research performance as measured in the national assessment exercises (Fulton, 2003; Jackson, 1999; Trowler, 2010). Moreover, HoDs have become more accountable to central university management for the above – and many other – aspects of management (Prichard, 2000; Sotirakou, 2004), and are expected to meet departmental targets in line with those set for the institution as a whole (Middlehurst, 1993; Thomas-Gregory, 2014).

This suggests that, as indicated in chapter 2 (section 2.1), at the national level the discourse of HoDs as managers – rather than academics – has become more dominant. As noted in chapter 2 (section 2.2), these changes in the HoD role and the transformation of the national higher education system more broadly have increased pressures on HoDs and heightened tensions with respect to performing their roles (Deem & Brehony, 2005; Deem et al., 2007). Indeed, not all HoDs equally embraced the managerialist discourses and the managerial responsibilities placed upon them or their labelling as managers (Deem et al., 2007; Henkel, 2000; Smith, 2002), and a variety of other discourses – many of which relate to HoDs' academic experience and activities – have continued to influence HoDs' perceptions and performance of their roles (Deem et al., 2007; Smith, 2002; Sotirakou, 2004).

Having provided a general overview of the ways in which managerialist reforms in UK higher education have impacted the HoD role and associated discourses in recent decades, I now turn to another aspect that is crucial to the present research – and which has long been steeped in managerialist approaches and discourses – the assessment and management of university research.

5.1.3 National Trends in the Management of Research Performance

The process of national assessment of university research, undertaken in the UK since the 1980s, has long had a profound impact on universities and academics (Deem et al.,

2007; Harley, 2002; Lucas, 2006). As detailed in chapters 6 to 8, my conversations with and observations of academics and academic managers at NewU often featured numerous discourses relating to the characteristics and requirements of the so-called REF. Prior to a detailed exploration of this scheme in the context of my field site, it is therefore necessary to introduce some of the core aspects of the UK's research evaluation framework and the impact it has had on the country's universities, academics and academic endeavours.

5.1.3.1 Introducing the Research Excellence Framework

The beginnings of the UK's national research assessment framework go back to 1986, when the country was the first to introduce a tool for assessing the quality of its universities' research activities in an effort to be more selective in funding university research. As the format, requirements and implications of this national research assessment tool evolved – the exercise became more systematic and served to inform the distribution of greater proportion of the government's recurring research funding – the Research Selectivity Exercise of 1986 and 1989 was replaced by the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) conducted in 1992, 1996, 2001 and 2008. Thereafter, the RAE was succeeded by the REF (Arnold et al., 2018; Stern, 2016), which has since been undertaken in 2014 and 2021 (UKRI, 2020). The purpose of the UK's research evaluation scheme as we currently know it – in the form of the REF⁹ – is threefold. The REF results “provide benchmarking information and establish reputational yardsticks”

⁹ In this dissertation, unless otherwise stated, when I speak of the REF in general or refer to my research participants' observations regarding the REF, I am referring to sources related to the REF 2014. This is because I assumed that most of my research participants, when speaking of the REF, had the REF 2014 in mind, as its results were announced only months before the start of my fieldwork and the REF 2021 requirements and guidelines had not yet been finalized at the time of my field research. Where relevant for the discussions later in the dissertation, I clarify the differences between the REF 2014 and the REF 2021.

(HEFCE et al., 2011, p. 4) as well as inform the distribution of a part of government research funding to universities. Thus, the exercise also serves as an “accountability” tool for the research efforts supported with public funds (HEFCE et al., 2011, p. 4).

The REF is, in short, “a process of expert review” in which panels of disciplinary specialists evaluate research quality in disciplinary Units of Assessment (UOAs). In the REF 2014, there were 36 UOAs assessed by as many disciplinary “sub-panels,” the latter overseen by four “main panels.” Individual UOAs submitted may mirror the submitting university’s organizational units, such as departments, but UOAs may also bring together researchers from multiple administrative units that fit the disciplinary focus of a UOA. Each UOA submission entered by a university in the REF is assessed on three aspects that relate to the UOA in the relevant census period:

- First, UOAs are assessed based on “research outputs” – often in the form of research publications – which are judged on their “originality, significance and rigour.” In the REF 2014, UOAs were generally required to submit four research outputs per academic selected for submission to the exercise. The research output assessment was weighted at 65 per cent.¹⁰
- Second, the REF includes the assessment of the “research impact,” that is the effects a UOA’s research has had outside academia. Impact is appraised, among other things, based on “impact case studies” and judged according to “reach and significance.” In order to be eligible for assessment, impact case studies must be based on research outputs of at least internationally recognized quality

¹⁰ In contrast to the REF 2014, in the REF 2021, UOAs were required to include in the exercise “*all* staff with significant responsibilities for research” (Department for the Economy et al., 2019, p. 13; emphasis added). Each UOA was required to submit an average of 2.5 research outputs per academic submitted, wherein as a rule, each staff member could enter a minimum of one and a maximum of five outputs. Additionally, in the REF 2021, the weighting of the research output assessment was reduced to 60 per cent (Department for the Economy et al., 2019).

standard.¹¹ The REF 2014 was the first time that the national research assessment included the evaluation of impact, with the latter being weighted at 20 per cent.¹²

- Third, UOAs are evaluated in terms of their “research environment,” which is judged, among other things, on the number of “research doctoral degrees awarded” and “research income.” The research environment is assessed based on its “vitality and sustainability” and weighted at fifteen per cent (HEFCE et al., 2011).

As part of the REF, “sub-profiles” are developed to indicate the level of research quality that a UOA has achieved in relation to each of the three research elements. These sub-profiles are integrated into an “overall quality profile,” taking into account the weightings assigned to each sub-profile. The overall research quality is judged according to a four-point “star” scale as follows, which can also be applied, broadly speaking, to the three individually assessed research elements:

- “four star” describes “world-leading” research;
- “three star” indicates research that is “internationally excellent;”
- “two star” refers to research that is “recognised internationally;” and
- “one star” denotes research that is “recognised nationally.”

¹¹ Internationally recognized research outputs are also referred to as “two star” outputs in the context of the REF. See below for the REF assessment scale.

¹² In the REF 2021, the weighting of research impact assessment was increased to 25 per cent (Department for the Economy et al., 2019).

Research quality that does not meet national quality standards or submitted elements that do not fit the relevant definitions in the REF submission guidelines are assessed as “unclassified” (HEFCE et al., 2011). As indicated earlier, while the purpose of the REF is not to create explicit rankings based on the performance of individual universities and UOAs, the results of the REF based on the above rating scale are incorporated into the REF-specific league tables produced by the media after each periodic national research evaluation (see e.g. Jump, 2014; The Guardian, 2014) and also feed into some of the previously mentioned league tables (The Complete University Guide, n.d.; The Times & The Sunday Times, 2021).

As already mentioned, the REF results not only inform rankings, but also play an important role in the distribution of public research funding. The allocation of “performance-based research funding” (Stern, 2016, p. 48) based on the REF and also referred to as “quality-related” or “‘QR’ funding,” takes the form of “long-term, stable block grant” that supports universities’ strategic research investments (Stern, 2016, p. 6). In the academic years in which I conducted my fieldwork, the allocated QR funding amounted to almost GBP 2 billion annually across the UK (HESA [Higher Education Statistics Agency], 2016, 2017), and just under GBP 1.6 billion annually was distributed among English universities (HEFCE, 2014, 2015).¹³ In England, the majority of this funding – the “mainstream QR funding” – was determined, following the REF 2014, by taking into account the following factors:

- research volume, based on the number of staff entered in the REF;

¹³ In line with the UK’s “dual support” research funding system, in addition to QR funding, government funding bodies distribute “competitive grant funding” allocated to specific “research projects and programmes” (Stern, 2016, p. 6). In 2014/15, these funds amounted to around GBP 2.6 billion across the UK (Wilsdon et al., 2015).

- research quality, as determined in the REF according to the scale presented above;
- subject-related cost weighting, given the different levels of research expenditure in different disciplinary fields; and
- “London weighting,” that is a funding increase for London-based institutions.

Regarding the role of research quality in QR funding allocation, the funding formula only takes into account research assessed as four star and three star at all relevant stages of calculation.¹⁴ Moreover, when determining funding for a UOA as a whole at the national level, and subsequently for individual universities within a UOA, a four-to-one weighting is applied to four star and three star research (HEFCE, 2015, 2016, 2017; Research England, 2018, 2019, 2020).

To sum up, the REF has brought about a particular set of discourses regarding university research. As indicated in the above overview of the UK’s national research evaluation system, the broad REF discourse is characterized by notions of selective funding, reputational comparisons and accountability. Research units are now spoken of in terms of UOAs, and research is constituted and referred to with reference to research outputs, impact and environment. The discourse of research quality has been permeated by the four-point star rating system, which also informs the notion of QR funding.

¹⁴ Until 2012/13, two star research outputs were also included in the QR funding formula (HEFCE, 2012).

Having introduced some of the basic features of the REF and REF-related discourses, in the next subsection, I examine what these notions have meant in practice for universities, academics and academic activities in general.

5.1.3.2 The Research Excellence Framework in Practice

According to some, the REF¹⁵ has helped to improve the quality of research conducted by UK academics (Stern, 2016; Wilsdon et al., 2015) and has given a more prominent role for research at UK universities more generally (Harley, 2002; Henkel, 2000, 2005; Lucas, 2006; Scott & Callender, 2017; Stern, 2016). However, it has also led to some significant changes in universities' and academics' approaches to research management, research itself and other academic endeavours. In this subsection, I present some of these consequences of the REF, focusing particularly on those that feature prominently in later analyses.

To begin with, the REF has greatly influenced UK universities' approach to research management (Agyemang & Broadbent, 2015; Arnold et al., 2018; Lucas, 2006; Sayer, 2015; Stern, 2016; Weinstein et al., 2019; Wright et al., 2014; Yokoyama, 2006). Some believe that, as a result of national research evaluation, research is better managed (Stern, 2016), or certainly more managed at the institutional level, as evidenced by the rise in strategic behaviours and academic and administrative positions specifically dedicated to supporting research efforts (Deem, 2010; Lucas, 2006; Sayer, 2015). Moreover, some departments and universities have employed support mechanisms to encourage and enhance their research activities, for example, through internal research funding, research mentoring, research seminars, research bulletins and REF-related training (Deem & Lucas, 2007; Hunt, 2014; Weinstein et al., 2019). However, it has also

¹⁵ In this subsection, I use "the REF" to refer to both the REF and the earlier variations of the UK's national university research assessment.

been shown that institutions, as they enter competition with their peers, often engage in “game-playing,” that is research management activities aimed at “gaming” the REF system (Agyemang & Broadbent, 2015; Lucas, 2006; Murphy & Sage, 2015; Sayer, 2015; Stern, 2016; Watermeyer & Olssen, 2016; Weinstein et al., 2019; Wilsdon et al., 2015). Thus, in their attempts to maximize their REF results – along with their QR funding and research reputations – institutions have adopted various practices that were likely not intended by the architects of the REF.

For instance, to improve their REF performance some universities brought together individual staff or groups of academics to form “new interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary” units (Henkel, 2012, p. 164). Many have been conducting various forms of institutional pre-REF reviews undertaken by internal and/or external reviewers to assess which research outputs and academics who authored them were suitable for the REF submission (Agyemang & Broadbent, 2015; Sayer, 2015; Stern, 2016; Watermeyer & Olssen, 2016). The latter suggests that academics have been expected to meet their institutional REF-informed targets if they were to be “REF-able” (McCulloch, 2017; Watermeyer & Olssen, 2016), for example reaching a certain number of likely three star and four star publications published in the relevant REF census period (McCulloch, 2017; Sayer, 2015). Such REF-inspired targets – in addition to those related to research funding (Leathwood & Read, 2013; Wilsdon et al., 2015) – therefore frequently permeate the processes of individual academics’ research performance management (Agyemang & Broadbent, 2015; Arnold et al., 2018; McCulloch, 2017; Sayer, 2015), as well as hiring and promotion decisions (Agyemang & Broadbent, 2015; Arnold et al., 2018; Gibney, 2012; Harley, 2002; Lucas, 2006; McCulloch, 2017; Stern, 2016). As such, they have a significant impact on academic careers (Agyemang & Broadbent, 2015; Arnold et al., 2018; Lucas, 2006).

On the one hand, some academics have welcomed the REF as an opportunity to engage in research to a more significant extent or to focus on producing higher

quality research outputs (Harley, 2002; Sikes, 2006). Moreover, those who perform at or above the required levels – the “research stars” (Gibney, 2012; Harley, 2002) – might be allotted more research time and (funding) support (McCulloch, 2017; McNay, 2015; Sikes, 2006; Wilsdon et al., 2015), receive bonuses (Agyemang & Broadbent, 2015), get promoted (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016; Clarke et al., 2012; Clarke & Knights, 2015) or be bought in and offered hefty salaries and research facilities by their new employers based on their research prowess (Gibney, 2012). On the other hand, those who do not meet research targets set for them may eventually not be entered in the REF so as not to compromise the exercise results (Lucas, 2006; Sayer, 2015; Wright et al., 2014). This may not only lead to “stigma” for these ‘non-REF-able’ academics (Stern, 2016, p. 19; see also Agyemang & Broadbent, 2015; Henkel, 2012; Watermeyer & Olssen, 2016), but in some cases they are also allocated increased teaching and administrative duties (Deem et al., 2007; Harley, 2002; Lucas, 2006; Sayer, 2015; Sikes, 2006) to free up time for their research colleagues (Henkel, 2012), given teaching-only contracts¹⁶ (Anonymous, 2019; Deem et al., 2007; Sayer, 2015; Scott, 2013) or are even made redundant (Grove, 2018; Sayer, 2015). These practices could be seen as problematic in a context where many academics complain of heavy workloads or a lack of research time allocated to them, which prevents them from fulfilling their research- and REF-related expectations (Deem & Lucas, 2007; McCulloch, 2017; Murphy & Sage, 2015; Weinstein et al., 2019).

¹⁶ As noted above (section, 5.1.3.1, footnote 10), in the REF 2021 universities could no longer *select* academics to be submitted to the REF, but were required to enter “*all* staff with significant responsibilities for research” (Department for the Economy et al., 2019, p. 13; emphasis added). While this development was intended to remedy the practice of some universities entering only a very small proportion of their academics in the REF (Stern, 2016; Watermeyer & Olssen, 2016), several universities have in recent years significantly increased the number of teaching-only academics, thereby – in a different way – reducing the number of their academic staff eligible for the REF 2021 submission (Baker, 2021a, 2021b).

Moreover, the REF and the resulting institutional policies described above have also been perceived as having significant implications for the nature of academic endeavour more generally. Since the REF places the primary value on publications of a certain quality, often peer-reviewed journal articles, and on research grants won (Leathwood & Read, 2013; Sayer, 2015; Teelken, 2015), this means that forms of research that do not meet these requirements are not valued to the same extent (Clarke & Knights, 2015; Deem et al., 2007; Harley, 2002; Leathwood & Read, 2013; McNay, 2015; Murphy & Sage, 2015; Sayer, 2015; Teelken, 2015). This presents a particular challenge for disciplinary areas unaccustomed to such research and publication patterns, including the humanities and some social sciences, where monographs are considered a more valuable form of scholarly publication (McCulloch, 2017). This is similarly problematic for some practice-oriented disciplines such as education, social work, health, law, architecture and business, for which applied research and practitioner-focused publications are more typical (Harley, 2002; McNay, 2015; Townsend, 2012).

On the other hand, with the introduction of impact assessment since the REF 2014, there has been a clearer focus on research resulting in non-academic impact (Khazragui & Hudson, 2015; Watermeyer, 2016; Weinstein et al., 2019). This development has been welcomed by some academics (Teelken, 2015; Wróblewska, 2021) and seen as consistent with existing modes of operation in certain fields, for example some social sciences (Clappison, 2013; Simpson, 2015; Watermeyer, 2014) and professionally-oriented disciplines such as education (McNay, 2015) and nursing (Wright et al., 2014). However, others see this as a further imposition on the forms of research to be undertaken by UK academics (Leathwood & Read, 2013; Watermeyer, 2016) and another sign that higher education is required to respond to the needs of the market (Watermeyer, 2014, 2016). Moreover, there have been concerns that impact measurement is becoming a “bureaucratic,” box-ticking exercise (Clappison, 2013), with universities submitting heavily edited, embellished accounts of their non-academic

impact (Watermeyer, 2016; Weinstein et al., 2019), which has led to a distinction between the “REF impact” and the actual, “real impact” (Smith et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the REF has not only led to a transformation of research endeavours, but has also increased the tension between research and other academic activities, particularly teaching (Bamber et al., 2017; Clarke & Knights, 2015; Deem et al., 2007; Harley, 2002; Johnson & Deem, 2003; Lucas, 2006; Sikes, 2006). With the increasing emphasis on research, some have argued, teaching and scholarly activities often associated with maintaining the quality of learning and teaching – such as “reading, reflection, critique” (Harley, 2002, p. 198) and lecturers keeping abreast of research developments and the literature in their subjects (Deem, 2006) – are neglected and devalued in comparison (Deem, 2006; Elton, 2000; Harley, 2002; Joynson & Leyser, 2015; Lucas, 2006). In light of these circumstances, attempts have been made to alleviate the tension between research and teaching, not least through the introduction of higher tuition fees, various performance measures in relation to the student experience and teaching, government funding to promote excellence in teaching and learning and scholarly activity (Deem, 2006) and, more recently, the inclusion of the impact on teaching and students in the REF 2021 impact assessment (Department for the Economy et al., 2019). However, the success of such initiatives appears to have been limited. For example, while some favour teaching-only arrangements (Anonymous, 2019), increased teaching loads have sometimes been perceived as “punishment for those showing low productivity in research” (Deem et al., 2007, p. 72) and transferring to teaching-only contracts as “demotion” (Anonymous, 2019). Furthermore, the existing literature suggests that the division between academics primarily dedicated to research and those primarily focused on teaching appears to have increased (Deem et al., 2007; Harley, 2002; Lucas, 2006; Mathieson, 2015; Sikes, 2006; Yokoyama, 2006). Recently, however, some UK universities have formally introduced systems that recognize different academic career tracks – focusing on, for example, teaching, research or leadership – with the aim of establishing “parity of esteem” between these

academic roles (Dayson, 2019); it remains to be seen whether this will be achieved and what it will mean for the division between academics undertaking the different roles.

To summarize, the discourses surrounding the REF have been mixed. On the one hand, the REF has been described as having a positive impact on the quality of research in UK universities and the role of research in general, and as stimulating better research management (see e.g. Stern, 2016) and better research support (see e.g. Weinstein et al., 2019). On the other hand, research in the context of the REF has been discursively constructed as a “game” (see e.g. Lucas, 2006) whose outcomes can be maximized through ‘artificial’ UOAs (see e.g. Henkel, 2012) and pre-REF audits (see e.g. Sayer, 2015), among other things. In this process, academics have been subjected to REF-informed performance management (see e.g. Sayer, 2015), with their successes and failures often described using REF-inspired language, for example “REF-able” (see e.g. McCulloch, 2017) or “three star” and “four star” research outputs (HEFCE et al., 2011). While on the one hand, those who succeed in meeting the REF targets are spoken of as “research stars” (see e.g. Harley, 2002), academics who fail to do so face a “stigma” (see e.g. Stern, 2016). Moreover, the REF and universities’ research management practices informed by it have brought about discourses that devalue certain kinds of research and research outputs (see e.g. Leathwood & Read, 2013), such as research and publications in practice-oriented disciplines (see e.g. McNay, 2015). The introduction of research impact assessment was intended to partially address this problem (Arnold et al., 2018), but it also led to mixed discourses. While impact has been described by some as a welcome development (see e.g. Teelken, 2015) and as consistent with the praxis of certain disciplines, for example some social sciences (see e.g. Watermeyer, 2014) and professional disciplines (see e.g. McNay, 2015), a discourse of impact as a box-ticking exercise (Clappison, 2013) has also emerged, potentially leading to further game-playing, as suggested by a discursive distinction between “real” and “REF” impact (Smith et al., 2020). Finally, despite efforts against it, the REF has contributed to exacerbating tensions between research and teaching, with the latter – and those

predominantly involved in teaching – often discursively constructed as lesser than research and researchers (see e.g. Mathieson, 2015).

Before introducing NewU and the Faculty in more detail in the following two sections, I present in the next subsection an important organizational feature of the university under study that, among other things, in significant ways informed how the two national developments described above – the evolution of the HoD role and the management of research performance – played out in the specific organizational context.

5.1.4 The UK's New Universities

As briefly mentioned in chapter 4 (section 4.1.3), NewU was one of the UK's 'new' universities, also referred to as 'modern,' 'post-1992' or 'statutory.' Unlike the 'old' – 'traditional,' 'pre-1992,' 'chartered' – universities, in England, some of their new counterparts were formerly polytechnics, granted the right to the university title under the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act (Pratt, 1997). This history of the new universities indicates some features that make them distinctly different from the old universities. In the following subsections, I explore some of these characteristics and the impact of managerialist transformation in UK higher education on the new universities, beginning with a general overview and then examining in more detail the HoD role and the place of research in post-1992 institutions.

5.1.4.1 Historical Features of the New Universities

Most of the former polytechnics were established from technical and other colleges in the early 1970s, as a result of the introduction of a "binary" higher education system. In contrast to their more 'academic' university counterparts, the polytechnics – representing the "non-university" sector – were founded as predominantly "teaching institutions" that were to offer mainly vocationally-, professionally- and industry-

oriented courses. Research was to play a lesser role in these institutions, and when it was undertaken, it was usually to address specific problems in the outside world or to support the institutions' teaching function. As such, both through their predominantly practical educational function and limited research activities, polytechnics were explicitly designed to respond to societal needs (Pratt, 1997).

Before the polytechnics became universities in 1992, they underwent a series of developments similar to those described earlier with respect to the universities (section 5.1.1). First, as indicated earlier, polytechnics contributed significantly to the expansion of the higher education sector by providing opportunities to populations that were previously not enrolling into higher education. Moreover, in the 1980s – the already lesser-funded – polytechnics, like the universities, experienced significant funding cuts. Similarly, the 1980s brought about more managerialist approaches to the polytechnics' management arrangements (Pratt, 1997). However, it is important to note that polytechnics were already more managerial, hierarchical and bureaucratic before this, due to the fact that they were governed by local authority governments for most of their existence (Deem, 1998; Farnham, 1999). Although polytechnics became independent institutions in 1989 and were granted university status shortly thereafter (Pratt, 1997), research conducted decades after this transition suggests that post-1992 universities remain more managerial, hierarchical and bureaucratic compared to their pre-1992 counterparts (Bessant & Mavin, 2016; Kok et al., 2010; Sotirakou, 2004).

Another difference between polytechnics and universities was that for most of their existence, polytechnics had their courses validated and their institutional structures reviewed by an external body. The awarding of degrees and other qualifications was also carried out by an external body; the polytechnics were only granted degree-awarding powers after their transformation into universities. Polytechnics' external regulation of teaching quality and academic standards thus occurred before similar initiatives in the university sector. In terms of research, however, polytechnics were not subject to

external assessment until they became universities (Pratt, 1997), a development that subsequently played a role in the post-1992 universities' increased emphasis on research (Scott & Callender, 2017; Sikes, 2006), on which more below (section 5.1.4.3). Since the abolition of binary divide in 1992, all universities – old and new – have participated in the same processes of teaching and research quality assessment and have become part of common government funding schemes (Pratt, 1997).

To sum up, and of particular interest for the following analyses, compared to their university counterparts, some of the discourses commonly used in characterizing post-1992 institutions refer to these organizations being predominantly teaching-oriented and established to offer vocational and professional courses, rather than being research-heavy organizations. Discourses of the limited research activity of former polytechnics often emphasize the central importance of applied and teaching-related research in these institutions (see e.g. Pratt, 1997). Moreover, former polytechnics are discursively constructed as more managerial, hierarchical and bureaucratic compared to their old counterparts (see e.g. Deem, 1998).

The above indicates that in 1992, new universities entered the singular higher education system from a different starting point than the pre-existing universities. In the next two subsections, I discuss the impact this had on the HoD role and the status of research in modern institutions.

5.1.4.2 The Head of Department Role in the New Universities

As described earlier in this chapter (section 5.1.2), the roles of HoDs in the UK higher education sector have become increasingly managerial in recent decades. Despite this general development, however, the traditionally more hierarchical management structures mentioned above distinguish HoDs in post-1992 universities from their counterparts in the old universities. First, it has been more common in the new universities for HoD posts to be advertised externally and for HoDs to be appointed

on permanent contracts, whereas at pre-1992 institutions these roles would usually be held by senior department members for a limited period of time, usually following various forms of consultation or election (Deem et al., 2007; Fulton, 2003; Jackson, 1999; Smith, 2007). Moreover, Deem et al. (2007) suggest that HoDs in post-1992 universities who held permanent appointments were more likely to embrace their role as managers. Smith (2007) also assesses that HoDs in new universities were most likely to fall into the “career track” (Deem et al., 2001; Deem et al., 2007) category of academic managers, that is deciding early on to pursue a career in management and being comfortable with taking on the role of a manager. On the other hand, Deem and Brehony (2005) find that those who held fixed-term appointments, usually at pre-1992 universities, “appeared ... uncomfortable with what they were being asked to do as managers” (p. 229) and, as Deem et al. (2007) noted, generally fell into the category of “reluctant” managers. A similar conclusion was reached by Smith (2002), who found that most HoDs in his study who were based in a new university saw “line management” as their primary role, while the majority of HoDs in a pre-1992 university saw “academic leadership” as their chief responsibility (p. 301; see also Jackson, 1999).

Another difference between the HoDs in the two types of universities concerns the place of research and research management in the HoDs’ functions. Since the former polytechnics were less research-oriented in the past, research-related responsibilities did not initially prominently feature among the HoDs in this type of institutions. However, after the abolition of the binary divide, when many new universities began to engage in research to a greater extent – more on this in the following subsection – HoDs in these institutions were increasingly expected to have research experience and a publication track record, sometimes at a level sufficient for a professorship, and to develop the research profile of their departments (R. Smith, 2002; see also Sotirakou, 2004; Yokoyama, 2006).

To summarize, on the one hand, the HoD role at the new universities has been discursively constructed as rather managerial – more so than at pre-1992 universities – including by HoDs themselves (Deem et al., 2007; Smith, 2007). On the other hand, the new universities’ increased commitment to research has also been reflected in the nature of the HoD posts in these institutions. Thus, in the past decades in post-1992 universities, discourses about the HoD role have constructed it not only as “more managerial” but also as “more ‘academic’” (Smith, 2002, p. 295), a transition that seems to be ongoing (Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021).

Next, I turn to the role of research and approaches to research management in post-1992 universities and how their particular institutional histories have informed their responses to the increased emphasis on research in the UK university sector.

5.1.4.3 The New Universities as Research Institutions?

As already indicated, compared to universities, polytechnics in the UK focused primarily on teaching rather than research. This was clearly reflected in the initially non-existent and later minimal recurring public research funding allocated to these institutions. The focus on teaching, especially on professionally- and practice-oriented courses, also shaped the type of staff hired at the polytechnics. As a rule, lecturers came from professional, commercial or industrial backgrounds rather than coming to the institutions with a strong academic background and a doctorate. Nonetheless, and although there were significant differences within the polytechnic sector, polytechnics were engaged in research, albeit typically applied research and research supporting their teaching. In addition, over time, newly appointed staff more commonly held doctoral degrees. A higher number of employees at the polytechnics attached importance to and engaged in research activities, although most of them had very little or no time allocated for research in their workloads. By the time they became universities in 1992, the former polytechnics were nowhere near the level of research activity and funding of their

university counterparts, but it was clear that there had undoubtedly been an “academic drift” over the decades (Pratt, 1997). This was demonstrated, for example, by the fact that in the RAE 1992, the first national research evaluation exercise that allowed former polytechnics to compete for recurring public research funding, all but one new university participated and the post-1992 institutions performed “creditably well” (Pratt, 1997, p. 271; see also Elton, 2000).

Since then, many post-1992 universities have continued to develop their research profile and give greater prominence to their research efforts (Garratt & Hammersley-Fletcher, 2009; Hunt, 2014; Johnson & Deem, 2003; Lucas, 2006; Pratt, 1997; Scott & Callender, 2017; Sharp et al., 2015; Sikes, 2006; Yokoyama, 2006; cf. Clegg, 2008). Indeed, some have been very successful in doing so, reaching or even surpassing the level of research quality of some of the old, traditionally research-focused universities (Scott & Callender, 2017). However, by and large, the historically determined characteristics of the new universities described above, combined with the historical features of their pre-1992 competitors, have meant that this research push at the former polytechnics firstly has been taking place in a challenging national environment and secondly has led to a number of tensions within these institutions.

In recent decades, as described earlier in this chapter (section 5.1.3), the national university research environment in the UK has been very much influenced by the REF and its predecessors. As outlined in the previous paragraphs, the new universities entered this reality from a disadvantaged position compared to pre-1992 universities, where research was generally central to their activities and supported by substantial public funding (Pratt, 1997). Given these historical advantages of the old universities, the unfavourable research status of post-1992 institutions has largely persisted to the present day. Indeed, the national research assessment scheme has led to a concentration of recurring research funding in a small number of universities and a lasting stratification between pre-1992 and new institutions (Arnold et al., 2018; Lucas,

2006; Pratt, 1997; Sayer, 2015; Scott & Callender, 2017). This is perhaps most evident with respect to the Russell Group, a group of twenty-four “leading,” “research-intensive” universities in the UK (The Russell Group of Universities, 2016, p. 3). To illustrate, following the REF 2014, in the academic year 2015/16, Russell Group universities in England received 71 per cent of QR funding, while post-1992 English institutions received a total of seven per cent (Arnold et al., 2018). Moreover, this hierarchy is further reinforced by the allocation of other research funding, as the institutions that receive the largest amounts of QR funding also receive a higher proportion of research funding from other sources (Arnold et al., 2018; Sayer, 2015). For example, in 2015/16, Russell Group universities received 76 per cent of all research grant and contract funding nationally (The Russell Group of Universities, 2016). Additionally, the national system of university research assessment appears to be a source of other potential biases against new universities. For one thing, peer assessors that populate the REF’s UOA panels are largely drawn from old, research-intensive institutions (Sayer, 2015). Moreover, applied research – which is more common at post-1992 institutions (Deem et al., 2007; Strike, 2014) – tends to be assessed lower than theoretical research (Dix, 2016; McNay, 2015; cf. Arnold et al., 2018), despite the REF guidelines stipulating otherwise (HEFCE et al., 2011). Furthermore, in some cases, research outputs published by academics at new universities have been judged to be of lower quality than those produced at old institutions, and arguably for this reason alone (Dix, 2016).

In addition to these persistent systemic challenges, the decision of post-1992 universities to pursue the research track usually leads not only to the REF-related tensions already described (section 5.1.3.2), but also to additional issues internal to the institutions, at least partly due to their historical characteristics. New universities tend to have higher teaching loads compared to old institutions (Deem, 2006; Sikes, 2006), as well as larger numbers of undergraduate students and higher staff-to-student ratios (Johnson & Deem, 2003). This may partly explain why some academics in post-1992

institutions found themselves under pressure to engage in research while at the same time not having (enough) time to do so (Sharp et al., 2015; Sikes, 2006) or sufficient research support and resources (Sharp et al., 2015). Both challenges may indicate that the new universities still de facto prioritize teaching and teaching-related administration and management, despite calls to strengthen the research profile of individual academics and institutions (Garratt & Hammersley-Fletcher, 2009; Sharp et al., 2015; Sikes, 2006), partly because of the crucial financial contribution of teaching to university finances (Garratt & Hammersley-Fletcher, 2009). Moreover, while some academics in the new universities welcomed the emphasis on research (Harley, 2002; Sikes, 2006), for others it presented a challenge. These include some of the many teaching staff employed in post-1992 institutions who have professional and practitioner rather than academic and research backgrounds (Hunt, 2014; Sharp et al., 2015) and who do not always see themselves as academics or researchers but as teachers or practitioners (Sharp et al., 2015; Sikes, 2006). This can lead to tensions when they are expected to engage in research activities and acquire research qualifications (Hunt, 2014; Sharp et al., 2015). Given these common characteristics of new universities, while some have invested significant effort in developing their research profile, on average post-1992 institutions entered only around 20 per cent of their staff in the REF 2014 (McQuillan, 2017). In comparison, some of the best performing UK universities submitted over 80 or 90 per cent (Watermeyer & Olssen, 2016).

To sum up, as mentioned earlier (section 5.1.4.1), the former polytechnics have been discursively constructed predominantly as teaching- rather than research-oriented institutions. Despite the “academic drift” and increased research efforts in many of these universities over time (Pratt, 1997), the prevailing national discourses continued to characterize the new universities in an unfavourable way in relation to their research compared to their pre-1992 counterparts, as reflected in patterns of research funding (see e.g. Arnold et al., 2018) and the biases associated with the REF process with respect to UOA panel membership (Sayer, 2015), the status of applied research (see e.g. Strike,

2014), and overall research conducted at post-1992 institutions (Dix, 2016). Moreover, when post-1992 universities embrace the research- and REF-related discourses these are often challenged from within the institutions themselves, as de facto priority has continued to be given to teaching- and student-related responsibilities and discourses, partly due to the financial importance of teaching at these institutions (Garratt & Hammersley-Fletcher, 2009) and the traditional identification with teaching- and practice-oriented activities over research among large numbers of academic staff (see e.g. Hunt, 2014).

Having outlined some of the managerialist changes in the UK national higher education sector, the transformation of the HoD role and the REF and its impact on academic organization and academic life – both in UK universities in general and in post-1992 institutions in particular – in the next section I introduce the case study university, NewU, and some of its key organizational features and discourses.

5.2 A Rendezvous With NewU

I arrived at the NewU's Central Campus on a rather cold, grey early spring day. The campus was located on one of the NewU's multiple locations, just around the corner from the city centre of an urban area in England. Reaching NewU about an hour before I had agreed to meet Jordan, one of my contacts at the university, I decided to pass time, heavy suitcase in tow, in the reception area of the Wordsworth Building, which rose above one of the streets through the NewU's Central Campus, and where I had arranged to meet Jordan. Although I could not pass through the security gates and explore the inside of the building further until I had obtained my university identity card, I could observe the fresh, modern interior of the Wordsworth Building from the reception area. I could also see that an event was taking place and that there was a lively crowd in the spacious open area below the entrance level where I was sitting.

After my first hour at NewU passed, I was first greeted by an administrator who took me to meet Jordan in their office. Following an initial conversation in which Jordan shared numerous facts and figures about NewU, we went for a meal served by a group of students as part of the ongoing event mentioned earlier. After lunch and more conversations about various higher education- and non-higher-education-related topics, Jordan took me on a tour of the Central Campus. As we walked around the university buildings, we met several people who Jordan seemed to know well. After our tour of the Central Campus, which included visits to the Student Union and the NewU's International Corner dedicated to international student activities, we returned to Jordan's office and continued our conversation for a while. An administrator then accompanied me downstairs to the registration desk, where a university identity card was prepared for me. After that, it was time to visit the Graduate School premises, located in a building across the street, where I was to complete my onboarding process as a Visiting Scholar at NewU.

Soon this corner of the city was to become my workplace for several months that academic year and the following. On my almost daily walk down the street through the Central Campus, my eyes encountered several university buildings – lined from the Wordsworth Building further down – a small part of Burberry House, Colgate Court and the Faraday Library. Perhaps more importantly, across the street was J. S. Mill Hall, a building that not only housed the International Corner, which I had visited earlier in the day, and the Graduate School, where I found myself at the end of my first day on campus, but also homed the Faculty. From that chilly afternoon onwards, this NewU building was to become the place where I spent most of my working hours.

In the following two subsections, I outline some of the key features and discourses that characterized NewU and address the research-related developments at the institution

that were of particular importance to the analyses presented in the remainder of this dissertation.

5.2.1 NewU in Brief

NewU is a post-1992 comprehensive multi-campus university in England. At the time of my fieldwork, several thousand students were enrolled at the institution, the vast majority of whom were undergraduates (HESA, n.d.-b). The academic and non-academic staff at NewU also numbered several thousand (HESA, n.d.-c). In university league tables published in the calendar year in which I conducted most of my fieldwork, the university ranked in the top half nationally (The Complete University Guide, 2015; The Guardian, 2015). In terms of some of the most visible performance measures of teaching and research success, NewU was in the top third in the NSS ranking released in the same year (Times Higher Education, 2015) and in the bottom half according to the REF 2014 results, published just months before I began my field research (Times Higher Education, 2014b).

In terms of the institution's governance structure, according to the university's website and organizational documents, at the time of my fieldwork, NewU was governed at the highest level by the Governors' Committee, which was responsible for overseeing the university's planning, performance and finances, among other things, and by the Senior Management Team. The latter was headed by the VC, who also served as the Chief Executive of NewU. The Senior Management Team included a number of Pro Vice-Chancellors (PVCs) responsible for various academic matters and several senior managers responsible for operational and business aspects. The university's senior academic body, advising on a range of academic matters, was the Council. Of particular interest to the topic of this dissertation, the university-level body which advised on the governance of research was the Central Research Board, which was chaired by the PVC – Research.

With regard to organizational and academic structure, NewU was organized into several academic units, led by Heads of Academic Unit and their Academic Unit Management Teams. Research-related matters were overseen at the academic unit-level by Academic Unit Deans for Research, who chaired the Academic Unit Research Boards. Each academic unit was divided into multiple faculties for which it provided academic unit-wide professional and administrative services, for example in the areas of human resources, finance, marketing and administrative support. Indeed, a number of my interviewees who commented on this issue indicated that they saw the Academic Unit as relevant mainly in terms of its administrative functions. Faculties were headed by Deans and their Faculty Management Teams. Research affairs at the faculties were managed by Faculty Heads of Research. Each faculty housed several departments led by HoDs.¹⁷ Of particular relevance to this dissertation is the nature of the HoD position at the institution. In line with the features of the role in post-1992 universities described in the literature (section 5.1.4.2), HoD posts at NewU were advertised externally and the selected HoDs were appointed on permanent contracts. While the role may have been defined somewhat differently in other parts of the university, HoDs in the Faculty were responsible for the overall strategic and operational management of their departments, which included planning and ensuring the quality of academic activities, line management, staff performance management, and budget and resource management. In addition, they held faculty-wide roles and were members of the Faculty Management Team.

The NewU's post-1992 nature did not only affect the specifics of the HoD role. The fact that the institution was a new university was mentioned by my research participants in relation to some of the other specific historical organizational features

¹⁷ At the time of my fieldwork, discussions were taking place about a possible change in the university's organizational structure. I return to this in chapter 8 (section 8.1.1), with regard to the relevance of this possible reorganization for one of the Faculty's departments in particular.

mentioned earlier. First, in line with existing research on post-1992 universities (section 5.1.4.1), several of my interlocutors commented on the institution's heavy bureaucratic and administrative burden and structures, and a few of them explicitly linked this organizational aspect to the NewU's past under local authority governance. Second, as can also be observed in other modern universities (sections 5.1.4.1, 5.1.4.3), many research participants mentioned the university's traditional teaching orientation. The latter continued to importantly shape the NewU's character even more than two decades after the institution gained university status, with many of my interlocutors acknowledging the continued central role of teaching. This was also reflected in the fact that numerous academic staff at NewU did not engage significantly in research, that research time was described by many of my interviewees as limited due to their heavy teaching and teaching-related administrative duties, and that at the time of my fieldwork, much of the university's income came from tuition fees and education contracts (HESA, 2016, 2017). Finally, also in line with the literature on new universities (section 5.1.4.1), several interlocutors associated the NewU's post-1992 status with a traditionally "practical," "applied" focus, both in terms of teaching provision and research.

Moreover, when my research participants talked about the NewU's organizational features, some additional discourses emerged. First, in line with the developments in the UK higher education sector in general described above (section 5.1.1), a number of my interviewees commented that over the years the university had become more integrated and managed, resembling a business enterprise, with processes becoming more "formalized" and given greater importance, staff expected to be more "accountable" to the organization, and the centralization and powerful role of professional services based in academic units. Several interviewees specifically linked some of these developments to the NewU's former VC. In most cases, interviewees who commented on this issue associated this phase in the university's chronicle with one or more of the following features: a "hierarchical," "top-down" management style;

centrally led, “one-size-fits-all” initiatives; and a lack of consultative approaches. In terms of my research participants’ perceptions of NewU at the time of my fieldwork, some of them acknowledged that the organization was in transition at that time. This was partly related to the relatively recent appointment of a new VC and the subsequent adoption of a new strategic plan. Many of my interviewees were positive about these recent developments. Some of them spoke of an emerging cultural change and described that the new VC was allowing for more differentiation in the implementation of university strategies and was taking a more consultative approach. At the same time, however, some research participants expressed concerns about the unavoidable raft of new initiatives, the pressure of accountability for their implementation, and the expectation that the new VC would be strict on the latter.

To conclude, some of the prevailing organizational discourses at NewU mirrored the prominent national discourses described in the previous section. In terms of the university’s post-1992 status, HoD roles – externally advertised and permanent – were discursively constructed in rather managerial terms with respect to the HoDs’ responsibilities (see e.g. Smith, 2007). Moreover, discourses of heavy bureaucracy and administration, the continued dominant teaching orientation of the institution – along with discourses of limited research activity and the financial importance of teaching – and the organization’s applied, practice-oriented focus were all characteristic of new universities according to the extant literature (see e.g. Garratt & Hammersley-Fletcher, 2009; Kok et al., 2010; Strike, 2014). At a more general level, the university was characterized by multiple discourses that pointed to its strong embeddedness in the managerialist nature of national higher education discursive environment. NewU was described as an organization that over the years began to pay more attention to accountability, university processes became more business-like, and administrators were given more importance (see e.g. Deem et al., 2007). Moreover, the institution was discursively constructed – often with reference to its former VC – as “hierarchical,” managed by “one-size-fits-all” measures, and lacking consultation. However, at the time

of my research, these discourses appeared to co-exist with – and in some cases may have been replaced by – some contrasting organizational discourses, a development often associated with the appointment of a new VC. These were discourses of organizational change that acknowledged the need for differentiation in implementation and gave place to consultation, although they were accompanied by discourses of caution about the scope and expectations of the VC for successful execution of the planned changes.

Having provided a general introduction to some organizational features and prominent discourses at NewU, in the next subsection I highlight selected research-related characteristics and events at the university that were important to developments at lower levels of the organization and on which I focus in the remainder of this dissertation.

5.2.2 The NewU's Growing Emphasis on Research

After its transition from a traditionally teaching-oriented polytechnic to a university, NewU – like many of its post-1992 counterparts (section 5.1.4.3) – began to raise its research profile, joining the national competition for research funding and reputation. As mentioned earlier, in the REF 2014, NewU was in the bottom half nationally in terms of its overall research quality profile, the latter being rated between two and three star. These results showed a decline in the NewU's national research ranking compared to the RAE 2008, but at the same time represented a significant increase in the NewU's overall quality profile in absolute terms (Times Higher Education, 2008, 2014b). Moreover, in the years prior to my research under the leadership of the former VC – although a number of my research participants felt that research was not a priority under that management (see e.g. sections 6.2.1, 7.3.2.1) – NewU not only saw a significant increase in QR funding after the RAE 2008, but also a notable increase in acquiring research funds through research grants and contracts compared to the period prior to

the appointment of the former VC (HESA, 2021, n.d.-a). Nevertheless, during the academic years in which I conducted my field research, the NewU's research-related income as a proportion of the institution's total income remained low and the university, as mentioned earlier, continued to be funded predominantly through tuition fees and education contracts (HESA, 2016, 2017).

Although the above figures suggest continued growth in the NewU's research profile in the many years prior to my fieldwork – and some of my interviewees confirmed this (see e.g. section 7.2.1) – a number of my research participants felt that the university was undergoing a significant change in its attitude to research at the time of my research. In particular, and as detailed later in the dissertation (see e.g. sections 6.2.1, 7.2.1), these accounts were often more or less explicitly linked by my research participants to the appointment of the new VC. As described at several points in chapters 6 to 8, many of my interlocutors spoke of more attention and importance being given to research at NewU recently, with some observing the introduction of higher research expectations and others acknowledging better research support beginning to be put in place. Based on the university's new strategy and the developments I learned about during my time at NewU, the university did indeed appear to be striving to raise its research profile. Resembling the approaches to research management of many other universities (section 5.1.3.2), this aim was sometimes directly related to the university's objectives for its next REF submission.¹⁸ Based on a combination of my research participants' explanations and organizational documents, I provide below a selected list of research-related developments that were being discussed or taking place at the time

¹⁸ At the time of my fieldwork, the next REF was scheduled for 2020, but there were also suggestions to postpone the exercise until 2021. As mentioned above, the next REF was indeed held in 2021 (section 5.1.3.1), but I refer to it as “the REF 2020” for the most part in this dissertation, as it was mostly referred to as such at the time of my field research.

of my fieldwork, particularly those relevant to the analyses presented in the remainder of this dissertation.

For one thing, at the time of my fieldwork, although the REF 2014 results had only just been published, NewU already seemed to be deep in preparations for the next REF, which was particularly visible during the second part of my field research. The developments I observed indicated an increase in expectations regarding the university's REF 2020 submission and a selective approach to supporting research efforts in individual UOAs. The target for the NewU's research output assessment in the REF 2020 was set at a three star average, arguably a more ambitious goal compared to the two star minimum submission threshold set by the university ahead of the REF 2014. In line with the goal of achieving an average rating of three stars for publications submitted to the next REF, the new VC's approach to funding research efforts at NewU focused on supporting research endeavours that were expected to result in three and four star outputs. While this approach meant increased support for units and academics that performed at the required level, it could also result in a loss of research funding allocated by the university to units and academics that were unlikely to achieve the required quality targets. To monitor the performance of UOAs, the university conducted regular reviews of research activity – including publications and impact case studies – and required faculties to report on a range of research performance indicators for their UOAs. These included research income, postgraduate research student numbers and completions, and research output quantity and quality, the latter assessed through publication audits involving external reviewers. Based on this and related data, the NewU top management was to decide whether and to what extent the individual UOAs should be supported for the purposes of the REF 2020.

Interpreted by several of my research participants as related to the increased focus on research and higher research expectations for the NewU academics were the ongoing discussions at the time of my fieldwork about the possible introduction of

different categories of academic staff. Early on in my fieldwork, the interlocutors who spoke on this issue explained that these groupings included what I refer to as Category I, Category II and Category III. Each group was to reflect a different focus and workload: from a dominant attention to teaching activities among Category I academics, to lower teaching responsibilities and some research functions and expectations among Category II colleagues, to an even lighter teaching workload combined with an expectation to produce high-quality research suitable for the REF submission among Category III staff. I later learned that these categories had been renamed and, based on some conversations with my research participants, seemed to have been given a slightly different connotation, at least in part: broadly speaking, what I refer to as Category NewI signalled an emphasis on professional practice-oriented activities, Category NewII indicated a focus on teaching and teaching-related scholarship, and Category NewIII signified a predominant focus on high-quality research production. Several research participants interpreted this discussion of staff categories as possibly leading to a change in the contractual status of some academics from teaching and research – which was the norm at the time – to teaching-only.

Other changes related to the management of academics and the research agenda concerned the recruitment, appraisal and reward systems. For example, the new strategic plan set out a clear policy of employing “research active” academics with “research qualifications” suitable to their disciplines. With regard to monitoring staff performance, the university issued an amended academic staff appraisal form which explicitly recognized the different parts of the academic contract, that is “learning and teaching,” “research and scholarship” and administration, as well as contributions to “professional practice” and “commercial activity.” It replaced the previous form which was open-ended, that is not structured according to the different types of academic activities. In terms of research performance management in particular, the new appraisal form explicitly required the setting of research objectives in relation to, among other things, research outputs, research funding and doctoral supervision. Finally, NewU

seemed keen to publicly celebrate its academics who engaged in excellent research. At the time of my fieldwork, the institution introduced staff awards for research, which I refer to as Research Excellence Awards, given to outstanding NewU researchers at different career stages.

Some additional changes involved reorganizing the research management and support structures, and emphasizing certain activities that fed into the research agenda. Firstly, at the time of my fieldwork, NewU was in the process of reorganizing its research leadership. Among other things, this process was to lead to the introduction of the PVC – Research position on a full-time basis, a role that was held at the time by one of the Heads of Academic Unit. Additionally, according to the university’s new strategic plan, NewU committed to increasing investment in research and creating more internal funding opportunities specifically targeted at the institution’s selected strategic areas of focus. Another issue affecting the university’s research agenda was the importance the strategic plan placed on developing partnerships with external organizations. As some of my research participants explained, this could help strengthen the NewU’s research impact and external funding portfolio, and a few of my interlocutors saw this as a break with the university’s previous limited attention to such efforts. Finally, while the NewU strategic plan more clearly emphasized the importance of research, it also paid attention to staff engaging in “scholarly activity,” which a number of my research participants explained as a term indicative of a definition of research broader and more inclusive than that established for the REF purposes. Moreover, the plan required the university academics to acquire relevant teaching accreditations and engage in appropriate academic associations, and placed emphasis on NewU cultivating scholarship in the field of pedagogy. These developments signalled the NewU’s increased expectations of professionalism with respect to teaching, including through staff’s pursuit of scholarship.

The above indicates that over the past many years, and particularly since the appointment of the new VC, NewU – like many UK universities (see e.g. Lucas, 2006; Sayer, 2015) – embraced and strengthened the status of research-related discourses that characterize the national discursive environment, including the REF-informed discourses. This was evident, for example, in the increased research expectations – spoken of in reference to REF assessment scales (see e.g. McCulloch, 2017) – and in more selective university research funding, supporting those units and individuals most likely to achieve the three star target set for the next REF (see e.g. McNay, 2015). Moreover, research performance was regularly monitored by university senior management, including through publication audits, to determine the level of quality of research outputs and those most suitable for inclusion in the next REF (see e.g. Sayer, 2015). Furthermore, NewU was discussing a system of different staff categories based on their main responsibilities (see e.g. Dayson, 2019), intentionally or not appearing to create a clearer discursive distinction between academic staff with different duties (see e.g. Mathieson, 2015). Additionally, research activity and achievements were more prominently and explicitly represented in the institution’s hiring-, staff appraisal- and awards-related discourses (see e.g. Agyemang & Broadbent, 2015). This was in addition to the steps the university was taking towards improved research management (see e.g. Lucas, 2006) and support (see e.g. Weinstein et al., 2019), as well as increased attention to external partnerships, funding and research impact. Despite this strengthened focus on research, often with reference to the REF, there was also an organizational discourse at NewU that emphasized the importance of more broadly defined scholarly activity and its role in quality teaching (cf. Harley, 2002). This was presumably at least partly in recognition of the fact that, as has been common in other post-1992 institutions (see e.g. Hunt, 2014), many of its employees had not been engaged in research to a significant extent up to that point, but had dedicated themselves mainly to teaching-related tasks and, importantly, that teaching continued to be the institution’s main source of funding.

Having introduced NewU and detailed its research agenda and approaches to research management at the time of my fieldwork, I discuss the Faculty in more detail in the next section.

5.3 Introducing the Faculty

As mentioned in the previous section, the Faculty was located in J. S. Mill Hall. One of my most vivid memories of the Faculty's building was the fact that it left me confused on many occasions. Even after working in J. S. Mill Hall for months, I felt that whenever I ventured into a new area of the building, I seemed to end up down unexpected corridors and stairways and pop up in places I did not expect. It was a relief to learn over time that I was not the only one who found the layout of the building confusing at times! The parts of J. S. Mill Hall that eventually ended up feeling more homey to me were the Faculty premises and particularly the areas homing its academics and managers. The large majority of the Faculty's space – where I spent most of my time – was located on two floors of part of the building and gave a feeling of not brand new, but still very contemporary and well-kept interior and decor.

Entering J. S. Mill Hall through the main entrance and walking up some flights of stairs towards the Faculty's offices, one first encountered the office that homed student support administrative personnel. Spreading out from either side of the student support office was a corridor. The ends of these two corridors were connected at right angles to two other corridors. These hallways housed the offices of the staff of Visionary, Small and Reinvigorated Departments and their respective HoDs, as well as some open seating areas; a few meeting rooms of various sizes, including the Faculty Conference Room where, among other things, the weekly meetings of the Faculty Management Team (the Faculty Management) were held; a kitchenette with a couple of small tables and chairs where I sometimes encountered the Faculty academics on a lunch break; and restrooms at various points on the floor. At one corner of two of these

perpendicular hallways were the offices of some of the Faculty managers, including the Dean and the Associate Dean, and the administrative staff who supported the Faculty Management. This group of offices was behind a glass door in a restricted access area that I could only enter by swiping my university identity card. Behind the door, in addition to the offices, was another kitchenette and a large seating area. The latter was occasionally used for meetings and gatherings, including, for example, the Faculty Christmas celebration. While this floor homed the academics of three of the Faculty's departments and its management's offices, most of the Different Department's premises were on the floor above. There I spent much of my time along two corridors running perpendicular to each other, where most of the offices of this department's academics were located, including the HoD's. However, due to the recent growth in the number of staff in the unit, some of the academics had been moved to an additional area on another floor by the beginning of the second part of my fieldwork, which I only got to visit a couple of times.

In the remainder of this section, I first describe some general features of the Faculty. I then present this unit's research-related features and developments.

5.3.1 The Faculty in Brief

As mentioned earlier (section 4.1.3), the Faculty was one of several faculties that formed a NewU academic unit. At the time of my field research, the Faculty's four departments – Visionary (headed by Ryan Quinn), Reinvigorated (headed by Karen Fowler), Different (headed by Dave Garner) and Small Department – had a total enrolment of about three thousand students in their numerous undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses, and an academic staff of nearly 200. In terms of some of the highly visible performance indicators related to teaching and research, the Faculty's overall student satisfaction as measured in the NSS in the year prior to my fieldwork

was high and several percentage points above the NewU average. While more details on the Faculty's research profile follow in the next subsection, let me note here that in the REF 2014, the Faculty academics were entered in three UOAs, two of which were based in the Faculty and one of which also consisted of a number of members from outside the Faculty. The Faculty's two main UOAs had varying degrees of success, with one of them ending up among the best at NewU, while the other UOA achieved a more modest result.

In terms of the management and organizational structure of the Faculty, the unit was led by Terry, the Dean, who headed the Faculty Management, which oversaw all aspects of the Faculty's work and met weekly. The Faculty Management also included the Associate Dean, the four HoDs – who led the Faculty's four departments and held additional faculty-wide responsibilities – and the managers responsible for administration, quality management and learning and teaching. Having attended about a dozen weekly meetings of the Faculty Management over the course of my fieldwork, the general atmosphere in which this group of managers worked gave the impression of collegiality, teamwork and mutual support, spiced with regular humorous remarks and subsequent giggles. In addition to the Faculty Management, there were a number of faculty-wide bodies responsible for specific areas, such as academic standards and quality, learning and teaching, graduate employability, internationalization and research.

At the departmental level, the four units were headed by HoDs assisted by senior members who held the position of Principal Lecturer,¹⁹ Reader or Professor, although the departments differed in their management arrangements and structures. The four departments also differed significantly in terms of a number of other key

¹⁹ At the Faculty, the position of Principal Lecturer – a post typical in post-1992 universities (Farnham, 1999) – was an academic position that differed from the others in that it involved significant management responsibilities.

features, which was also observed by some of my research participants on various occasions. Firstly, the departments represented different academic and professional disciplines across the spectrum of political and social sciences. Some departments offered courses with a predominantly professional, practice-oriented focus, and some awarded degrees accredited by relevant professional bodies. Moreover, the departments differed significantly in terms of student and academic staff numbers (see Table 4 below). Furthermore, there were significant differences not only between the three departments studied, but also in the characteristics of the HoDs who headed them in terms of gender, age, level of academic appointment, time in their departments and at NewU, and time as HoDs (see Table 5 on p. 142). Moreover, interviewees who spoke on this topic regularly commented on the very different foci and approaches to the HoD role among the Faculty’s HoDs.

Table 4: Student and academic staff numbers in the Faculty’s departments.

	No. of Students (UG²⁰ + PGT²¹)	No. of Academic Staff
Visionary Department	< 900 (2014/15; 2015/16) ²²	≈ 30 (2014/15); < 50 (2015/16)
Reinvigorated Department	≈ 500 (2015/16)	≈ 30 (2015/16)
Different Department	≈ 1,400 (2015/16)	≈ 80 (2015/16)
Small Department	≈ 300 (2015/16)	≈ 20 (2015/16)

²⁰ Undergraduate students.

²¹ Taught postgraduate students.

²² While most of the fieldwork in Visionary Department took place in the academic year 2014/15, I also conducted a small number of observations and interviews in the academic year 2015/16.

Table 5: Characteristics of the shadowed HoDs at the time of fieldwork.

	Gender	Age	Academic Rank	Time in Department/NewU	Time as HoD
Ryan Quinn	male	late 30s	Reader	≈ 3 years	≈ 3 years
Karen Fowler	female	early 50s	Professor	≈ 5 years	≈ 5 years
Dave Garner	male	mid-60s	Professor	> 30 years	≈ 5 years

In addition to the above facts and figures, in the conversations and observations of my research participants, a number of discourses on other organizational characteristics and developments were drawn on that were of importance to the workings of the Faculty and its departments at the time of my fieldwork. One set of relatively recent changes were mentioned several times, namely a reorganization that led to a realignment of the Faculty’s departments and a review of the departments’ courses a few years before my research. Some of my interlocutors described how the existence of the Faculty was called into question by the university management when the former Dean left their post and the unit remained under the leadership of an Acting Dean. After a new Head of the Academic Unit arrived, who was involved in overseeing the developments at the Faculty, the decision was made to preserve it. As a result, however, the Faculty underwent significant structural changes that were to provide a clearer disciplinary focus for the individual departments, some of which had previously been considered to lack disciplinary coherence. Consequently, one former department was merged with Reinigorated Department, reducing the number of departments in the Faculty from five to four, some other staff changed their departmental affiliation, additional staff were brought into the Faculty from other parts of the university, and three departments changed their names to align with prominent academic disciplines. As part of this realignment – and coinciding with a university-wide review of educational programming – the departments in the Faculty also reviewed their courses, leading to changes in some teaching programmes and, in some cases, their elimination.

As indicated earlier, this coupled process began under the leadership of an Acting Dean, but partway through – signalling a change in the Faculty management – a new Dean, Terry, was appointed.

By the time I arrived at the Faculty, the dust seemed to have settled for the most part, even if the changes described above were still fresh in the minds of some of my interlocutors. The no-longer-very-new Dean was seen by a number of my interviewees as very involved in the running of the Faculty and as someone who kept a close eye on the unit, which several of my interviewees who spoke on the subject compared to the different management style of the Faculty's previous Dean. Moreover, the Faculty was steadily growing strong since the reorganization and Terry's appointment. This was evident, for example, in the increasing undergraduate student numbers, an increase of several percentage points in the Faculty's overall student satisfaction as measured in the NSS, the growing staff numbers, which was clearly visible at the time of my fieldwork with numerous newly created academic positions, and a higher financial contribution of the Faculty.

While this growth and improvement undoubtedly manifested the Faculty's healthy environment, it became clear at the time of my fieldwork that it also brought with it estate issues. On numerous occasions, both the positives and the challenges of growth were discussed, in part because of the large influx of newly appointed staff – particularly in Visionary and Different Departments – and because the Faculty had been asked by the NewU management to prepare a growth plan for the coming years. Importantly, these estate issues led to a proposal by the university management to move parts or all of Different Department to another NewU campus, with the possibility of incorporating it into another faculty (a detailed discussion of this issue follows in chapter 8, section 8.6). By the time I completed my fieldwork, the decision had been made not to implement this plan, but the Faculty had not at that point been provided an estate solution to its considerable expansion. Another development taking place in

the Faculty at the time of my fieldwork – and which signalled another, albeit smaller, change in the Faculty’s departmental organization – was the incorporation of a team previously based in Reinvigorated Department into Visionary Department, and the transition of a course and affiliated staff previously based in Visionary Department into Reinvigorated Department. Similar to the earlier departmental realignment, this faculty-initiated move was about further enhancing the Faculty’s disciplinary structure. Additionally, Reinvigorated Department had undergone another significant internal organizational change in the years preceding my fieldwork, which was coming to completion during my time in the Faculty and which I discuss in more detail at several points in chapter 7.

To sum up, speaking of the Faculty, one of the discourses that emerged among my research participants was the discourse of the significant differences between the unit’s departments – including in terms of their size and the disciplines they represented – and the dissimilarities between the Faculty’s HoDs. Another prominent faculty discourse pointed to the recognition of the significant change that the Faculty had undergone relatively shortly before my fieldwork, which in broader terms signalled that the university top management viewed the Faculty and its educational offer as a business (see e.g. Deem et al., 2007) that was perceived at one point in time as potentially not beneficial to the institution. At the same time, however, this change was discursively constructed by some as a step towards a more ‘academic’ orientation of the Faculty in terms of a better disciplinary alignment – an indication of the Faculty’s “academic drift” (Pratt, 1997) – a process that was continuing at the time of my fieldwork through additional structural changes to Visionary and Reinvigorated Departments. Another faculty discourse that arose among my interlocutors related to the then Dean who was appointed in the midst of the Faculty reorganization and who was said to have significantly changed the way the Faculty was run. Indeed, after the Faculty’s reorganization and the appointment of the new Dean, another notable discourse became established, highlighting the Faculty’s recent extensive growth. However, this

development was marked by both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, the Faculty's performance on a number of indicators had improved significantly; on the other hand, the growth had also led to estate issues.

Having presented some of the Faculty's general features and discourses, the following subsection outlines the research-related characteristics that are important for understanding the Faculty as a whole in terms of its research operations.

5.3.2 The Faculty's Diverse Research Constitution

At the time of my fieldwork, one of the Faculty's overall strategic goals was to be recognized for "internationally-excellent and world-leading" research, both theoretical and applied. According to the Faculty research plan, one of the unit's main objectives was to increase the number of academics producing outputs of two star or higher quality, while at the same time increasing the quality of research outputs to meet the university-required three star threshold for the Faculty's REF 2020 submissions. In addition, the Faculty sought, among other things, to grow research income and postgraduate research student numbers, improve research impact and consolidate "synergies between research, teaching, professional and scholarly activity." The Faculty research plans and developments were overseen by Karen Fowler, the Reinvigorated Department HoD and the Faculty Head of Research, who also chaired the Faculty Research Board (further details of Karen's role as the Faculty Head of Research follow in sections 7.1.3.2, 7.2.2.3). This body brought together a number of members responsible for various aspects of research in the Faculty, including the departments' Research Leads and the Leads of the UOAs associated with the Faculty.

Before focusing on the Faculty's diverse research constitution mentioned in the title of this subsection, it is important to mention some faculty-wide research developments that took place in the years leading up to and during my fieldwork. First, a few years prior to my field research, the Faculty appointed Karen Fowler, HoD of

Reinvigorated Department, as the new Faculty Head of Research, a position previously held by a member of Different Department. Following Karen's appointment, a new faculty-wide research strategy was introduced, along with a number of other developments aimed at raising the Faculty's research profile and culture, with some of my interlocutors acknowledging the change that Karen's appointment brought (see also section 7.2.1). For example, changes were made to the distribution of research funds within the Faculty, faculty-funded doctoral scholarships were established, the Faculty proposed an initiative for a research mentorship scheme, and a research bulletin was introduced to report on and celebrate research developments and achievements within the Faculty and its departments.

In addition, a few of my interviewees indicated that the appointment of Terry, the new Dean, further encouraged the Faculty's research efforts. For example, as stated in one of the Faculty's research bulletins issued prior to the REF 2014, Terry already had their sights set on the REF after at that time. Moreover, during our interview, for instance, Terry envisioned that in five years' time the Faculty's "research would be far more high profile, I would anticipate that far more of our staff are research-active," adding, "I would anticipate that more of our staff ... have PhDs" (see Table 6 on p. 150 for information on doctorate-holding staff at the Faculty). At the time of my fieldwork, I also observed first-hand some clear signals of the Dean's commitment to furthering the Faculty's research endeavours, including Terry's efforts to strengthen faculty-wide research leadership by advocating that the role of the Faculty Head of Research be established as a post to be held by a Professor without other significant leadership responsibilities, rather than by an individual in addition to their HoD role (more details follow in section 7.2.2.3). Furthermore, the Dean was demonstrably supportive of the development of external partnerships, relevant to the research agenda as they can potentially lead to funding opportunities and greater research impact. Not only did Terry themselves make a significant contribution to enhancing existing and developing new partnerships with external organizations, but following Terry's arrival

and the appointment of Ryan Quinn as HoD of Visionary Department, the faculty-wide position of the Faculty Head for External Engagement was created and filled by Ryan. In relation to this area of work, at the time of my field research, two new research and policy entities were being launched in the Faculty and funded by NewU, namely an Academic Unit-wide centre and a university-wide think tank dedicated to addressing various social issues. Both initiatives were led by Ryan, who was also described by a number of my interlocutors as an important force in the Faculty in terms of the unit's external engagement; I discuss Ryan's commitment to this agenda in detail in sections 6.5.2.3 and 6.5.2.4.

Having outlined some of the faculty-wide research developments, it is also important to recognize that one notable characteristic of the Faculty in terms of its research endeavours was the diversity of individual departmental research profiles. This was explicitly or implicitly acknowledged by a number of my interlocutors and confirmed by looking at the departments' research-related facts and figures. While the details of the research profiles and challenges, including historical issues, in Visionary, Reinigorated and Different Departments can be found in chapters 6 to 8, let me present here a selection of indicators that point to some of the research-related differences between the Faculty's departments at the time of my fieldwork (see also Table 6 on p. 150).

In terms of academic staff, the departments differed in the percentage of doctorate-holding members. This was partly related to the departments' different disciplinary foci, and suggested that a significant proportion of staff in Visionary and Reinigorated Departments did not have strong research backgrounds. Another significant difference between the departments was the number of doctoral students. Different Department hosted about half of the approximately 100 doctoral students enrolled in the Faculty, while the remaining doctoral students were more evenly distributed across the other three departments. Yet another figure that illustrates the

variation between the departments was the Faculty's REF 2014 submissions. The Faculty entered two main UOAs and contributed to a third university-wide UOA submission. A small number of members of Visionary, Reinvigorated and Different Departments formed one UOA submission (the Faculty UOA 1), whose performance can be seen in the first two rows of Table 6 (p. 150). A larger number of the Different Department academics came together in the Faculty's other UOA (the Faculty UOA 2). As can be seen from the third row of Table 6, this submission led to notably better results (HEFCW [Higher Education Funding Council Wales] et al., 2014; Times Higher Education, 2014a). In terms of research income reported in the REF 2014, the Different Department's primary UOA significantly outperformed the Faculty UOA 1. Moreover, several members of Different Department contributed not only to the Faculty's two main UOA submissions, but also to a third, cross-university REF 2014 entry. To the best of my knowledge, no Small Department members were entered in the REF 2014.

At the time of my research – in line with the NewU's approach (section 5.2.2) – the Faculty already seemed to be in the process of preparing for the REF 2020. However, as can be seen from the figures above, the individual departments were in very different positions in terms of their research status post-REF 2014. This became particularly visible in the second part of my fieldwork and was related to the changes that the VC introduced in relation to the university research funding allocation (section 5.2.2). In the Faculty, this meant that funding for the Faculty UOA 1 decreased significantly, research funding for the Faculty UOA 2 increased, and funding for Small Department discontinued. Thus, while Different Department focused on effectively distributing the increased funding, other departments were finding ways to support their research with significantly less or no research funding allocated by the university. Moreover, at the time of my fieldwork, the NewU management had not yet decided whether the Faculty UOA 1 would be supported for inclusion in the REF 2020. This was to be determined during a review in the months following my fieldwork. At the same time, towards the end of my field research, the university management seemed to

have all but finalized the decision that a REF 2020 UOA submission aligned with Small Department's discipline would not be supported. As a result, a few Small Department members were considered as potential contributors to a possible future Faculty UOA 1 submission.

In conclusion, in line with the NewU's approach, the Faculty also incorporated the research- and REF-related discourses into the management of the unit's theoretical and applied research. As indicated above, the Faculty strategy and targets were largely formulated with reference to the REF assessment categories and scales (see e.g. McCulloch, 2017), although the Faculty research plan, like the NewU strategic plan, called for synergizing the different academic activities undertaken in the unit, including professional and scholarly activity (cf. Harley, 2002). Other discourses identified among some of my research participants related to the appointment of Karen Fowler as the Faculty Head of Research and new forms of research support and management that ensued; the arrival of the new Dean, who was seen by some as enhancing the Faculty's research efforts; and the appointment of Ryan Quinn as the Faculty Head for External Engagement, which led to the Faculty's increased external partnerships-related activities. Another discourse that was crucial to understanding the state of research in the Faculty related to the diversity of departmental research profiles – with Different Department standing out in particular – which, at the time of my fieldwork, appeared to be reinforced through the NewU's reformed research funding scheme. These differences between the departments are of particular importance for the ensuing analyses, as they indicate that the Faculty's HoDs were confronted with very different departmental research management issues, to which they responded in different ways, as detailed in chapters 6 to 8.

Table 6: Selected research-related characteristics of the Faculty's departments.

	Doctorate-Holding Academic Staff	No. of Staff in REF 2014	No. of UOAs Contributed to in REF 2014	Overall Results of Department's Main UOA in REF 2014
Visionary Department	≈ 50–75 % (2014/15); ≈ 50–75 % (2015/16), but < 2014/15	handful of staff	1	Average: > 2 star; Ranking: bottom third
Reinvigorated Department	25–50 %	handful of staff	1	Average: > 2 star; Ranking: bottom third
Different Department	75–100 %	tens of staff	3	Average: < 3 star; Ranking: 2 nd third
Small Department	75–100 %	N/A	N/A	N/A

5.4 Summary

The aim of this chapter was to introduce the shared discursive environments of the three shadowed HoDs, which proved to feed into the identity tensions experienced by the HoDs and thus informed their discursive identity work and the construction of their managerial identities.

The first section presented a selection of discourses that characterize the UK national higher education discursive context. In particular, it highlighted the shift towards a more managerialist nature of discourses constructing different groups of university members – from students and academics to those responsible for running higher education institutions – and the management of academics and academic activities. Specifically, the section looked at the impact of managerialist discourses on the HoD role – which over the years has increasingly been characterized as a managerial position rather than an academic position – and (the management of) research, the latter increasingly described and evaluated in the language of assessment categories and scales embodied by the REF as the UK's national research assessment scheme. The final part of the section examined how these discourses have manifested themselves in the UK's new universities' notions of HoD posts and research efforts, emphasizing the impact of the particular institutional features and discourses of this group of traditionally more managerial and teaching-oriented higher education institutions.

The next section turned to NewU and presented selected general organizational and the more specific research-related discourses. Many of these map neatly onto the broader national and research-related discourses presented earlier in this chapter. For example, NewU was constructed as having become more managerialist – although this trend may have been at least partially reversed recently – while placing more emphasis on its research efforts. The final section of the chapter focused on the Faculty homing the shadowed HoDs and outlined selected notable discourses relating to the unit as a

whole and its research operations in particular. Discourses specific to this organizational unit were presented, for example in relation to changes in the Faculty management and the Faculty's research diversity, but the embeddedness of the Faculty into broader discursive settings was also demonstrated. For example, the influence of managerialist trends was pointed out, as well as the generally acknowledged drift towards a more academic character of some of the recent organizational changes, and the Faculty's commitment to improving its research, which was in line with the NewU's goals and expressed in the language of the REF.

To summarize, the present chapter set the stage for the ensuing analyses of the shadowed HoDs' discursive identity work by introducing their shared discursive contexts. However, it also already pointed to the significant differences between the HoDs and their departments, suggesting that the discursive resources that the three HoDs had in common played out in the process of the HoDs' managerial identity construction in different ways, as they interacted with discourses that stemmed from additional, dissimilar sources. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 analyse these processes in detail, turning to Ryan Quinn, HoD of Visionary Department; Karen Fowler, HoD of Reinvigorated Department; and Dave Garner, HoD of Different Department, respectively.

6 The Man With the Plan

My first impressions of Ryan Quinn, Head of Visionary Department (the Department), were formed a few days before my first face-to-face meeting with him. On my second day at New University (NewU), when Skyler, one of my points of contact at the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences (the Faculty), and I discussed the arrangements for my stay, Skyler mentioned more than once that I would have a lot of fun shadowing Ryan because he was a very lively person. They also advised me to be prepared to run around a lot while shadowing Ryan, noting that he would often walk the Faculty hallways in socks, not wearing shoes. With these impressions in mind – of Ryan as a fun, lively and somewhat unconventional person – I went to my first meeting with him a few days later. I was originally supposed to interview and begin shadowing him that day, but since I had to obtain additional ethical approval from NewU (section 4.5.2.1), this had to be postponed a bit. Thus, my first meeting with Ryan, which took place in his office, was mainly to explain the situation to him, introduce each other and discuss the practical aspects of my fieldwork with him.

As we began talking, Ryan immediately came across as very personable and empathic and enquired about the delay in my fieldwork, of which he had been informed

by the ethics committee. When I explained the circumstances and expressed my regret about the situation, he told me that there was no need to apologize and assured me that we could reschedule the research. He then offered me a hot beverage and left the office to prepare the drinks. In his absence, I began to pay attention to my surroundings, where I would soon be spending many of my working hours. I first noticed that the table I was sitting at was the only table in Ryan's office. It was placed in the middle of the room and was a meeting table surrounded by six chairs, one of which was a rolling office chair. There was no 'traditional' desk in the room. I noted to myself that I had expected an office of a Head of Department (HoD) to be larger, and thought to myself that the room felt very crowded. Close to the office door was a partially open bookcase, and next to it, on the floor, I noticed a pair of Converse sneakers. Opposite the door was a large window and to the left was a shelf with a printer and a phone. In the corner to the right of the window was a filing cabinet. On the wall across from me was a whiteboard covered with some writings and drawings. There were also quite a few mementos of all kinds stuck to the wall. At a quick glance, for example, I could spot a number of (inspirational) quotes – I particularly remember one from Gandhi – photos of what I assumed was Ryan's child, a pink *Don't panic* sign and a copy of a newspaper front page.

When Ryan returned to the office – with my tea in a Star Wars-themed cup – he took off his shoes as he sat down across from me, revealing bright salmon-coloured socks. He then shared some information about himself and Visionary Department, including the unit's management arrangements, an upcoming departmental strategic meeting, changes that were taking place or about to take place in the Department – he mentioned the unit's upcoming growth – and his engagement in various external activities. We also talked about my research project, with Ryan telling me about the jokes they had made in a meeting of the Faculty Management Team (the Faculty Management) about my upcoming fieldwork, and offering me help with my ethical approval and ethical research practice. By the end of the meeting, as I was about to

leave Ryan's office, I felt comfortable enough with Ryan to compliment him on his colourful socks.

Indeed, as I learned during my time with him in the weeks that followed, witty remarks about his socks were a common feature of exchanges between a number of Ryan's colleagues and himself. In my eyes, they were one of the expressions of an open, often joking attitude between Ryan and his colleagues at various levels of the organization. Ryan's efforts to foster such positive relationships manifested in giving his co-workers funny nicknames, telling amusing stories peppered with comic – verbal and performative – exaggerations, fist-bumping and high-fiving his colleagues and wishing them a “happy Wednesday” or whichever other day, and other bigger and smaller acts of kindness and support. This energetic expressiveness was also evident in times of Ryan's frustration, concern or vulnerability, although even in these instances he usually tried to maintain a positive, if not joking, tone. Ryan's almost relentless positivity was also coupled with an undeniable ambition, vision, commitment to strategy and constant determination to “up the game,” whether in relation to research, teaching portfolio, departmental leadership arrangements, strategic partnerships or any other task that was high on his agenda on any given day.

The remainder of the chapter is structured as follows: I begin with an introduction to Visionary Department, followed by a description of some of the key discourses that characterized this unit from the perspective of organizational members other than Ryan himself. I then introduce Ryan Quinn as HoD of Visionary Department and detail how he navigated his discursive contexts in the process of forming his managerial identities at a rather general level. The rest of the chapter turns to selected research management-related issues that I identified during my fieldwork with Ryan and outlines the challenges associated with these concerns and Ryan's responses to them, paying attention to Ryan's experiences of identity tensions and his discursive identity work:

- the lack of a research agenda in Visionary Department upon Ryan’s appointment as the HoD and his determination to change this;
- the diverse composition of the Department staff – particularly in terms of the commitment of individual academics to research and teaching activities – and Ryan’s research strategy aiming to bring everyone on board the research agenda;
- the limited success of the Visionary Department’s initial research strategy and the subsequent planned boost of the Department’s research through the recruitment of new research-active staff and the introduction of a revised performance review mechanism and staff categories that differentiated between academics primarily on the basis of their teaching and research responsibilities (section 5.2.2); and
- the initial lack of focus by the Department, the Faculty and NewU on external engagement and Ryan’s emphasis on the importance of impact on policy and practice and strategic partnerships with external organizations.

I conclude the chapter with a brief summary.

6.1 Introducing Visionary Department and Its Head

When I completed the bulk of my fieldwork in Visionary Department,²³ the unit homed about 30 academic staff, including a few research fellows; about a dozen postgraduate

²³ Although I conducted a small number of additional observations and a few interviews in Visionary Department early in the academic year 2015/16, this section largely refers to the part of the academic year 2014/15 when I conducted most of my fieldwork in the Department. However, I do mention some developments in the unit that occurred later, towards the end of the academic year 2014/15 and at the beginning of the academic year 2015/16.

research students; and more than 800 undergraduate and taught postgraduate students. The Visionary Department members were seated in offices along two perpendicular corridors on the Faculty's lower floor. According to the Department's website, the unit brought together staff from diverse "academic and practitioner backgrounds," organized around courses in three disciplines. The arrangement at that time was the result of the aforementioned reorganization of the Faculty (section 5.3.1), in which the Department's membership was reconstituted to readjust the Visionary Department's disciplinary focus.

At the time of my fieldwork, the Visionary Department members were organized into three research groups. This was one of the outcomes of a recently developed department research strategy that aimed to enhance the unit's "research culture" while increasing the quantity and "quality of research publications," "funding" and "impact on policy and practice." As explained later in the chapter, while the Department was making progress towards these goals by the time of my fieldwork, perhaps initially particularly in terms of research-related funding and engagement with external partners, this research agenda should be understood in the context of an unsatisfactory Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 performance of the Unit of Assessment (UOA) to which Visionary Department contributed (the Faculty UOA 1). As noted in chapter 5 (section 5.3.2), only a handful of the Visionary Department academics were returned to the REF 2014 and the overall assessment was between two star and three star, placing the UOA in the bottom third nationally (HEFCW et al., 2014; Times Higher Education, 2014a). Against this backdrop, at the time of my fieldwork at NewU, the Department seemed determined to turn things around, not least by appointing several research-active staff (section 6.4.2) and planning to divide the Department academics into categories based on the extent of their engagement in research and teaching activities (section 6.4.3).

Visionary Department ran several undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses in the three disciplines represented by the Department staff. The teaching offer of one discipline far exceeded the other two disciplines in terms of student numbers, with a large undergraduate programme in that discipline. The Department's teaching provision had undergone several recent changes, including the addition of new components to existing programmes – particularly with regard to encouraging student engagement with external organizations (section 6.5.2.2) – and the establishment of a new master's programme, for example. Moreover, at the time of my fieldwork, other significant changes to the teaching portfolio were planned to ensure greater disciplinary cross-fertilization between the courses. In the years prior to my fieldwork, overall student satisfaction, as measured in the National Student Survey (NSS), was in the 80s and 90s for the Department's three undergraduate courses, out of a maximum of 100 per cent.

In leading Visionary Department, its HoD Ryan Quinn was supported by the Leadership Team. The group consisted of the unit's Principal Lecturers and selected Professors, each of whom had a specific portfolio of responsibilities, such as overseeing the Department's research or internationalization efforts. They initially met weekly to discuss and oversee the unit's "key strategic and operational issues" – as Ryan described in the document introducing this management structure – and after about a year moved to meeting as needed, that is when Ryan felt there was something important to discuss. In addition to several meetings of the Leadership Team, I observed multiple one-on-one conversations between Ryan and individual senior department members on various issues. There were also two other groups of selected department members which met a few times per academic year. One group was responsible for informing the unit's research agenda and the other focused on the student experience and curriculum.

In addition to the above-mentioned changes in the unit's research and teaching agendas and in its leadership and management structures, the unit had undergone and

was on the verge of undergoing further changes by the time I had completed all the observations and interviews in Visionary Department. The Department grew significantly in terms of staff, due to several new hires and the aforementioned incorporation of a team from Reinvigorated Department. At the same time, one of the Department's courses and associated staff left to join Reinvigorated Department (section 5.3.1). This meant a further readjustment of the Department's disciplinary focus. Moreover, as indicated earlier (section 5.3.2), Ryan led and won two bids for the NewU's internal strategic fund, which led to the establishment of an Academic Unit-wide "research, policy and practice centre" and a university-wide policy- and practice-oriented think tank focusing on various social issues, both of which came with funds for further additional hires (details on this follow in sections 6.5.2.3 and 6.5.2.4).

Having outlined some facts and figures about Visionary Department, in the next subsection I present a selection of some of the most prominent departmental discourses as conveyed by organizational members other than Ryan.

6.1.1 A Wind of Change

When I asked my interviewees about the changes Visionary Department had undergone, most of them painted quite a contrasting picture of how they perceived this organizational unit in recent years before and how they perceived it at the time of my research. To begin with the 'past' view of the Department, one senior NewU manager explained that some years ago, Visionary Department was "the ... most dysfunctional area" of the Faculty. Terry, the Dean, described that in the recent past the Department had "big quality issues" with its course offer, needed to address "the student experience," lacked partnerships with external partners, had issues with "the calibre" of staff, and needed to improve its research efforts. Additionally, most of my interviewees in the Department pointed to a lack of management and strategy in the past. Furthermore, one Faculty Management member expressed the view that Visionary

Department used to be “the most diverse” unit in the Faculty, and “it felt like, when they didn’t know where to put people, it went in[to]” Visionary Department. Indeed, several of my interviewees described how the Department used to be divided into three teams in different disciplinary areas that worked largely independently of each other. Wes, for example, told me that the different groups of staff “didn’t mix.” Frankie described the Department as a “hodgepodge” where the different groups kept “themselves to themselves,” resulting in the unit operating in a “federal way” and people being “protective of [their] own little group[s].” In addition, Frankie perceived a further division between staff groups, which was due to “a complete inequity amongst workloads between them.” Moreover, Sage described that “everybody was very disenfranchised” and “defensive.” Even a member of Different Department I spoke to about this shared the view that Visionary Department used to be “very fractious,” with “a lot of unpleasantness;” in short, they described it as a “dark place.”

Frankie’s view aptly sums up the departmental circumstances; when Ryan was appointed HoD of Visionary Department a few years earlier, the situation was, in their opinion, “far from ideal.” Frankie thought that Ryan “inherited a very difficult thing,” “a team which was not a team” and that was not “coherent” and “going places,” but “really needed sorting out.” In addition to setting new agendas for teaching, research and external partnerships, Wes described that “break[ing] down those factions” between staff was “one of the key things” that had to be done following the unit’s reconfiguration as part of the Faculty’s reorganization (section 5.3.1). According to Wes, Ryan had to “fuse together a number of subject areas” and “mould the new department” so that everyone would “[sing] in one voice.” Wes thought

that that has been ... quite successful. Now it feels more like we’re a department of [a discipline] and there’s been a bit more of ... [a] merging of who teaches on the different programmes, and so it’s not been that ... quite insular thing.

Another interviewee confirmed the view that Ryan had decided right at the beginning of his tenure that he was “not having this. And [that] he’s gonna bring us all together,” and they perceived that “people are coming together more and more.” Finley also shared that since Ryan’s arrival “people see themselves as part of the department and identify with the department much more. ... I think people are much more settled and sort of content with coming to work.” Sage agreed that Ryan had “broken ... down” the disenfranchisement and defensiveness among the Department staff, noting that “people are feeling more valued,” which is why “there’s more openness, a little bit.” The previously quoted Different Department member observed how, since Ryan’s appointment, Visionary Department had “been ... through a very big cultural change ... to turn into a department that’s much more positive, and it lost a lot of its cynicism, I think.”

Despite these strong discourses of improvement in Visionary Department since Ryan’s appointment, I also encountered discourses that pointed to some remaining challenges in the Department. For example, while Finley assessed that Ryan “brought a notion of management here,” Sage pointed out that he was rather “absent.” Frankie similarly commented that “one of the criticisms of Ryan is he’s never here.” Furthermore, a couple of interviewees expressed the view that despite the Department feeling much more integrated and positive, some friction remained between different staff groups. Another lingering issue referred to in one way or another by all my interlocutors in Visionary Department related to, as Frankie put it, “discrepancies in workloads.” In Tommy’s words, the problem with workloads also lay in the “workload transparency” or rather the lack thereof. I address workload-related issues in Visionary Department in section 6.4.3.

To summarize, before and upon Ryan’s appointment, Visionary Department was predominantly characterized by discourses that pointed to a rather troubled situation in the unit. My interviewees spoke of issues related to various aspects of the

Department's operations and a lack of management. The unit was described as very diverse in terms of the disciplines represented in it, which was further problematized by a discourse of strong divisions between these different staff groups. An additional exacerbation of the situation was signalled by a discourse of unbalanced workloads. Moreover, my interviewees' reflections pointed to the Department's overall negative atmosphere. However, the narratives of most of my interlocutors also included strong notions of a discourse of change, with the past mostly constructed as a bleaker time compared to the period after Ryan's arrival. Although there were still some challenges – evident in the persistence of discourses of absent leadership, tensions between different staff groups, and workload issues – most of my interviewees agreed that the Department had since Ryan's arrival also become characterized by discourses that pointed to improved departmental integration and a generally more positive climate.

In addition to a variety of other discourses, most of the above departmental discourses conveyed by my interviewees featured prominently in Ryan's perspectives on his role as the Visionary Department HoD. After the next subsection, in which I introduce Ryan's reflections on his career and some of his general views on the HoD role while outlining his career trajectory, I explore in more detail the discursive resources and identity tensions that significantly influenced Ryan's managerial identities construction.

6.1.2 Ryan Quinn on His Career and the Head of Department Role

When I began shadowing Ryan, he was in his late thirties and had been at NewU in the position of the Visionary Department HoD for about three years. When asked how he had got to where he was at that point, Ryan explained to me during our first interview that he had “left school at sixteen with minimum qualifications” and had started working in community development. After a couple of years in that job, he enrolled in a university programme in his field of work, entering higher education from what he

described as a “non-traditional start.” Having “coasted through my first year” of undergraduate studies, his “attitude towards learning and education just changed completely” after writing an essay in his second year on a subject he “was really passionate and interested about” and discussing it at length with his lecturer. Thereafter, he “put everything into my university education,” completing his undergraduate degree and immediately receiving a scholarship to pursue a PhD. Before becoming the Department HoD, Ryan had climbed the academic ladder at his previous institution, where he had most recently been the Research Head for a university-wide community engagement project; prior to that he had held the roles of Principal Lecturer and department Research Lead. Over the years, although he identified predominantly with one area of his work, Ryan explained that he had “dabbled” in several disciplines represented in Visionary Department and the Faculty more broadly. Importantly, Ryan’s application and appointment as HoD of Visionary Department were not incidental. Ryan told me that he had previously worked for Terry, the Faculty’s Dean. He said he “admired [Terry] as a manager” and described them as “somebody I would want to work for again;” a feeling that was evidently mutual. About a year after joining NewU, Ryan was promoted to Reader.

As indicated earlier (section 5.3.2), Ryan was not only the Visionary Department HoD, but also the Faculty Head for External Engagement. However, enhancing external engagement and partnerships was an activity he also saw as crucial to his HoD role, and he invested a lot of his time in efforts related to it (more details follow in section 6.5). Overall, Ryan described the HoD position as very administration-heavy – he spoke of “crushing administrative responsibilities” – and very busy, once jokingly telling me that he supported “the development of cloning” by scientists at NewU because then there could be “two of me.” One of the consequences of Ryan’s busy HoD role was the lack of time he could devote to his academic activities. On the one hand, as mentioned above, he was promoted to Reader about a year into his time as HoD, tried to sustain his research activities by reserving – albeit rather unsuccessfully

during my time with him – one day a week for his research, and overall saw himself as “coming from a place where I’m an academic first, it’s just that I’m the person who’s leading.” On the other hand, Ryan also explained that “being a ... researcher [in a discipline] and a Reader” – though he considered his “own personal identity” to be centred around these categories – was “in this period of my life, right now ... subservient.” In a similar way, although Ryan “love[d]” it and wanted to do more of it, he could not “commit to serious teaching,” and was only able to supervise one doctoral student. Ryan conveyed this tension – in a rather comical way – to Dave Garner, the Different Department HoD, when Dave remarked in a joking tone that Ryan had “intellectual weight” after Ryan showed him a book he had co-authored. In response, Ryan pretended to look for the “intellectual weight” in the drawers in his office and told Dave that he could only find “spreadsheets and workloads” in there for the past three years. Although the above shows that Ryan felt strongly about this tension, he seemed to have come to terms with it to some extent, telling me that he measured his “achievements through the achievements of others ... in this job you can’t have your own, kind of.”

In addition to the above, there were three other significant discursive resources that Ryan drew on during my time with him. First, he described himself as “a really happy person, generally I like to be happy, that’s part of how I like to work.” Second, Ryan described “political life” as something that was important to him, which was particularly evident during my fieldwork when he campaigned to become a Member of Parliament. Finally, Ryan regularly brought up his personal life at work, in particular his children. He expressed his commitment to his family by telling me, for example, “if I won the lottery, and I don’t play, but if I won the lottery, I would become a house husband.”

To sum up, Ryan’s narrative of himself as the Visionary Department HoD began with a discourse that pointed to his “non-traditional” educational background

and a turning point during his studies that set him on a career path very different from what his earlier life experiences would have suggested. As I will note later (section 6.1.3.3), this trajectory played a role in how he constructed his managerial identities as an HoD. Another prominent discursive resource related to Ryan's past that had a clear impact on how he defined his identities as a manager was his previous work in community development and external engagement. This was evident in Ryan's commitment to these causes both in his role as HoD as well as the Faculty Head for External Engagement (section 6.5). One more discursive resource related to Ryan's past was linked to his pre-existing relationship with Terry, the Faculty's Dean. This could explain Ryan's perception that he felt supported by them (see e.g. section 6.1.3.1), which in turn positively fed into his sense of self as the Visionary Department HoD. What also emerged from this early conversation with Ryan was his experience of an identity tension – one frequently referred to in the existing literature on academic middle managers (see the discussion in section 2.2.1) – due to Ryan's simultaneous holding of a busy, administration-heavy HoD post and his identity as an academic in a Reader position engaged in activities such as research and teaching in a particular discipline. Although Ryan suggested at the time that he identified more strongly with the academic aspects of his work – as evidenced by Ryan's reference to his “own personal identity” when talking about this – the realities of the HoD job prevented him from devoting much time to these activities. This kept Ryan from balancing the priorities he would have preferred to set with the demands of his managerial role. In response to this tension, Ryan constructed himself as a manager who measured his successes through the successes of “others” rather than his “own.” This suggests that he at least partially accepted the primacy of the managerial aspects of his role in constructing his identities as an HoD – in line with broader national discourses about the HoD position (see the discussion in section 5.1.2) – by claiming that the alternative was unattainable. In addition, Ryan drew on several other discursive resources, which extended outside and inside the workplace. Discourses of Ryan as a “really happy person” and someone who placed great importance on his “political life” as well as his family played into Ryan's

managerial identities as the Department HoD, whether through how and about what he communicated with his colleagues, or the agendas to which he was dedicated.

6.1.3 “First and Foremost,” a Leader

In addition to the above-mentioned discourses, there was another set of dominant discourses in Ryan’s narrative that related to how he constructed himself as the Visionary Department HoD and as a leader, in relation to various aspects: from how he viewed his HoD role in the context of NewU and the Faculty as his broader discursive environments, to how Ryan perceived his role as HoD in relation to some of the discourses specific to Visionary Department, presented earlier (section 6.1.1) and, finally, how Ryan formed his sense of self as leader in reference to aspects such as his life trajectory, professional experience and political life. In the following subsections, I in turn explore these different components.

6.1.3.1 *Head of Department as a “Firewall”*

I begin by examining how Ryan defined his role as HoD in relation to NewU as the broader discursive context in which he operated. When I asked Ryan in our first interview if he could “follow your own values” in his job, he explained that he “[m]ostly” could, but that sometimes he acted

as a firewall. So I always think of it as a firewall, in that it keeps the rubbish out of the internet but enables you to do the good things. ... And I think the job of an HoD is to be that firewall.

Ryan continued with an example of how, as the Department HoD, he turned a NewU-wide initiative he saw as “punitive” into something “more meaningful” for his staff. He told me about the previous university management introducing “management observation,” which Ryan said focused on staff “being observed by their manager” in

order “to weed out poor performance,” that is “starting from the position where poor performance is your driver, rather than good practice. Or learning.” He continued,

[s]o the job of the firewall is to take the management observation policy, if I don't deliver, I'll be sacked. But to turn it into something that's more meaningful, something more creative. So we train a lot of our team to be observers, we do observation groups, we will observe with a view to pulling out ... what's good. How can we learn. But we'll also work on constructive feedback, because actually yeah, we all wanna be better teachers, don't we? But we don't wanna do it in a way that is seen to be punitive.

However, defining his role as HoD in terms of a “firewall,” a “filter” or a “barrier” who tries “to interpret, mediate and deal with it [university precepts] in a way that doesn't impinge negatively on people,” also meant that

you put yourself as the responsible person. ... So you are saying, actually I made the decision to do it this particular way. So I make all sorts of decisions, probably on a week by week basis, that fall foul ... of some sort of university precept. And I'm comfortable with that. Because actually then we've enabled things to happen and sooner or later the good results come of it ...

The above suggests that Ryan, as the Visionary Department HoD, sometimes challenged the way NewU operated and perhaps even the university's expectations of him as HoD. When I asked Ryan about his tasks as HoD, he explained that the guidance he received for his job was a “standard job description” that he described as “typically underambitious.” He continued, “[t]ypically you will need to manage some money and people. [Ryan and I laugh] You know, that's the summary of it.” Ryan, however, was not satisfied with such an approach to his job. He elaborated,

the thing that measures my job is my conversations with the Dean and ... our appraisal system ... Because that's where we set the more reaching objectives, the more interesting and exciting things that will enable us to get something of a real change, you know. Something meaningful.

These statements indicated not only Ryan's ambition and commitment to "meaningful" change, but also that the Dean enabled Ryan to take such an approach in his role as HoD, sometimes contrary to or in addition to what was expected by the NewU higher management. Ryan explained that while he experienced "pressures ... in terms of the performance management culture here, the requirement to meet [the] metrics and perform according to that," this was "done in a culture where you feel supported, or I do."

To conclude, the above remarks point to Ryan's recurrent experience of two interrelated identity tensions. The first arose from a contradiction between the nature of NewU directives – grounded in discourses of performance management and sometimes perceived by Ryan as "punitive," in line with the discursive characterization of NewU presented in section 5.2.1 – and Ryan's alternative notion of change. He spoke of the latter by focusing on discourses of meaningfulness, creativity and a rejection of the notion of organizational change that negatively affected the Visionary Department staff. The second, related identity tension arose from the conflict between the university's discourses about the HoD role, which focused on budget and people management, and Ryan's more ambitious characterization of the post, again emphasizing the importance of meaningful change. In response to these interlinked identity tensions, while Ryan acknowledged that he had to meet the university requirements, he also indicated that he regularly rejected the NewU's version of the discourse of change and the HoD position as the source of his managerial identities. Instead, he drew on alternative discursive formulations that recognized the potential for change of a different nature and the place of his department staff in it. Thus, on the one

hand, Ryan constructed a managerial identity as a “firewall,” a “filter” or a “barrier” that signalled identification with the members of his department, not unlike Gjerde and Alvesson’s (2020) “umbrella carriers” or “protectors.” At the same time, Ryan also claimed an identity as an ambitious HoD, who sought meaningful change, a sense of managerial self also supported by Ryan’s immediate manager, the Faculty’s Dean, who thus enabled Ryan’s notion of what it meant to be an HoD.

6.1.3.2 Leading for Change

While the above subsection addressed Ryan’s construction of his managerial identities as HoD in relation to the NewU and faculty discursive contexts, Ryan as HoD of Visionary Department also operated in a department-specific discursive environment. Like my other interviewees in Visionary Department and some outside the unit (section 6.1.1), Ryan spoke of several challenging features of the Department upon his appointment as HoD. During our first interview, Ryan told me about the “team that had just been through ... [a] reorganization” and shared that the Department’s previous head “was widely regarded as somebody who [had] not really engaged fully with the job.” Furthermore, in a strategic meeting of the Department Leadership Team, Ryan spoke of the unit being divided into three groups “with different legacies” when he arrived, noting that he felt “we were a bit downtrodden as a department.” In our first interview, Ryan also mentioned that he “found colleagues ... to feel undervalued.”

Ryan believed that this particular departmental context – combined with some of his attributes – played a role in his appointment as the Visionary Department’s next HoD. Alluding to his positive personality and ambition mentioned earlier (sections 6.1.2, 6.1.3.1), Ryan shared his thoughts on the hiring process,

I think they [the interview panel] recognized that staff had been through [a long period] of quite demoralizing experiences. In order for NewU [Faculty of] Political and Social Sciences to up its game, it was gonna need some real positive energy in

and transformational kind of work. And I think that's probably what I came pitching.

Upon his appointment as HoD and in response to these circumstances, Ryan seemed to immediately apply his “positive energy” to his work in the Department. During our first interview, he explained to me that the “number one” thing he started working on was

about staff ... I call it kind of almost the staff integration and department identity, and it was about overcoming some really entrenched separation between people ... Some people feeling downtrodden, so that was number one, because you can't do anything if your team is dysfunctional.

While, upon arriving at Visionary Department, Ryan “knew within ten minutes of being here” that there were several “pressing problems” that needed to be addressed, such as issues with the level and quality of departmental research,

instead of just kind of driving it forward, it was critical meeting everybody for 90 minutes, two hours, just to get a sense of their story, where do they come from, why they're here, where do they hope to be.

In order “to change how we did business, to create much more an open environment where people talk to each other,” Ryan continued,

[w]e did something stupid in the first year. ... I say it's stupid, it was a breakfast club, just where people came together and said, I'm doing this, this is my job, this is what I'm about, this is what I'm up to. And critically for three teams coming together as well, it gave people the chance to overcome some of their previous, you know, I don't know who these people are.

Although Ryan accepted that in “any team” as big as his, “there’ll be cliques,” he was also determined that he would not “[let] that be the dominant driver for stopping you from doing something.”

Ryan, however, not only emphasized the importance of departmental integration and a friendlier working environment, but also wanted to deliver on his commitment to ambitious change in the Department. He saw his role as the Visionary Department HoD as also being

ambitious for this team. And being ambitious for ... somebody who writes a really good lecture and telling [them], that's a great lecture, now it needs to be a publication, you can do more. ... so you're relational ... but you're also pushing them.

A clear example of Ryan’s ambition for the Department, while emphasizing the importance of that ambition for maintaining a positive, encouraging atmosphere within the team, could be observed during a Faculty Management meeting in which future growth in taught postgraduate student numbers in the Faculty’s was planned. When Terry, the Dean, informed Ryan that they decreased the growth he had originally proposed because it was “too ambitious,” Ryan in response expressed his confidence in the original growth proposal, partly due to the measures they had already taken to achieve that goal. He added that he wanted to be ambitious and come back to his team with an optimistic plan, rather than telling them they could not grow. Despite the nervousness and hesitation of the senior Faculty Management members, Ryan convinced them to keep his original growth proposal, concluding the conversation by saying that while he was “feeling anxiety, these are not big numbers, so we need to get serious about it.”

To summarize, Ryan’s reflections on Visionary Department upon his arrival were largely consistent with the departmental discourses described earlier (section

6.1.1): he mentioned the unit's recent reconfiguration, the absence of management, the divisions between the three staff groups, the overall rather negative departmental atmosphere and the poor staff morale. In contrast to this departmental discursive context, Ryan spoke of himself as bringing "some real positive energy" and a "transformational" approach to the Visionary Department's endeavours – a sense of self he said was validated by those in charge of hiring him – and focusing first on integrating the team and creating a more open departmental environment. However, this suggested an identity tension, as Ryan, rather than drawing on existing dominant departmental discourses as the source of his managerial identities instead contradicted them and was determined to change these discourses, or at least not allow them to stand in the way of achievement. Moreover, Ryan again constructed himself as an HoD who was also "ambitious" for the Department (see also section 6.1.3.1). However, as the above example shows, this sometimes led to further identity tensions for him. In this case, Ryan's proposal was challenged by the senior Faculty Management colleagues, including the Dean. In response to the identity tension, instead of realigning his identity as the Visionary Department HoD by drawing on the discourses offered by his senior colleagues, Ryan resisted the pressure from above and maintained a managerial identity based on discourses of ambition and commitment to maintaining an optimistic atmosphere among his department staff.

6.1.3.3 A People Leader

Ryan's reflections, presented in the two subsections above, already point to a certain notion he held regarding what being an HoD meant to him. During our first interview, when Ryan and I talked about the categories he identified with and those he did not identify with or identified less with (section 4.3.2.1), he stated early on, "I guess first and foremost I would put this [the leader card] on the top of my job pile." With this came Ryan's notion of "the leadership of people" as his "primary leadership ... Because that's our biggest resource."

When I asked Ryan about the role his disciplinary background played in his leadership style, he explained that his “particular view of people” came not only from his discipline but also from his life experiences, from “the particular walk into this university that I had. From leaving school, from being a community worker, from being politically active.” This related to what Ryan described as a “genuine position I have,” emphasizing, “this isn’t a soundbite,”

I’m a great believer in relationships. And the power of relationships. And I’ve learnt this throughout my life that if you give people trust and you give people the support they need, and you give people the time and the attention they need, they will flourish. So that’s my driving philosophy. ... And ... I wasn’t trying to do it, it’s just something I do.

In other words, Ryan reflected,

that first fundamental is believing that those guys are doing a good job. Starting from that position. So if you start from the assumption that everybody is doing good work and then manage according to that, it’s much better than a constant feeling that people aren’t performing.

Furthermore, Ryan’s conception of leadership also included a distinction between being a leader and being a manager. He quite explicitly positioned himself on the leadership side of the spectrum, telling me,

I’ve always interpreted these [leader and manager] as different. That the leader is somebody that sets strategy, drives strategy, inspires people to go somewhere, and I hope I do that. ... that for me is my litmus test of have we done a good job, are people heading in the right direction and doing things. But inevitably I have to manage processes as well, so there is some of that.

Ryan also indicated that he prioritized the leadership component of his HoD role over the management component when he explained to me how he thought his colleagues regarded him as their HoD,

I think if you were to ask colleagues what one of my faults is, they'll probably say, sometimes he's a bit too busy, rushes around, things might slip through the crack, I had to send this form off to the right committee at the right time and I've to chase him for it, but what they'll also say is that when I need something, seriously need something or need help ... then he'll do something. I hope that's what they would say.

To conclude, Ryan's reflections above make it clear that in his role as the Visionary Department HoD, he "first and foremost" constructed a managerial identity drawing on leadership discourses. Specifically, although he briefly acknowledged the role of his disciplinary background, Ryan employed discursive resources linked to his other life experiences – "leaving school," his community work and his political activity – to explain his view of people and how he positioned himself towards them as department leader. Ryan's notion of leadership focused on discourses of trust, support and belief that staff were "doing a good job," as opposed to questioning their performance. Furthermore, Ryan suggested that his notion of people and relationships was inherent to who he was as an individual and as HoD, which seemed to indicate a congruence between what identity researchers refer to as personal and social identities (see e.g. Alvesson et al., 2008; Coupland & Brown, 2012; Webb, 2006; and the discussion in section 3.3.1). However, this appeared to feed into an identity tension between Ryan's dominant sense of self as leader – focused on "strategy" and "inspir[ing] people" – and the job responsibilities that required him to be a manager who "manage[s] processes," a commonly recognized distinction in the management literature (see e.g. Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). In response to this identity tension, Ryan – despite acknowledging negative consequences this sometimes had for the colleagues he

managed, in line with some Visionary Department staff's own perceptions of Ryan's frequent absences (section 6.1.1) – maintained a managerial identity wherein he constructed leadership discourses as much more valued than management discourses. By sticking to the aspects of his work that he saw as primary, Ryan at least partially contradicted some additional elements of his role that would have been appreciated by his staff.

Having provided an overview of some of the prominent discourses that characterized Ryan's environment, the identity tensions he experienced, and his responses to the latter, the remainder of this chapter focuses on Ryan's discursive identity work as it manifested itself in relation to the Visionary Department's research efforts and specifically to Ryan's management thereof.

6.2 Putting Research on the Agenda

From the very beginning of my time with Ryan, it was clear that the Visionary Department's research and effective management thereof were among Ryan's key strategic priorities as the Department HoD. However, as indicated earlier (section 6.1), it was also apparent early on that Ryan's focus on strengthening the unit's research culture was to be understood in a specific – rather challenging – context. As discussed both by several interviewed organizational members other than Ryan and by Ryan himself, his emphasis on research was at odds with some of the dominant research-related discourses in the Department and in the broader institutional environment, thus challenging the status quo. In the remainder of this section, I first present the frictions related to the Visionary Department's limited research efforts from the perspective of organizational members other than Ryan and their views on some of the recent, more positive developments in relation to research within the Department and beyond. This is followed by Ryan's perspectives on the state of departmental research, along with an

exploration of Ryan's experiences of identity tensions arising from the discursive environments in which he operated.

6.2.1 The Visionary Department's Research Crisis – and Solutions to It

In the interviews with the Visionary Department academics and the Faculty's Dean, the unit's past was portrayed as generally lacking in research orientation. The interviewees cited multiple reasons for this situation. First, in line with the discourses outlined in chapter 5 (sections 5.1.4.3, 5.2), several interlocutors pointed to the traditionally dominant emphasis on teaching over research at NewU, implying a distinction between the post-1992 universities and the old universities. Wes, for example, portrayed research efforts at NewU as secondary to teaching and emphasized the financial importance of teaching-related income to the university,

obviously for an institution like ours, we always have been very heavily dependent on student numbers ... the amount of money that we, even at this point, are earning in terms of research, the doing of the research is more important in terms of a kind of Kitemark and our credibility ...

Sage spoke of the difficulty of balancing the different parts of the academic job, including finding time for research activities. This, in their view, was partly due to the focus on teaching at the new universities. Sage said, “[i]t is very tricky. And it's led, isn't it, by the institution to some degree. I mean ... it's a heavily teaching-focused university.” Frankie pointed to another characteristic of NewU as a post-1992 university, which affected the extent of research undertaken by its academics. The institution's past under the local authority (section 5.2.1) continued to shape the mentality of some employees to “work their [weekly contracted] hours,” adding, “[t]hat's it. They won't work anything beyond it or anything like that.” Frankie took the view that for academics to perform well in research, it was necessary to work beyond those hours, a practice they described as common in “old, traditional” universities.

Moreover, Morgan pointed to the advantage of old universities when it came to fostering research and participating in national research assessment activities. In particular, Morgan described how academics at Russell Group universities “all have the same [academic] training” and that, overall, these institutions were “more driven by the REF” and “have a greater understanding on what that is,” in contrast to NewU as a post-1992 university.

Some interviewees linked the lack of a research agenda at NewU to the former Vice-Chancellor (VC), who was described as very focused on students. As Wes noted, for “the previous VC it was all about students, partly because of the introduction of fees, it was all about ... a quality [student] experience.” Finley expressed a complementary view, telling me, “it was clear that [the previous VC] thought research was an added extra here. And [they] didn’t think that this was a research-based university.” Moreover, the situation seemed to have been exacerbated by the Department’s former leadership, under which research was not considered a priority. Wes described how, in the past, “[t]here was no research strategy.” One interviewee even spoke of a failed attempt to introduce a department research strategy after the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2008, explaining that a

research strategy document ... was passed, and it [included], for example, you cannot go to a conference unless you are giving a paper and you are developing that paper for publication. People [still] went to conferences without papers and didn’t publish anything. In other words, there was no management of the policy.

Furthermore, as described in more detail later (section 6.3), some interviewees indicated that a number of the Visionary Department members had not previously been involved in research and consequently were not skilled in research. Terry, the Dean, similarly recalled that when they were appointed they were “surprised that we didn’t have as much research-active staff in [the Faculty UOA 1] as I thought somewhere with the standing of NewU should’ve had.”

These circumstances may explain why Visionary Department found itself in a difficult position when it came to preparing its REF 2014 submission. Although the Faculty UOA 1 was eventually entered in the REF 2014, it was not certain in the run-up to the exercise that the UOA would be submitted. Upon their appointment, Terry recalled that they were “surprised that the research within ... [the Faculty UOA 1] ... wasn’t further advanced.” The status at the time was in stark contrast to the UOA’s RAE 2008 submission, which resulted in NewU being positioned in the first quartile nationally in the disciplinary area. Terry explained,

what had happened there is the people that had made that excellent submission had all retired or gone on to do other things. And what we hadn’t done was, hadn’t had a plan, if you like, in terms of how we made that submission a sustainable activity within that [UOA]. ... So suddenly we found that ... what was a brilliant [UOA] before ... suddenly there wasn’t a submission there.

A department member shared a similar view and explained how, after several high-performing researchers left,

it drifted. And so, you know, we arrived at a situation where literally kind of ... eighteen months before [the] REF 2014 deadline we had no idea whether we were going in, there’d be no strategy in terms of trying to say, this is the area of research that we’re going to do.

As a result, they shared, the Faculty UOA 1 “didn’t do particularly well in [the] REF 2014.” Additionally, this research participant also explained that the RAE 2008 submission brought together “all the leading researchers” and returned them to a single UOA, some of whom, I later learned, were aligned with other UOAs in the REF 2014 (see also section 8.3).

However, at the time of my research in Visionary Department, shortly after the announcement of the REF 2014 results – despite the fact that the Faculty UOA 1 ranked in the bottom third nationally (sections 5.3.2, 6.1) – my interviewees seemed to agree that research had recently become a higher priority in the Department and that the latter was in transition to becoming more research-oriented. Tommy, for example, described that there had been “big changes” and a “push” in relation to research. Morgan also shared that they had “noticed a change. People can see that the infrastructure is there to bring about research.” There were several factors that my interviewees saw as stimulating the Department’s research agenda. One of these was Ryan’s arrival and his commitment to creating a stronger research profile for Visionary Department. Wes, for instance, described how Ryan had tried “to galvanize us into a research strategy” and “give a much more strategic direction to research.” Frankie also acknowledged Ryan as “the leader ... who has put this on the agenda.” At the same time, some interviewees spoke of the role of other managers in the Faculty in promoting research, including the appointment of Karen Fowler as the Faculty Head of Research, which brought about strengthening the departmental strategic research management roles, and Terry, the Dean, who played a role in making the Faculty as a whole “more academic,” including in terms of promoting “research” and “scholarship,” which Frankie described as previously “kind of tangential.”

These developments were seen by some as crucial in the light of the recently appointed VC, who, as mentioned in chapter 5 (section 5.2.2), changed the university’s attitude to its research function and placed more value on it. Wes, for example, described how the new VC differed from the previous one in that they placed much more importance on research rather than focusing predominantly on students. Similarly, Finley perceived that when the new VC was appointed, “the first thing [the VC] talked about was research. And the first thing [they] said, universities are about ideas. I’d never heard that here.” In Frankie’s words, “[t]he new Vice-Chancellor wants this, we need to be a proper university.” In light of this sea change stemming from the appointment

of a new VC, one interviewee assessed that due to Ryan's push for a stronger focus on research, Visionary Department was "ahead of the game" in terms of "what the VC is gonna be requiring the different faculties and different departments to do." Another interlocutor shared a similar view, describing how "when the new Vice-Chancellor came here, we were suddenly in a much stronger position than we had been prior to Terry and Ryan coming here."

The above reflections by the Visionary Department members and the Faculty's Dean portray the Department's research profile as rather weak in the years preceding my fieldwork. This discourse of limited departmental research was linked at a broader level to the discourses mentioned earlier of NewU as a post-1992 university that focused primarily on teaching (sections 5.1.4.1, 5.1.4.3, 5.2), as reflected, for example, in the financial importance of teaching, the lack of research time, the remnants of the local authority mentality in terms of staff working hours, and the institution's traditionally lower level of engagement in national research evaluation schemes. According to my interviewees, this discourse was further fuelled by the NewU's former VC and their promotion of the aforementioned university-wide discourse of a lack of emphasis on research (section 5.2.2). Moreover, at the departmental level, my interlocutors spoke of a lack of research management; the low number of research-active academics; the resulting issues in terms of the Visionary Department's contribution to the REF 2014 submission, which was particularly striking given the UOA's previous highly successful performance, even if the latter was at least partly related to the UOA's 'artificial' nature; and the Faculty UOA 1's eventual unsatisfactory performance in the REF 2014. Despite all this, a number of my interviewees confirmed that a departmental discourse had recently emerged of a greater focus on research, constructing Ryan as a crucial figure in bringing about this change, while also acknowledging the role of Karen Fowler and the Dean in strengthening research efforts at a faculty-wide level (see also section 5.3.2). As a result of these recent developments, some assessed that Visionary Department was "ahead of the game" in terms of the new VC's increased research expectations discussed

earlier (section 5.2.2), indicating an alignment between the more recent departmental and university research discourses.

6.2.2 Determined to Overcome the Barriers to Research

Ryan's thoughts on the state of research in Visionary Department on his arrival mirrored the discourses employed by his colleagues, which, as shown above, indicated that the departmental research culture was limited in various ways, and exposed a number of challenges. In the continuation, I highlight Ryan's commitment to creating a stronger departmental research profile, describing the obstacles he felt hindered these efforts and illuminating his determination to overcome them.

6.2.2.1 Managing Research at a Post-1992 University

In line with the reflections of the Visionary Department members interviewed, Ryan identified numerous barriers to achieving his goal of establishing a strong departmental research profile. In our first interview, for one, Ryan acknowledged the difference between the post-1992, teaching-oriented institutions – such as NewU – and the old, research-focused universities. At the same time, he expressed his determination from the outset to improve the Department's research despite the obstacles posed by the fact that NewU was a new university, arguing,

I just don't accept that you can be a university and not have a thriving research culture. And I recognized in the UK higher education system ... there's a distinction between the old universities and the new. ... Old universities will give a lecturer 200 hours [annually] of teaching and the rest of the time for research. And they will flourish and produce great work. New universities are delivering high amounts of teaching, high amounts of administration, and keep a little bit for research. So we had to change that culture.

In our second interview, Ryan elaborated further on this. Not only were the former polytechnics “former teaching-heavy institutions,” but they were also “[f]ormer local authority-controlled.” The latter was at least partly related to “a culture of, I work nine ‘till five,” which Ryan seemed to imply contributed to his perception that “we’re trying to do research in an environment where there is not enough time to do research.”

Furthermore, Ryan argued that the differences in approach to research between the old universities and the former polytechnics continued to be reproduced by the REF, which he saw as “crude” and “elitist.” Nevertheless, he was determined to play the REF “game,” as he explained to me in our third interview when I asked him about his thoughts on the REF, “I treat [the] REF as a game that we have to play.” He continued, “I think [the] REF is, like many things in the UK research environment” – such as competitive research funding distributed by government funding bodies and non-government funders – “[it] favours those who are already strong [old universities]. ... So on the one hand I feel like ... the odds are stacked against us already.” Ryan, however, went on to use an analogy to a regular “health check” to describe the REF as also

something external to say this [research] is so important, we must do this, and if we're saying to the staff we've gotta get a good REF submission what we're actually saying is, we have to have a really healthy research department. ... it provides us with some sort of [a] milestone, yeah? Through which to judge it [research].

To sum up, Ryan, like several of his colleagues (section 6.2.1) and in line with the discussion in chapter 5 (sections 5.1.4.1, 5.1.4.3), attributed one of the obstacles to a stronger research culture in Visionary Department – a unit within a new university – to a nationwide discursive distinction between the old, research-intensive universities and the post-1992 institutions. As Ryan explained, unlike their pre-1992 counterparts, the new universities had traditionally focused on teaching, had higher administrative loads and a different culture in terms of staff working hours, all of which meant that

academics had less time for research. However, these features of NewU were at odds with Ryan's firm belief that "a thriving research culture" was central to a university. In response to this identity tension – on the one hand, Ryan operated in a discursive environment that was not conducive to research, and on the other hand, his views contradicted this notion – Ryan rejected the dominant discourse that diminished the role of research as the source of his managerial identities and challenged it by claiming a sense of self to which research was central, in line with the notion of "academic drift" (Pratt, 1997). However, this was related to another identity tension, which was connected to Ryan's position vis-à-vis the REF. While Ryan partially rejected the idea of the REF, discursively characterizing the exercise as "crude" and "elitist," as "a game that we have to play" – in line with some of the REF discourses presented in chapter 5 (sections 5.1.3.2, 5.1.4.3) – he at the same time welcomed the notion of the REF as a tool promoting the importance of research (see also section 5.1.3.2), which was consistent with the significance he attached to research in constructing his managerial identities. Ryan thus distanced himself from certain aspects of the REF, while accepting others, which seemed to indicate an ongoing identity tension.

6.2.2.2 Challenging the NewU's Attitude to Research

Ryan not only acknowledged the differences between the old and new universities within the national research environment, but also identified obstacles to "a thriving research culture" specifically emanating from the NewU management. Compared to his previous university, which was also a post-1992 institution, Ryan told me during our first interview that when he arrived at NewU, he felt that "there was much less evidence of research being prioritized in this department, and I think that came from the top. There wasn't a strong message at the top." During our third interview, in which we talked again about the circumstances at the time of Ryan's appointment, he went on to explain that "the thing they [the NewU management] were interested in was reaching the maximum teaching bar [in staff's workloads]. ... And they didn't care about the

other stuff in there.” In a strategic meeting of the Department Leadership Team, Ryan thus assessed that research in Visionary Department had been “done in spite of, and not because of NewU.”

Ryan was determined to challenge this barrier to research, as he explained to me when I asked him in our first interview about the contradictions between the university’s central and departmental levels that he had to manage as HoD. He recounted,

what was stark, and I’m quite serious about this, [was] that when I got here, there was this failure to kind of promote research ... And I think that was ... a real challenge for us, because here we were operating within our resource constraints, within what we had, to go against the university dominant position. And ... that was a disruption, that was about us doing something counter. ... So that was probably the time when it really took a bit of, you know, there were certain things that I was doing to enable that to happen, actually, when it came to auditing, I would have to make a defence of why I made the decisions that I’d made.

To conclude, the above points to Ryan’s experience of another identity tension related to the aforementioned centrality of his commitment to enhancing the departmental research to Ryan’s managerial identities (section 6.2.2.1). The latter – in combination with Ryan’s experiences at a different university, which he employed as another discursive identity resource – was at odds with the NewU top management’s discourses at the time of Ryan’s appointment. These university discourses conveyed a neglect of research and a prioritization of teaching, which was also observed by some of Ryan’s colleagues (sections 5.2.2, 6.2.1). This led Ryan to reject university discourses as potential sources of his managerial identity and instead to challenge them by dedicating himself to advancing the departmental research agenda. In a demonstration of his ambition and commitment to change that was sometimes at odds with broader university discourses (section 6.1.3.1), Ryan did so regardless of the potential

consequences of contradicting the word from the top, signalling a managerial identity that was primarily informed by his own vision for Visionary Department rather than the university's mandate.

6.2.2.3 Tackling the Inadequate Departmental Research Culture

As indicated both in the reflections of Ryan's colleagues (section 6.2.1) and by Ryan himself, the research in Visionary Department was in a less than desirable state at the time of Ryan's arrival, a point Ryan reiterated on several occasions during my time with him. During our third interview, for example, Ryan pointed to the earlier lack of an explicit research agenda in the Department. According to him, although "there was research going on [in Visionary Department], there wasn't a research strategy. There were pockets of work going on, but there was no drive. There was no emphasis, no value placed on it." Moreover, a number of staff in the Department had limited or no experience with research. In our second interview, when we talked about the introduction of a department research strategy – an initiative led by Ryan in collaboration with selected senior academics in the Department, which I discuss in more detail at several points later in this chapter (see e.g. section 6.3) – Ryan mentioned that some staff thought a step in this direction was "stupid" and for some even "impossible because they are completely unskilled in that area ... they've been teaching all their lives." In Ryan's perception, at the time of his arrival at Visionary Department, it was uncommon to even talk about research or celebrate research successes. During the aforementioned meeting of the Department's leadership, he remarked in a whisper, "[i]n the past, we were whispering about research in corridors." However, he went on to challenge this state of affairs by saying, "you don't have to apologize about doing research, let's rather organize research seminars and celebrate when we get funding."

This brings us to the fact that Visionary Department was not organizing research seminars at the time of Ryan's appointment. During our third interview, in

which he confirmed that it was his idea to launch the departmental research seminars, Ryan commented, “when I got here ... Small Department had their monthly seminar, Different Department had seminars, we didn’t. ... So that’s really weird ... you should have seminars. Seminars are a way in which people can hear about their colleagues.” Speaking of celebrating research successes, Ryan recounted an example where an academic in the Department was “actively discouraged” from applying for a research grant before Ryan’s arrival, which they ended up winning. Ryan described his reaction to the academic’s research funding success as notably different, describing – and showing me – how he “danced in the street, I did a little dance for [them].”

Furthermore, during our third interview, Ryan described how the issues with the Department’s research culture – or rather, the lack of one – were also at the time of his appointment

evident in the metrics. ... the research target, the income target, when I got here was zero. So my budget was presented to me ... and the projection for research in my first year was zero. So we weren’t expecting Visionary Department to bring a penny of income in. I just couldn’t believe that. Even coming in from a fairly small ... department [at Ryan’s previous university], there was an income coming in for external work.

As mentioned earlier (sections 6.1), another indicator of the Department’s limited research was the REF 2014 submission of the Faculty UOA 1. Upon his appointment, as Ryan shared in a strategic meeting of the Department’s leadership, he was told that there would probably be no submission to the REF 2014, which he found particularly upsetting given the UOA’s aforementioned success in the RAE 2008 (section 6.2.1). In our third interview, he shared with me some troubling details regarding the Faculty UOA 1 REF 2014 submission, explaining,

[w]e submitted [a small number of] staff ... to [the] REF [2014] [silence] and we were scrambling around to get enough publications to put in. ... We weren't submitting [a small number of] people who had ten publications each and saying, which are my best four. We were saying, are you gonna have a fourth out [in time]?

Ryan's reflections on the REF, which I presented earlier (section 6.2.2.1), however, indicated that he was intent on playing the Department's REF "game" quite differently in the future.

To summarize, Ryan, similar to several of his colleagues (section 6.2.1), indicated that Visionary Department at the time of his appointment was characterized by a discourse of lack of research orientation. According to Ryan, this manifested itself in multiple ways: research was not given strategic importance, many of the Department staff lacked research experience, no research seminars were being organized, applying for research funding was discouraged, the target for research income was zero, and there were barely enough publications to prepare a REF 2014 submission. As indicated in the previous two subsections, this situation was at odds with Ryan's attitude and vision for research in the Department, which led to a set of identity tensions for him. In line with Ryan's stance shown earlier (sections 6.2.2.1, 6.2.2.2), in response to these frictions, he showed his determination to challenge the existing departmental research-related discourses. Ryan consistently pointed to the centrality of research to his managerial identities as the unit's HoD, evident in his comments on the introduction of the departmental research seminars, the celebration of funding successes and the commitment to playing the REF "game" (section 6.2.2.1). As shown above, Ryan sometimes reinforced this sense of self by drawing on additional discursive resources, including the research seminar cultures in other departments in the Faculty, his experience in a department at another university, and the successful performance of the Faculty UOA 1 in the RAE 2008. However, this subsection also points to the fact that Ryan's commitment to raising the Department's research profile was not only

challenged by the broader national, university and departmental research-related discourses emanating from the unit's (former) top, but also contradicted the views of at least some of the Department staff; a dynamic similar to the previously described findings in the existing literature on the introduction of research agendas in the post-1992 universities (section 5.1.4.3) and discussed in more detail later in the chapter (see e.g. sections 6.3, 6.4.1).

6.2.2.4 A Mix of Personal Determination and Enabling by Senior Colleagues

The above illustrates that putting research on the Visionary Department agenda was one of Ryan's central undertakings as the Department HoD, indicating the importance Ryan attached to research endeavours. During our first interview, Ryan suggested that the development of a research strategy was central to all other efforts of the Department, saying,

that was so important for me because I think that actually if you get a thriving research culture, you get a better student experience, you get a bigger profile of that, the work you're trying to do, and you generate scholarship, which is, again, fundamental. So that was really, really critical.

This view of the centrality of research was also reflected in the Visionary Department research strategy, led by Ryan and developed in collaboration with the Department's selected senior academics. In this document, research was presented as "central to our mission," as "the activity around which all others revolve" and which was "not distinct from any of the other activities we engage in," be it improving learning and teaching, evaluating new pedagogies or influencing policy and practice. At the same time, the research also helped to build their reputation and supported their growth as a department.

However, the interview quote I cite above not only points to Ryan's view that research played a crucial role in all the endeavours of Visionary Department and its members, but it also shows that putting research on the agenda was "so important for *me* [Ryan]" (emphasis added). Throughout the time I spent with him, Ryan expressed this on numerous occasions and in different ways, sometimes more, sometimes less explicitly. In the previous subsections, I presented several examples where this was implied (see e.g. section 6.2.2.1), but let me at this point more explicitly illustrate Ryan's sense of ownership of the Department research strategy, which stemmed from just how important this strategic issue was to him as the Department HoD. For example, in the first interview, Ryan explained to me that while he trusted his Leadership Team, "it's still something to give away. Something. You know, given the research strategy is so central to what *I* want to achieve, it's then a real challenge to give one of the [Leadership Team members]" responsibility for departmental research (emphasis added). In our third interview, Ryan predicted that a future research strategy would be more ambitious than the one in place at the time of my fieldwork, sharing, "if we haven't moved into a different place of what we look and feel like as a department by then, then *I've* manifestly failed. In *my* little experiment, yeah?" (emphases added).

While Ryan – and a number of his colleagues I interviewed (section 6.2.1) – indicated that he indeed played a critical role in challenging the state of affairs in Visionary Department with respect to research, Ryan and his department members also acknowledged the importance of other actors in the Faculty in advancing the research agenda. Not only did Ryan acknowledge that the development and implementation of the Department research strategy was the work of a group of the Visionary Department senior academics, but also stated during our third interview that the appointment of Karen Fowler as the Faculty Head of Research resulted in her "beginning to gee up some support." Furthermore, on a couple of occasions – here during our second interview – Ryan suggested that it was the Dean who "enabled me to do it [get the research strategy up and going] ... in spite of the university's priorities." At the same

time, in relation to the recent change in the NewU management, Ryan expressed the view that “[t]hose priorities are changing now” and that “the change at the top ... is palpable, it’s noticeable.” In his opinion, this also meant that “we are probably ahead of the curve in terms of our change.”

To sum up, this subsection explicitly showed that the development of a departmental research agenda was one of Ryan’s main efforts as the Visionary Department HoD, as demonstrated by his promotion of a departmental discourse which constructed research as central to all efforts in the unit. This discourse featured prominently in Ryan’s formation of his managerial identities. Although he acknowledged the role that his senior department and the Faculty Management colleagues played in promoting these efforts, Ryan at times explicitly claimed ownership of the research agenda, demonstrating just how important it was to his sense of self as manager. Ryan’s strong attachment to this endeavour, however, led to some further – possible – identity tensions. First, one of the quotes above suggests that Ryan felt uneasy delegating responsibility for research management to a department colleague. At the time, this tension seemed to persist, despite Ryan’s attempts to construct himself as an HoD who accepted this departmental management arrangement. Moreover, one could expect that a possible lack of success of the research plan Ryan mentioned would lead to another identity tension, as Ryan would have to deal with failure in an area so central to his sense of managerial self. Furthermore, as explained earlier (section 6.2.2.2), Ryan’s firm commitment to raising the Department’s research profile initially brought him into conflict with the NewU research discourses. However, the above suggests that Ryan was not alone in grappling with this identity tension – by challenging the university’s stance on research – as he drew on the Faculty’s Dean as a discursive resource that supported his sense of self in terms of the importance he attached to research. Additionally, Ryan suggested that this early identity tension could be further diminished due to the aforementioned changes in the institution’s approach to research following the arrival of a new VC (see e.g. section 5.2.2) that was more in line with his own

research vision for the Department, which Ryan believed the unit had already begun to work on.

6.3 Building an Inclusive Research Culture

The above section outlined the many obstacles to the development of a research agenda in Visionary Department, as perceived by several department members interviewed and Ryan himself. At the same time, it highlighted Ryan's firm commitment to turning the tide and in the process forming a managerial identity to which these efforts were central. In this section, I focus on how Ryan approached the introduction and implementation of a research strategy in these circumstances. I begin by examining the perspectives of some of the Department academics on this issue. I then present the details of Ryan's view on this matter – which he believed required a primarily inclusive approach – and his discursive identity work related to it.

6.3.1 Can the Visionary Department Members Do Research?

As already indicated (sections 6.2.1, 6.2.2.3), many Visionary Department members did not have a strong research background, and several had focused mainly on teaching for many years. While this is not a perfect indicator of staff's research skills and activity, as outlined in chapter 5 (section 5.3.2), a significant proportion of the unit's members did not have doctorates, which gives a rough idea of how many department members were not skilled, or were less skilled at research. Among the academics in the Department who spoke in the interviews about this issue in the context of setting a research agenda, views were on a spectrum between two opposite poles: on the one hand, a recognition that the less research-oriented staff could be taken along, and on the other hand, a scepticism about this possibility.

In the words of one interviewee, the way to move from “that teaching kind of mindset” – associated with the post-1992 status of NewU – “to one that places research” at the centre of “everything we do” was through understanding and appreciation of “where people are coming from” while “harness[ing] that change in the most beneficial way, in a holistic manner, for individuals” by “enabling people” and “facilitating change through building confidence.” Another department member also recognized that not everyone in the unit could embark on this new trajectory without support. They shared their view that some people were “resistant” to the research push, while a group of others were “scared” of this new agenda. This research participant expressed understanding for those who felt this way because “[i]f you don’t have any kind of experience in these things, it can be scary.” At the same time, they shared an example where a very small research project was turned into a published article that made this relatively simple piece of research “scientific.” After this experience, they reflected, “actually, you can, you know, if you’ve got a brain, you can do some relatively small little thing and can make something of it.” Moreover, they believed that with some help, “most” Visionary Department members “should be able to do that.” Similarly, another interviewee emphasized that any research effort, no matter how small, could contribute to building a research culture in the Department. They shared,

everything that staff do in terms of research ... can contribute to the research culture and the strategic direction. So I think that there are some staff ... [who] think, why should I do this, 'cause I'm not gonna be one of the elite few who's returned in [the] REF 2020? Just trying to get across that, no, you know, doing that small little project ... it's what contributed.

While these research participants believed in bringing people along and recognized the value of even small research contributions, one of them pointed out to me that not everyone in Visionary Department thought so. Indeed, one interviewee was rather sceptical about the possibility of staff with limited or no prior research experience

getting involved in research activity and expressed doubts about these department members getting on board with the research agenda. In their view, those who did not perform well in research should “mov[e] on to teaching-only contracts.” Moreover, this interviewee expressed doubts about NewU as a whole being able to establish a strong research position in the national context. In their opinion, NewU “should be one of the leading ... regional research institutions,” but – unlike research-intensive universities – “[t]his university can’t have a national research function.”

In conclusion, the above indicates a complex departmental discursive environment in relation to the Visionary Department’s research agenda. First of all, the data presented point to the existence of contradictory departmental discourses. That is, the recent introduction of a discourse of research as a central endeavour was, as indicated earlier by Ryan and explored in more detail later in the chapter (sections 6.2.2.3, 6.4.1), at odds with the fear and resistance of at least some of the staff to this discourse – or their perceived inability to enact it; a dynamic previously identified in the modern universities (section 5.1.4.3). Moreover, the reactions of the Visionary Department members interviewed to the presence of these opposing discourses led to further discursive friction within the unit. While one group of them acknowledged the limited extent of research in the Department – with one of them explicitly linking this to the fact that NewU was a post-1992 institution, in line with national discourses concerning this type of university (section 5.1.4.3) – they focused on discourses of support, of “enabling,” of facilitation and of recognition that every research contribution counts, not just those that are suitable for a REF submission. These departmental discourses thus challenged the generally prevailing discursive positions regarding the possibility of a department within a new university developing a strong research culture (section 5.1.4.3) and that research is predominantly defined in the context of the REF (section 5.1.3.2). In contrast, another academic signalled the presence of a competing discourse by calling for the exclusion of staff unable to fulfil the research agenda from the unit’s research endeavours and assigning them a teaching-

only workload. Moreover, this person constructed NewU as a whole as unlikely to play a strong role in research nationally, thus distinguishing NewU from research-intensive universities. As opposed to the discourses mentioned above, these two discourses were consistent with the aforementioned increased discursive distinction between UK academics dedicated to research and those primarily engaged in teaching (section 5.1.3.2), and the notion of the continued inferiority of the post-1992 universities in the national research environment (section 5.1.4.3).

6.3.2 Anyone Can Do Research!

It is clear from the above analysis that Ryan was operating in an environment that was characterized by numerous challenges in terms of introducing a department research strategy. First, as noted earlier, a not insignificant number of department members had not previously engaged in research to any significant degree (sections 6.2.1, 6.2.2.3), and not all embraced the discourses that emphasized the centrality of a research agenda (section 6.2.2.3). Second, the views of the Department academics about how to meet this challenge created further discursive friction (section 6.3.1). In this subsection, I explore Ryan's attitude towards these conflicting discourses.

As noted above – and in line with several department members interviewed – Ryan found that many Visionary Department staff did not have advanced research skills and did not engage in research activities to any significant degree. Nevertheless, he was determined to transform “research from a fringe activity to something” that all staff in the Department undertake “as a key part of our academic role,” as described in the Department research strategy. What stood out in the research strategy document and in the conversations with Ryan, however, was the emphasis he placed on achieving this through an inclusive approach, echoing what some of the unit's academics talked about above (section 6.3.1). The Department research strategy acknowledged “the diversity of our research practice” and stated that “[w]e are all at different points in our research

journey.” At the same time, the document affirmed that this “diversity” was something to be valued and argued that “our responses to different needs must be appropriate and helpful in each case.”

As mentioned in section 6.2.2.4, the Visionary Department research strategy placed research at the centre of all the Department’s efforts. As such, it suggested that research not only included ‘traditional’ research activity such as obtaining research funding and writing peer-reviewed publications, but was also linked to teaching content and teaching methodologies. The latter two aspects could lead to conference presentations, the publication of textbooks, the winning of national awards and engaging in funded work or obtaining teaching-related fellowships, all of which could be considered research activity according to the research strategy. As Ryan described in our second interview in the context of explaining the different academic staff categories being discussed at the time (more on this in section 6.4.3), the reason the Department research strategy claimed that research was central to all endeavours was because, even if you were a department member focused on teaching,

you are doing scholarly activity of a sort to inform your teaching. So I would be horrified if I went into a [class]room ... and somebody was talking about a ... development of 20 years ago. Yeah? So the kind of everyday stuff should be informed ... by research. And where I'd ideally like to get to is that our ... people [who focus on teaching] become leaders in teaching. So there are a couple of examples in our team of people who do ... really great, innovative teaching, but never take it to that next level. Never find the research grant, and I mean research for teaching grant, that would help them to develop that.

Furthermore, the research strategy presented activities such as writing publications on a spectrum ranging from blog posts and articles in practitioner journals to publications in international peer-reviewed journals, thus encompassing the very different writing and publishing practices of the Department members.

In our third interview, Ryan discussed at length the departmental context and his rationale for making the Visionary Department research strategy as inclusive as it was. He explained that

you have to see that document as arriving out of the context where our productivity in research was next to zero when I got here but a couple of examples, yeah? ... The research strategy was designed to kind of be inclusive enough to take into account absolutely everybody within the team. Because we were so determined to shift the language. ... So that's why it's a broader definition [of research], that's why the sense is, actually, I can find myself in this.

Ryan went on to explain that the intention was to “make research meaningful to” those whose primary focus was teaching and the student experience while at the same time “bringing ... in” people with strong research backgrounds, for whom research meant winning research grants and publishing – as well as “all the shades in-between.” With such a vision, Ryan was determined to

getting a culture of research embedded into the Department, but ... it's about doing that in a way that enables and inspires people to participate in it, rather than saying, [Ryan continues in a stern voice] welcome to NewU, a research-intensive university [I laugh] ... Because then if you go down that road ... you become something else. We need to be a home where ... we can do world-leading research, we can do world-class research, but we can also be somewhere that's inclusive ...

At the same time, Ryan was aware that such a “generous” interpretation of the research “enterprise” had its opponents. As he explained to me in our second interview, while acknowledging the “different types” of research activity, Ryan was nevertheless convinced that such an approach to the departmental research strategy was the right way forward for Visionary Department,

I've heard this debate in the Faculty that some people say, well, research is a very specific enterprise ... what you're talking about is scholarly activity. ... I think what we've chosen to do is just say, for the purposes of what we're talking about in this department ... and to be as inclusive as possible for people, we are choosing this.

Such an approach also meant challenging the views of some of Ryan's own colleagues who were involved in formulating the Visionary Department research strategy. In our third interview, Ryan recounted,

if I'm absolutely honest, there were times where I just flatly refused to take forward some of their suggestions. So for [the Visionary Department academics coming from research-intensive universities], their view [is] if you're not doing research, you're not in a university. Go. Well, that's fine if we have 75 staff doing research and two refusing. Yeah? [Ryan and I laugh] But ... that wasn't our place. So ... we needed to do something that was different, that was ... starting from an inclusive base.

During my time with Ryan, I was able to observe first-hand his inclusive approach to research at a strategic meeting of the departmental leadership. When the conversation turned to the place of a particular group of staff – whose primary focus was on teaching and developing innovative teaching methodologies – in the Department research strategy, Ryan spoke of the importance of “reclaiming research from the elite” and asserted that he wanted to leave no one behind. Shortly after, he mentioned teaching-related national awards and teaching-oriented fellowships, raising the rhetorical question, “[w]e have [innovative teaching practice] and are working on [another innovative teaching practice]; if we're the only university doing that, why don't we write and publish about it?” Ryan then remarked, “[r]esearch is everything; it's not just getting a grant or publishing a paper, it's also about us shaping the field and not just

being shaped by it.” As he was drawing the conversation to an end, he commented, “everybody does scholarship of some kind or another.”

To summarize, and as mentioned at several points earlier in the chapter (see e.g. section 6.2.2.4), Ryan attempted to establish a discourse that constructed research as central to all the Visionary Department endeavours in a discursive environment where, at the time of his arrival, research activity was not given much importance and many of the unit’s members had little or no research experience. To overcome the identity tension that resulted from the presence of these conflicting discursive resources, Ryan promoted a particular research vision for the Department. That is, he envisioned appropriate research support for all staff in the unit – from those who focused primarily on teaching to those who were heavily involved in research – and spoke of a broad definition of research that encompassed not only ‘traditional’ research endeavours but also teaching- and practice-related scholarly activity. With such an approach, Ryan, while rejecting existing departmental discourses – and broader discourses (sections 6.2.2.1, 6.2.2.2) – that demeaned the role of research as the source of his managerial identities, he constructed his sense of managerial self as the Visionary Department HoD by prioritizing the discourses of support, inclusivity and making the research endeavour “meaningful” for everyone in the team over the discourse of research as an exclusive “enterprise.” In doing so, Ryan alluded to the importance of the aforementioned leadership discourses and, in particular, his view of those he managed (section 6.1.3.3). However, as the discourse of research as an exclusive endeavour was also embedded in parts of the Department and the Faculty – as well as in the national discursive context (section 5.1.3.2) – this led to another set of identity tensions for Ryan as his already “heterogeneous audience” (Iedema et al., 2003) became further differentiated. That is, advocating for a discourse of research as an inclusive endeavour meant not only challenging a dominant departmental discourse – and university discourse (section 6.2.2.2) – that neglected research, but also the additional associated departmental, faculty and wider discourses that defined research as an effort

that excluded broader scholarly activity (section 5.1.3.2) and/or as an effort of the “elite,” research-intensive universities (section 5.1.4.3). What is noteworthy, however, is the congruence of Ryan’s vision with parts of the NewU strategic plan, which discussed scholarly activity and pedagogy-related scholarship (section 5.2.2). Before concluding this section, another observation worth mentioning is that despite the centrality of the discourse of inclusive research in Ryan’s managerial sense of self, the above account – arguably in line with Ryan’s previously mentioned commitment to playing the REF “game” (section 6.2.2.1) – points to Ryan’s aspirations for Visionary Department to also produce “world-leading research.” This suggests that Ryan adopted a managerial identity in which the arguably more exclusive, REF-informed definitions of research also found a place (section 5.1.3.1); something that, as will be shown later in the chapter, led to curious discursive patterns in Ryan’s identity work in relation to some of the other research management-related issues (sections 6.4.2, 6.4.3.4).

6.4 Boosting the Research Strategy

A mixed picture is painted in the above sections; while Ryan’s push towards a greater recognition of the importance of research to Visionary Department is undeniable, the above analysis also provided some evidence that the building of a “thriving research culture” in the Department was still a work in progress. In this section, I first address how the department members interviewed perceived the change that resulted from a stronger research orientation and what remaining challenges they saw with regard to research in Visionary Department. I then turn to Ryan’s thoughts on what the first steps after the introduction of the research strategy achieved and what issues remained to be addressed. In the remainder of the section, I go into detail about the steps Ryan decided to take to boost the research strategy – from a strong emphasis on research profile of new hires, to the introduction of a reformed performance review tool, to staff categories that grouped the unit’s members based primarily on the extent of their research and

teaching responsibilities (section 5.2.2) – and what this meant for Ryan’s managerial identities formation.

6.4.1 Why the Research Strategy Needed a Boost

As mentioned earlier, both the department members interviewed and Ryan himself acknowledged that the Visionary Department’s new research agenda definitely bore fruit and led to more importance being attached to the departmental research efforts (sections 6.2.1, 6.2.2.3). At the same time, they also acknowledged that there were still some issues that hindered the further progress of the research strategy (section 6.3.1). In the continuation of this subsection, I describe the successes of the Department research strategy as well as the remaining challenges in its implementation as seen by the Department members interviewed and Ryan.

6.4.1.1 Work in Progress

To begin with the Department members interviewed, as mentioned earlier (section 6.2.1), several of them acknowledged recent – positive – changes in research culture and management in Visionary Department. Finley, for example, assessed that the Department had changed in that the unit’s members “[a]ctually see colleagues researching.” Morgan mentioned the introduction of research groups within the Department and assessed that this had provided people with “vision.” They described the groupings as a “way to anchor” the Visionary Department academics’ “thoughts and research activities” and facilitate “collaborat[ion],” “partnerships” and “shar[ing].” A few interviewees spoke of positive developments in relation to their own research, specifically highlighting Ryan’s role in this. For instance, one research participant explained that although “[y]ou are expected to deliver things” there were also “a lot of positives from this.” They described how Ryan gave them the opportunity for research-related travel abroad, which “completely stung me because you just wouldn’t have asked in the past.” Furthermore, some of my interviewees predicted that the importance

placed on research in the Department was there to stay. Tommy, for example, foresaw that in the future, the unit “will be more research-focused.” In line with this statement, a research participant mentioned that the Department was recruiting “new people” and indicated that these would be research-active hires (more on this in section 6.4.2). They further explained, “[t]he idea is to bring in new people who are young, dynamic ... and the others ... will have to decide whether they wanna play along or go on their merry way.”

Despite the positive changes in terms of the Visionary Department members’ engagement in research – and Frankie’s description that some people were “kind of excited” about the introduction of a research strategy “because they think that this is gonna give them an opportunity to do things they haven’t done before” – the statement at the end of the previous paragraph suggests that not everyone agreed with the research strategy. Finley described how in the early stages of implementing the research strategy, some department members tried to find ways to hold it up. Although “those people are now fully cooperative,” Finley said that there “still” were “a number of people here who think, well, if things just carry on, we’d be able to carry on as we are. And they’re not researching.” Finley’s reflections echoed the view of another interviewee who noted, “we still have people who aren’t really into it,” who are “resistant to the whole research agenda,” and others who are “scared because they really seriously think they can’t do it.” Moreover, Frankie described how some department members joked about the research strategy and the notion that research was at the centre of everything they did, countering that teaching – not research – was the focus of their work. Another – quite prominent – issue had to do, as mentioned earlier (section 6.1.1), with the persisting workload-related challenges and perceived differences between the accountability of those whose main responsibility was research and those whose primary focus was teaching (more on this in section 6.4.3).

The above reflections of the Visionary Department members suggest that the Department was home to a mixture of research-related discourses at the time of my fieldwork. As hinted at earlier (section 6.2.1), several interviewees indicated that the discourse of research as a central departmental activity had gained ground as evidenced by the increased number of staff engaged in research; the introduction of research groups that brought together the Department staff around their research interests; the increased support for academics' research efforts since Ryan's appointment; the expectation that these developments were to continue, including through the future recruitment of research-active academics; and the enthusiasm of some staff about the research strategy. However, my interlocutors also brought up competing discourses that continued to challenge a stronger role for research in Visionary Department. This was evident in discourses of resistance to and fear of the research agenda, with some staff refusing to embark on the Department's research trajectory. Furthermore, one interlocutor pointed to the presence of a discourse of teaching as a central activity in the unit, consistent with the broader discourses characterizing post-1992 institutions and their staff (section 5.1.4.1), and illustrative of the discursive divide between research and teaching (section 5.1.3.2). In relation to the latter, there also continued to be workload discrepancies and accountability issues, partly due to the perceived differential treatment of those involved in the Department's research efforts as opposed to those whose main responsibility was teaching.

6.4.1.2 Promising First Steps, but...

In line with the observations of his department colleagues, Ryan himself acknowledged the mixed success of the research strategy and the more general research drive in the Department. On the one hand, he was confident about what Visionary Department had achieved in the area of research since his appointment, but on the other hand, Ryan also recognized some remaining problems.

On a positive note, some measures of research success had improved in the years since Ryan's arrival at the Department. For example, several times during my time with him, Ryan shared figures demonstrating a significant increase in funding for research and related activities. In our final interview, he also shared the Department Research Lead's assessment that Visionary Department was producing more publications. Furthermore, during my observations, I listened to multiple conversations between Ryan and his colleagues that pointed to the Department's growth in terms of the importance placed on research endeavours. For instance, regular departmental research seminars had been introduced and Visionary Department was selected to host a conference of a disciplinary professional association.

At the same time, I was able to observe first-hand how Ryan supported the Visionary Department members' research efforts. For example, when an academic told Ryan that they had been invited to give a talk at a conference, he replied, "[e]xcellent." When the unit member went on to say that they had informed the organizer that the Department could not contribute financially, but that they could make a minimal contribution of around GBP 50 to GBP 100 to be listed as a co-organizer, Ryan immediately agreed to contribute GBP 100 and thanked their colleague. At another meeting, an academic informed Ryan that a proposal they had submitted for a conference panel had been approved. The colleague then informed Ryan that the only costs that would need to be covered were their registration fees, to which Ryan responded, "[w]e'll sort your registration fees." The colleague then asked, "[a]re you sure?," to which Ryan replied, "[a]bsolutely." Moreover, Ryan also spoke about his and the Department's commitment to supporting staff research efforts in our interviews. During the first interview, he described how a colleague who had previously been unable to describe their ideas "in terms of the university's precepts" began to thrive when Ryan encouraged them to "[g]o for it" and supported their research activities. According to Ryan, this colleague had in the meantime achieved "major" research success. Another example of the Department's supportive research environment came

up during our third interview, when Ryan gave an example of the support the Department provided to a research-active academic that went beyond the conditions offered by a research-intensive university; from “no teaching” to “space to do the research,” “freedom to make decisions that affect [their] projects,” and “if [they need] money for something, [they] can just knock on the door and say, can I have this.” In Ryan’s view, this made Visionary Department “much more enterprising and enabling” by comparison.

In terms of the Department members’ reception of the research strategy, overall, Ryan assessed during our first interview that “some [people] might have been threatened by [the research strategy], but because we’d gone through that relational assurance, trust, non-punitive way of managing ... they’re behind it, you know. By and large.” In our second interview, he reiterated his view that people “like the direction,” “are generally behind it and see its value.” Furthermore, Ryan described some successes in changing the minds of people who were initially sceptical about the research agenda, explaining to me,

[some staff] think it’s impossible [to make research central to everything we do]. And you have to work with that. You have to show that it can be possible, you create spaces, you offer mentoring, you create support. And we’ve had successes there. Where people moved from being kind of cynical sceptics to, yeah, I’m actually doing something.

However, as briefly mentioned earlier (section 6.2.2.3), Ryan also acknowledged that not everyone agreed with the research strategy. In our third interview, he explained,

resistance [to the research strategy] in terms of refusal is minimal. But resistance in terms of other things is still there. ... Other things might be confidence ... and I say resistance ‘cause I think, [silence] I think some of it is a bit unconscious ...

it's not, I don't like this research strategy ... it's more about, I'm really scared about research or ... it doesn't apply to me because... Yeah? So I think there's some of that there ...

Moreover, Ryan picked up on another feeling among the Visionary Department members that suggested that commitment to research was not yet as far as it could be. When I asked Ryan during the same interview if the REF was making his unit's staff anxious, he explained the prevailing state of affairs in the Department,

I think people haven't gotten anxious enough actually. ... [the anxiety is] about, I'll be made to do something towards this. Or, it's got nothing to do with me, why should I care about it. ... I want to get to a point where if there is any anxiety, 'cause there's always anxiety about performance, you know, we don't go into a classroom completely relaxed and stand at the front and think, whatever happens will happen. ... we're always looking to perform well [with students]. But so I want us to get into that mind-set around research. ... so a bit of anxiety about ... 'is this good enough?' is actually for me quite healthy.

Based on the successes and remaining challenges of the Visionary Department research strategy, at the time of my fieldwork Ryan was planning the next steps for implementing the research strategy that would enable it to achieve the objectives set out in the document. As he explained at a strategic meeting of the Department Leadership Team, "I think we started [implementing the research strategy], but we're going too slow." Later in his presentation, Ryan added a sense of urgency to the issue, saying, "[w]e can't repeat what we did for [the] REF 2014. We need to act on it *now*" (emphasis by Ryan). According to Ryan, it was therefore high time to address the challenges of implementing the research strategy, which he described in our second interview as follows,

the challenge ... is that you can launch it [research strategy], you can have a great strategy, you can have most of your people in it and wanting it, but you still have to be on it all the time to make sure that it is delivering. And you have to rethink it and think about how we're engineering. ... just leaving it to happen is not gonna work.

To summarize, the above illustrates, on the one hand, Ryan's perception of the increased embeddedness of the discourse emphasizing the centrality of research in Visionary Department, manifested in the growth of research-related funding, higher publication production, the organization of departmental research seminars and the Department's hosting of an upcoming conference. Moreover, consistent with my earlier analyses of the importance of the research agenda to Ryan's managerial identities, even in the face of departmental and wider discourses challenging this (section 6.2.2), further observations of and conversations with Ryan pointed to the successes in overcoming some of the obstacles to research. This included beginning to overcome the unfavourable departmental financial circumstances and the constraints on research resulting from the NewU's (previous) attitude towards research, as well as Ryan's continuous determination to create an "enterprising" and "enabling" research environment; according to Ryan, more so than at some research-intensive universities. While these developments indicated a better fit between Ryan's sense of managerial self and the Visionary Department's new discursive reality – thus possibly reducing the associated identity tension Ryan experienced – he also acknowledged that some challenges to the research agenda remained. Although he noted that most staff accepted the research agenda – due to the "trust" placed in them, the "non-punitive way of managing" and the provision of "mentoring" and "support," in line with Ryan's previously mentioned approaches to leadership (section 6.1.3) and alluding to the discourse of research as an inclusive endeavour (section 6.3) – Ryan, like some of his colleagues (sections 6.3.1, 6.4.1.1), also acknowledged that a discourse of resistance and fear of the research strategy remained present among some department staff. Moreover,

Ryan suggested that the Department academics should have been more “anxious” about the REF and their performance therein – just as they were about their student- and teaching-related responsibilities – suggesting that the discourse of teaching as the Visionary Department’s central activity persisted, at least in part of the unit. Furthermore, Ryan assessed the Department’s research progress was “too slow” and brought up the Faculty UOA 1’s last-minute REF 2014 submission to create a sense of urgency to act immediately in order to avoid a repeat of this scenario in the next REF. These statements suggest that despite evidence of some convergence between Ryan’s own identification with and the Visionary Department’s adoption of the discourse of research as a central departmental endeavour, Ryan’s identity tension remained because – according to Ryan – the Department had not made sufficient research progress. In response, Ryan recommitted to furthering the implementation of the unit’s research strategy, including by – once again (see also sections 6.2.2.1, 6.3.2) – giving place to the REF-related discourses in the construction of a sense of managerial self. As will be examined in more detail in the continuation (section 6.4.3.4), this pointed to Ryan’s adoption of what could be seen as “antagonistic discursive resources” (Clarke et al., 2009) in the process of forming his managerial identities. That is, he embraced discourses of trust, support and research as an inclusive enterprise as well as the REF discourses that tend to challenge such approaches to managing research and present a more exclusive notion of research.

The following subsections elaborate on Ryan’s ideas about how to further the departmental research and Ryan’s discursive identity work in relation to these attempts.

6.4.2 We’re Hiring, Preferably Researchers

As Ryan explained to me already in our first interview, one way in which he sought to enhance the Visionary Department’s research culture was by hiring research-active staff who could contribute to this “wholesale change” in the unit. Early on during my time

with Ryan, the Department was in the process of hiring a Professor, and was planning several new hires at different levels – Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and Principal Lecturer – across the different disciplinary areas in the unit. Soon after, the budget plans for these additional hires were approved by the NewU management, and by the time I spoke to Ryan again early in the next academic year, most of these new hires had already started working in Visionary Department. In this subsection, I focus on two themes related to these new appointments, focusing on Ryan’s perspective on them and his related discursive identity work: first, in the planning and hiring phase, the criteria established for the new hires; and second, after the appointments were made, the implications of the addition of several research-active academics to Visionary Department.

6.4.2.1 Setting Criteria for New Hires

For Ryan, the appointment of new staff was an opportunity to recruit academics who excelled in research. Indeed, as implied earlier by one interviewee (section 6.4.1.1) and described by another department member, these new appointments were intended to be “the game change” in the Department’s investment in research. Already early in my fieldwork, I learned what this would mean in practice in a strategic meeting of the Department Leadership Team. During his presentation, Ryan shared with the rest of the team his expectations for new hires at the Lecturer and Senior Lecturer level. Although there were some specifics to his expectations as the hires were in different disciplinary areas within the Department – some were more professionally-oriented than others and therefore had slightly lower expectations in terms of their research – Ryan described the general expectations for all newly hired (Senior) Lecturers as follows, in this order: they should have “a record of grant capture and external income generation,” publications at the two star to four star level, with a “strong preference” for those entered in the REF 2014, and “evidence of teaching excellence.”

The emphasis on research skills and achievements also applied to the new appointments at the level of Principal Lecturers who would become part of the Visionary Department Leadership Team. In a weekly Leadership Team meeting, Ryan explained he expected these new hires to be able to provide “academic leadership” and have a track record of four star publications, rather than ‘just’ being able to provide “daily management.” As he began talking about it, Ryan described the conversation as “difficult and tricky” as well as “controversial,” as such a definition of a Principal Lecturer’s responsibilities would exclude “some people from the Department that have done a great job at daily management and might expect being able to apply for a promotion.” Nonetheless, Ryan suggested not to “do an internal deal,” that is not just advertise the posts internally, as some people in the Department “can do a great job [doing an administrative task] but [their ability to provide] academic leadership is questionable.”

The selection process that took place for a Professor post during my time with Ryan was not without tensions either. One morning I observed a meeting in which Ryan, in conversation with a colleague, was deciding which candidates to shortlist. As Terry, the Dean, stopped by Ryan’s office briefly as the matter was being discussed, Ryan informed Terry of their decision on the shortlisted candidates, with which the Dean agreed. However, later that same day, as we sat alone in his office, Ryan informed me that one of the candidates might not be shortlisted anymore. While working on his laptop, he spoke his thoughts aloud and said, “it is true that the [applicant’s] university didn’t submit [them] to [the] REF 2014, but the question is why.” I asked Ryan if this meant that the candidate’s publications were not good enough, or if it was just about them not being entered in the REF. Ryan replied that the candidate’s institution must have decided not to submit them, and explained that a candidate’s submission to the REF 2014 was something they took into account when assessing applicants for the Professor post.

A few hours later, as an unrelated meeting between the Dean and a couple of HoDs, including Ryan, was drawing to a close, Ryan and Terry turned to the above-mentioned conversation about the shortlisted candidate. The Dean must have been informed of the situation in the meantime, as they noted that the VC would not approve the hiring of the professorial candidate if they were not “REF-able.” Terry and Ryan acknowledged, however, that this could have been a result of “something ... happening” at the candidate’s university. The Dean suggested that they may have been ranked just below the academics entered in the REF 2014, which would still place them above the Faculty UOA 1 ranking. Ryan then expressed discomfort about having this conversation with the candidate, telling Terry, “you can’t have this conversation, how do you ask a person, why weren’t you [entered in the] REF?” Terry advised Ryan to tell the candidate – after the applicant explained why they were not returned to the REF 2014 – that he had spoken to the Dean and the Dean had said no, also telling Ryan that the candidate would not be approved by the VC. As Ryan left the Dean’s office, an administrator was waiting for him there and asked about some logistical questions about planning interviews for the Professor post. Ryan was not sure at that point about the details needed from him, as he had not yet decided how many candidates would be interviewed for the position. After the conversation with the administrator had gone on for a bit, Ryan said something along the lines of “OK, enough of this,” hurried into the Dean’s office, returned about fifteen seconds later, and indicated that one of the previously shortlisted candidates was no longer on the shortlist, adding, “I’m being assertive.”

As also suggested by a couple of department members, Ryan considered the appointment of new, research-active staff in Visionary Department as a way to improve the unit’s research culture and thus further promote the discourse of research as the unit’s key endeavour (section 6.2.2.4). This could be seen as another effort by Ryan to try to better align a discourse central to his managerial identities as the Visionary Department HoD and the discursive realities of the Department. Moreover, it is

perhaps noteworthy that although I did not record Ryan referring to the university's then-in-preparation strategic plan in the context of the Department's staffing arrangements – which turned out to include a policy of appointing research-active academics – he did hint at the recently changed attitude of the NewU top management towards research (section 6.2.2.4). The upcoming hires may thus have been planned at least in part in anticipation of, or perhaps even in awareness of, some of the contents of the forthcoming strategic plan. Either way, Ryan's statements above suggest that the criteria he sought to adopt to define what 'research-active' meant often drew on the REF-related discourses, indicating the significant role these discourses played in Ryan's managerial identities formation. In the case of (Senior) Lecturer posts, Ryan did recognize "teaching excellence" as a relevant criterion – signalling the continuing importance of the discourse emphasizing the crucial role of teaching – and acknowledged the varying degrees to which candidates could be expected to be research-active given their different, that is sometimes professional, backgrounds. However, the criteria for this group of hires simultaneously placed an emphasis on the REF, expressed in the importance attached to winning research grants, having published publications of at least two star quality, and ideally having been submitted to the REF 2014. The job criteria for Principal Lecturers also drew on the REF discourse, manifested in Ryan's expectation of a four star publication track record, which he brought up in the meeting described above. This suggests that Ryan seemed intent on asserting a Principal Lecturer role defined not only by operational management and administrative duties – which might have been expected by some Visionary Department members – but also by the provision of "academic leadership." Indeed, Ryan insisted on this, even though he signalled an identity tension arising from this discrepancy, and he knowingly risked the discontent of some of his department colleagues. In doing so, he once again signified a managerial identity characterized by the importance of discourses emphasizing the significance of research and the REF. Similarly, submission to the REF 2014 proved to be a decisive measure in the shortlisting of applicants for the Professor post. Although Ryan accepted the REF as a discursive identity resource

on other occasions, in this case it clearly caused an identity tension for him. As the Dean – citing the VC – constructed the applicant’s ‘REF-ability’ as a decisive hiring criterion, Ryan expressed discomfort at having to make the decision of whether or not to shortlist the candidate on this basis, hinting at his ambivalence towards the REF mentioned earlier (section 6.2.2.1). In response to this identity tension, Ryan nonetheless reluctantly accepted a managerial identity as an HoD who attached importance to REF-related measures in hiring decisions – under the influence of his manager, the Dean, and indirectly the VC – although it seemed he almost had to encourage himself out loud to do so.

6.4.2.2 *Welcoming New Research-Active Staff*

Shortly after returning to NewU for the second fieldwork session, I conducted the final interview with Ryan. When I asked him how things had evolved over the summer, Ryan almost immediately mentioned the large number of new hires and what this meant for Visionary Department, especially in terms of the Department research strategy and culture.

Early in the interview, when he was describing the recent changes in the Department, Ryan shared,

[w]e also appointed, I think, twelve, maybe ten or twelve new staff. [Ryan and I laugh] In the summer. So we had a massive turnaround of recruitment, appointment ... So that was a huge change. So essentially the department you’re in now is radically different, as we predicted, from how it was in the spring.

When I then laughingly asked Ryan if he was happy about this change, he went on to emphasize the benefits of the new appointments for the Department research strategy,

I'm extremely happy. Yeah. I'm really happy, there's a number of reasons. Obviously it's nice to have new people here, it's a sign that there's confidence in us as a team, to get the resources to grow, but there's also a significant benefit for our research strategy. Because we've suddenly, almost overnight, changed the kind of research, I say productivity ... and I don't mean that in a crude way, but the outputs, the research grants that are going on ... most of the new staff have got, you know, the publications ready for [the] REF 2020. So everything they do now is bonus.

Later in the interview, Ryan elaborated on other aspects of the Department's research culture that he believed the new hires had already had a positive impact on,

we went to a research seminar yesterday and [a new appointment] stood up and presented data on [their research topic] ... here's [a person] presenting data to the room ... Whether you agree with it, whether it's something you're interested in or not, this is research I've done. Yeah? And we're gonna see that throughout the year. And every single new member of staff is gonna be presenting on their work. And suddenly you realize that the cultural shift is changing because suddenly the majority of people are actually writing or getting grants or pursuing grants.

To sum up, Ryan noted that the new research-active staff had had a positive impact on the implementation of the unit's research strategy as soon as they were appointed, elaborating on the evidence that the discourse placing research at the centre of the Department's efforts had gained prominence. This development, Ryan said, made him "happy," which indicated a further alignment between his sense of self as a manager who placed great value on research and the departmental discursive environment. Nevertheless, the above quotes suggest an identity tension that accompanied this departmental change, and Ryan's reflections signal that he struggled with how to express the nature of this change. Indeed, Ryan seemed reluctant to employ "crude" notions of research "productivity," but then drew on the REF discourse –

which he had described as “crude” earlier in the same interview (section 6.2.2.1) – to characterize the new staff’s research efforts, mentioning grants, publications and the REF 2020 benefits that would result from these activities. This example once again points to Ryan’s ambivalent positioning vis-à-vis the REF (see also section 6.2.2.1, 6.3.2), although his response to the identity tension described above and his later thoughts on “cultural shift” in Visionary Department due to “the majority” of staff “suddenly ... writing or getting grants or pursuing grants,” point to Ryan’s acceptance of the REF discourse as a discursive identity resource. However, in doing so, as already indicated in relation to some other instances (see e.g. section 6.3.2) and discussed further later (section 6.4.3.4), Ryan appeared to be at least partially at odds with another discourse with which he claimed a close affinity, namely the discourse of research as an endeavour inclusive of more than REF-appropriate research outputs (section 6.3).

6.4.3 Dividing Staff Into Categories

In addition to hiring new, research-active staff, Ryan saw another tactic for advancing the Visionary Department research strategy as implementing a NewU-wide proposal for different staff categories – introduced in chapter 5 (section 5.2.2) – whose distinction would be based primarily on the balance of their teaching and research activities. At the same time, Ryan believed this would help address some of the aforementioned persistent workload issues in the Department (see e.g. section 6.1.1).

At the time of my first fieldwork session, when the discussions on the introduction of this new system in the Department were still ongoing, the conversations mainly revolved around the establishment of three staff groups: Category I, Category II, and Category III.²⁴ Before going into detail about the discursive context and

²⁴ As mentioned in chapter 5 (section 5.2.2), the three staff categories were later renamed Category NewI, Category NewII and Category NewIII, and partly given different connotations. In the remainder of this paragraph, I use these newer terms because Ryan employed them in the

challenges associated with the introduction of the staff categories in Visionary Department, I would like to clarify what each staff group represented. In a presentation to the Department – which I was not present at, but which Ryan shared with me – Ryan defined them as follows:

- Category NewI staff were to focus “primarily on developing teaching, innovation and curriculum enhancement,” while receiving “support to pursue scholarship and research,” with their number of teaching hours to reach a maximum of just over 400 annually;
- Category NewII staff were those who might be “pursuing a research degree,” produce two star “REF outputs” in addition to their “teaching and other scholarly activity,” and “[m]ay also pursue grant funding,” while teaching a maximum of just over 300 hours annually; and
- Category NewIII staff were expected to produce three star and four star “REF outputs,” pursue “at least one major grant application each year,” obtain “funding from other sources” and teach a maximum of just over 200 hours annually.

In the remainder of this subsection, I first elaborate on how the Department members perceived the context that led to the introduction of the staff categories and describe my interviewees’ reflections on this new system, pointing out some of the challenges involved. I then examine Ryan’s motivations for introducing and his conceptualization of this staff categorization, as well as his perceptions of the initial

presentation I am about to discuss; however, in the remainder of this chapter, I use the ‘original’ terminology as it was commonly used at the time of my fieldwork in Visionary Department. It should also be noted that in said presentation Ryan seemed to draw on the newer terminology for the academic staff categories, but did not seem to employ the changed connotations assigned to each grouping.

steps of its implementation, examining his discursive identity work and the ways in which he dealt with the identity tensions that arose from this issue.

6.4.3.1 (Only) a Sign of Improved Workloads and Strategic Commitment to Research?

As mentioned earlier, while the Visionary Department members interviewed acknowledged the progress that had been made with regard to the research in their unit, they also pointed out some outstanding issues (section 6.4.1.1). One of the concerns they raised related to workloads and workload accountability. Some felt that they did not have enough time to engage in research alongside their other responsibilities. Tommy described how they felt that “do[ing] everything well” – teaching, research and administration – was “quite a difficult juggling act,” later adding, “I’m on board with it [the research strategy] and I’m gonna do what I can, but I do feel that ... [silence] my work-life balance really isn’t where I want it to be. [laughs] It definitely isn’t.” Sage reflected on the persistent lack of time for research,

I think before Ryan came ... people would say there’s no time to do research ... And there still isn’t time to do research ... And it is difficult because there is a bit of a message that goes out that if you want to do research, you’ve got to do it, you end up doing it in your own time, weekends, holidays, etc. ... That has been said explicitly, and that is the reality.

In addition to the above concerns, a few interviewees raised the issue of transparency of workloads and accountability – or rather lack thereof – of research-oriented academics in the Department. Frankie, for example, commented, “people previously said, well, I’m research-active, but they didn’t actually do anything.” Wes also acknowledged and elaborated on this concern,

I think if you speak to lots of people ... they see the idea that you have to have some people doing research, but what they’re not happy about is that there are a few

Readers and [Professors] who don't deliver what they're meant to do, but they never seem to get a call-to-task about it, whereas someone who was predominantly involved in teaching, if a student starts complaining, or you didn't turn up to your classes or you didn't get your marking done on time, you'd quickly be in trouble.

According to one Visionary Department member, the tool developed in part “to address [the] problem” with workloads and workload accountability was the staff categorization according to the principles I presented at the beginning of section 6.4.3. At the same time, dividing staff into categories, they suggested, was “to demonstrate we’re actually strategically committed to research.” According to this research participant, this was in line with “the direction that the centre of the university is very much gonna be pushing under the new VC so it’s kind of ensuring we’re there ready to meet that challenge rather than having to play catch-up.” Furthermore, both addressing the workload concerns and demonstrating a strategic commitment to research, were to be assisted by the introduction of a redesigned process for staff performance objective setting and review (section 5.2.2). “Up until now,” my interlocutor explained,

... you might say to someone, OK, to make progress in research outputs by producing one article for a refereed journal, but I think that's gonna be tightened up so it's going to be, write an article on this topic to be submitted to this journal. And so I think it is about giving that strategic focus, but it's designed to ensure that the researchers ... or the staff who do majority research are held to account in just the same way as the teachers.

My interviewees highlighted some other positive aspects of the staff categorization. We acknowledged that the Department’s membership consisted of “different people with different [backgrounds],” some of whom for various reasons “don’t want to go on the [research journey].” Against this background, they also saw the “new regime” in terms of staff categories as being

about trying to find different ways of ... motivating them. ... And I think it's about trying to find a way in which you could see that those staff can make a contribution. ... and clearly have a role, rather than saying, you know, we gotta drag everyone kicking and screaming ...

At the same time, Wes also saw the staff categories as a way of countering “a perception” among some staff in the Department “of there being a kind of hierarchy,” with the “research elite” being seen as “kind of better than people who do teaching.” Moreover, some of my interviewees also talked about the flexibility of this new staff classification system, describing the possibility for “a great deal of movement” between the different categories (Morgan). Frankie’s view echoed Morgan’s as they stated, “there is promotion and relegation from this.” However, the use of the term “relegation” at the same time suggests that the new staff groupings would not be necessarily free of hierarchical connotations.

The above final remark suggests that not all discourses surrounding the new staff categorization and its implementation were unproblematic. For example, in addition to Frankie’s reference to the potential for staff groups to be seen in a hierarchical way, Tommy challenged both the idea that the introduction of staff categories would solve workload issues and the notion that it would remove the pressure for everyone to do research. Regarding workloads and workload transparency, Tommy commented,

I think the thing that is annoying to some people is that they still don't feel the workloads are transparent [after the introduction of staff categories]. So I think there's always, there's an undercurrent ... that there's an inequity. [silence] In the division of labour.

With regard to the planned reduced pressure to do research for a certain group of staff, Tommy stated, “I don’t think that pressure to do research goes away, even if you’re in

... Category I. As opposed to Category III.” Additionally, the process of developing and implementing the new staff classification was largely coordinated in a top-down manner, with decisions on the placement of individual staff members in categories being made by the Department’s leadership. In this context, Harper expressed concern that colleagues might “feel that label is being placed upon them ... I think that would almost have to come from [individual staff members].” Frankie’s comments were partly in line with Harper’s, suggesting that some staff assigned to Category I were “gonna be a bit unhappy about this.” Tommy assessed the Department members’ reaction to the staff category system more generally, reflecting, “I’m not sure people really appreciate what that looks like, [*silence*] it’s been discussed but I don’t think it’s been advertised in a way that is meaningful. Or people can make real sense of it.”

Furthermore, although not explicitly connecting it to the staff categorization described above, a couple of my interviewees brought up the possibility that NewU might introduce a clearer distinction between teaching-only and research-focused academics, and described this potential development rather more bluntly than the Visionary Department’s narrative of the introduction of staff groupings. One department member commented on the resistance of some staff to the research agenda, noting,

if you’re not gonna do research, then you’ll do teaching. And you’ll do a lot of it. There was talk ... about research-only contracts [and] teaching-only contracts, and teaching-only contracts could well mean people being paid less than [those on research-only contracts] ... It’s in everyone’s contract that we’re supposed to do research.

Another interviewee predicted that the new VC “will expect everybody to do research or go on to a teaching-only contract,” which they later in our conversation suggested would be beneficial because these staff “would take on extra teaching hours and therefore give those hours to the researchers.”

In conclusion, one of the factors that challenged the discourse of research as a central departmental activity was that the Visionary Department members felt that there was insufficient time for research. This was accompanied by a sense among some of lack of accountability among academics with more research time in comparison to their colleagues who focused on teaching, signalling a tension between these staff groups that is also recognized more generally in UK universities (section 5.1.3.2). The categorization of the Department staff, accompanied by a revised performance review methodology, was intended to simultaneously address both the limited departmental research efforts – and thus the positioning of Visionary Department in relation to the new VC’s research expectations – and workload issues. However, the discourses about this new arrangement painted a mixed picture. On the one hand, one interviewee argued that the system would allow for recognition of different kinds of contributions to the Department’s overall efforts and help to overcome a “hierarchy” between researchers and teachers. Additionally, some pointed out that the categories would not be set in stone and that staff would be able to move between them. However, these discourses – which can be described as rather positive and inclusive of the Visionary Department members with different responsibilities – were countered by another, contradictory set of discourses. One interviewee argued that the staff classification had not freed the Department from workload inequalities, nor from the pressure to engage in research, even if one was categorized as Category I. Another seemed to give the staff groupings a connotation of hierarchy that indicated a likely persistent hierarchical division between academics mainly committed to teaching and those to a greater extent engaged in research. The top-down process of designating staff categories could, according to some interviewees, lead to discontent among academics regarding the label assigned to them. Moreover, one of my interlocutors assessed that the initiative was not “advertised” in a “meaningful” manner. Furthermore, a couple of interviewees spoke of the possibility that NewU could introduce teaching-only contracts for academics not engaging in research (see also section 5.2.2) – which would arguably lead to a widening

of the separation between these staff groups – and suggested that this might be a sensible way forward.

In the following three subsections, I turn to Ryan’s perspectives on enhancing the Visionary Department’s research efforts by changing the unit’s members’ workloads through the introduction of staff categorization and a reformed performance review system.

6.4.3.2 Time to Resolve Workload Issues

As mentioned earlier (section 6.4.1.2), while Ryan was pleased with the research progress in Visionary Department, he also acknowledged that there were still some challenges and more needed to be done to achieve the objectives set out in the Department research strategy. As he explained in our second interview, “we’ve learnt through this first year, I think, of it [the research strategy] not making enough progress, that we probably need to be a bit more proactive.” Ryan went on to say that part of the solution to “this challenge” lay in “remodelling our workloads.”

In making this comment, Ryan – like the department members interviewed (see e.g. sections 6.1.1, 6.4.3.1) – acknowledged the continuing issues associated with workloads. The “wholesale change” of Visionary Department, which was to result in it becoming a unit with a strong research culture, also had to address, as Ryan explained to me in our first interview, “the balance of workloads, which can sometimes feel quite unequal.” In a strategic meeting of the Department Leadership Team, Ryan illustrated this in more concrete terms. He explained that among those who were expected to divide their responsibilities between teaching and research, there were some who did “450 hours of teaching [annually], had two publications in the last year and applied for two bids, but you also have people who have 200 hours of teaching and don’t do much besides that.”

In addition to these discrepancies in the Visionary Department members' workloads, Ryan told me during our second interview about the remarks he identified in the Department that pointed to a lack of accountability, particularly in relation to those staff whose primary focus was research,

[o]ne of the complaints that I [heard], a vocal complaint, whether it's shared by a lot of people I don't know ... was that I used to hear a lot that so and so has all this time to do research, but we never know what that person's doing. And I'm teaching, and I'm managing, I'm dadadada. And you hear that a bit.

To summarize, Ryan, similar to a few of his interviewed colleagues (sections 6.1.1, 6.4.3.1), acknowledged the presence of departmental discourses that pointed to workload inequalities and a lack of accountability among some research-focused academics. The above also suggests that for Ryan, these workload issues were related to the Visionary Department's limited progress in relation to the unit's research agenda, the latter – as noted earlier at several points (see e.g. section 6.2.2) – being one of the central discursive resources in Ryan's managerial identities formation as the Department's HoD. Unsurprisingly, therefore, to address this departmental research deficit – and the associated identity tension – Ryan expressed an intention to redesign the Department's workloads, an initiative built into the aforementioned staff categorization (more on this below).

6.4.3.3 Embracing the NewU's Initiatives

For Ryan, the acknowledgement and decision described above to address the persistent workload issues in order to improve the Visionary Department's research efforts by "remodelling" workloads related to "classifying staff into different groups." As noted earlier, this idea stemmed from a NewU-wide initiative (section 5.2.2) that Ryan welcomed. In fact, he seemed quite enthusiastic when he talked about how the Faculty's

HoDs were asked to explore how this new model of staff categorization would play out in their respective departments. As Ryan explained to me in our second interview,

at [the] Faculty Management, we all had a go at how many Category III [staff], how many [Category II and Category I staff] ... The thing that's different for me is I saw that and thought, that's a bloody good idea, let's do that now. So we've taken the principle and we're gonna run with it. So what turned out as an exercise, just to see what the numbers look like, became something, I took it to the next step, the next step, the next step, started to plan, think about what the composition of the Department would look like. Took it to [the] Leadership Team, launched the thing, and now ... we're ready to go.

The above suggests that Ryan fully supported this NewU initiative and even pushed it further than the university management required at the time.

Furthermore, Ryan planned to introduce this system of staff categorization along with a redesigned NewU-wide objective-setting and performance review tool (section 5.2.2). As he described in our final interview,

the [annual performance review] form is now structured around teaching, input there, research, input there, and then admin. The three parts of the academic contract. ... now ... a form is only a thing you record on, but if a form is suddenly explicitly talking about research metrics, about [the] REF, it's changed from being open objectives on anything. Which is what the old form was. ... So ... I didn't take them seriously, you know, we didn't manage by objectives in that kind of environment, but ... here's a document that says, actually, the university is quite serious about this now.

But it was not just NewU that was “quite serious about this,” Ryan also had a clear idea of how the redesigned objective-setting and performance review form would be used.

In a Leadership Team meeting where the performance review system was discussed with academics who were responsible for managing this process, Ryan explained that setting an objective for a publication for staff who were expected to publish meant listing several details: the publication topic, the journal in which it would be submitted, and the timing of the submission. This illustrates how precisely Ryan interpreted the form's requirement to provide "details of publications" when setting individual staff's objectives.

The above suggests that for Ryan, resolving persistent workload issues and improving the state of the Visionary Department's research – and thus attempting to address the identity tension he experienced due to a mismatch between the centrality of the research agenda to his managerial identities and the Department's slow research progress (see e.g. sections 6.4.1.2, 6.4.3.2) – were closely linked to two NewU-wide initiatives: staff categories and a redesigned performance review process. Both signalled changes in the university's discursive positioning with respect to the place of research in the institution (section 5.2.2). Ryan enthusiastically embraced both motions and took steps to resolve the identity tension by proactively drawing on the two university schemes as discursive identity resources in the construction of his sense of managerial self. In relation to staff categorization, Ryan's strong commitment to the university-wide proposal was demonstrated by planning the introduction of the new staff classification in Visionary Department at a time when the initiative still had the status of an exercise at the university level. The next subsection provides further insights into Ryan's discursive identity work in relation to the planning and implementation of this scheme. With regard to the remodelled university performance review system, Ryan not only accepted the newly introduced equal emphasis on research in the form – which was consistent with the discourse of research as a central academic activity that Ryan promoted in Visionary Department (see e.g. section 6.2.2.4) – but also appeared to further it by defining very precise research-related objectives. Moreover, Ryan pointed out that – and how – the new methodology would enable them to implement a

previously unfeasible management-by-objectives approach in the Department. In doing so, he explicitly claimed a managerial identity informed by the university and the broader discourses of performance management in general (section 5.1.1) and research performance management specifically (section 5.1.3), leaning towards constructing a managerial identity similar to Gjerde and Alvesson's (2020) "performance drivers."

6.4.3.4 Implementing Staff Categorization

During my fieldwork, I heard Ryan talk about staff categorization on several occasions. In my interviews and observations of Ryan, an interesting discursive pattern emerged in relation to the idea and its implementation: while emphasizing that the new system would lead to a more supportive environment and a fairer and more inclusive distribution of work among the Department members, Ryan also regularly used the language of performance management, which sometimes contained rather harsh messages regarding individuals' performance.

On the one hand, when Ryan spoke to the Leadership Team about staff categories in a strategic meeting, he asserted that the idea behind this new approach was "to move to ... a model that recognizes the diversity of people." In our second interview, Ryan explained that as a result, everyone would "have a clear plan of work" and could see how it contributed to the efforts of Visionary Department as a whole. As he clarified to a colleague in a one-on-one conversation, when the colleague wanted to confirm that with the new model, "[w]e're actually giving the person reassurance – but we need output," Ryan agreed, emphasizing, "[a]nd it goes for somebody giving a class as well." That is, the support and associated expectation had to do not only with support and expectation of solid performance from those who were engaged in research, but also from those who were primarily teaching. Furthermore, as Ryan noted in our second interview, "[p]eople can move up or move down," suggesting a certain flexibility in the system and the possibility for staff to adjust their workloads and trajectories over time,

although – as with Frankie (section 6.4.3.1) – Ryan’s references to “up” and “down” also seemed to suggest a hierarchy between the different groups.

In relation to the specific staff categories, Ryan emphasized at a couple of points in conversations with me and/or his colleagues that becoming a Category I academic would not result in a substantial increase in teaching hours for these individuals, that they would not reach the maximum number of teaching hours and that, as he explained during our second interview, they were “not going down [the] road” of introducing “teaching-only contracts and academic contracts,” the latter including research. This would mean, as Ryan explained to me in the same interview, and as indicated earlier in the chapter (section 6.3.2), that Category I staff would still have the time to engage in – the “generously” defined, teaching-related – research activities. At the same time, because of their “higher teaching load,” these staff would not be “punish[ed]” if their work did not lead to publications or winning research grants. Therefore, according to Ryan, this could result in Category I colleagues “feel[ing] comforted by suddenly realizing that the expectation on them primarily is to teach.” On the other hand, Ryan explained, in relation to individuals who may “feel pigeon-holed” and think “you’re killing my research career,” they could be given the opportunity to prove that they could deliver on their research objectives, whereupon “we might make a resource adjustment for that person.”

However, the underlying premise behind the model, as Ryan explained in a strategic meeting of the Leadership Team, was to “use these objectives [for each category], and if people aren’t meeting them, they will fall into a different category.” Moreover, during our second interview, Ryan explained to me – acknowledging himself that this was a “hard message” – that by introducing staff categories, “[w]e are reconfirming to staff that being an academic means doing scholarship. That you can’t be an academic and just teach. Or if you are, you need to do a lot of teaching.” Furthermore, the initial process of categorizing staff into the new categories was to be

largely coordinated from the top, by the Department's leadership. As Ryan explained to me in our second interview, he had "a pretty clear idea" of which group each staff member would fall into, "based on what they've done in the last couple of years."

In relation to specific categories, Ryan acknowledged the potential pressures of being assigned to Category III. In our second interview, he said, "if you're a Category III [academic], you'll feel a great sense of excitement, but then you'll feel a bit of trepidation in terms of what that means, in terms of how you'll be monitored and measured." As Ryan explained to me during our third interview, this was supposed to be the group of academics for whom, by a set date, "we want to say, have moved significantly forward in terms of their research." For these staff, "there are very clear ... deliverables on research" set out in their annual objectives, and by a certain date "no question, you know, you have the space, you have the time to do it."

When I spoke to Ryan again after the launch of staff categorization, he told me that because of the new hires in the Department, "the workload reduced overall." This meant that in practice they "majored on ... one category," namely Category III, while they "made less of a distinction with the other two categories." As a result, with a couple of exceptions, everyone was still expected to "[fulfil] the research strategy." Ryan elaborated,

nobody is at the top [in terms of teaching hours]. There might be one or two people. ... So we're treating everybody at this stage as the kind of middle category [Category II] ... So ... there is nobody in that group yet that we're saying isn't a focus for research ...

I then enquired how the Department members received the new staff classification. Ryan replied, "[g]reat. Actually ... 'cause I was a bit worried about that ... And I can't say, I'm sure there's been some corridor conversation," however,

the general impression I got ... is this is a really sensible way to go. Yeah? Because the start message we keep giving to people ... is here's how badly we performed in the last REF. Do you know what I mean? Here's the investment we're putting in, here's all the new people, here's the direction of travel, here's where we need to be, so in order to get there ... we have to intervene. So we can't leave it to chance like we did last time ... I think ... people get a sense of that without feeling like it's an attack or it's somehow demoralizing. And we're careful about ... not emphasizing the categories, we keep pushing that message of everybody contributes. Everybody does, yeah? Rather than saying you're this, you're that. Because there lies the way of ... division.

In conclusion, as mentioned earlier (section 6.4.3.3), the introduction of staff categories was one way in which Ryan sought to raise the Visionary Department's research profile and, in doing so, also to address an identity tension arising from the discrepancy between the value he placed on research as the unit's HoD and the research realities of the Department. However, Ryan constructed the new staff classification system by drawing on what might be described as contradictory discourses, largely consistent with what I was told by Ryan's department colleagues about this initiative (section 6.4.3.1). On the one hand, Ryan drew on discursive resources that were consistent with descriptions of his approach to leadership (section 6.1.3): it was about recognizing everyone's contributions and making workloads and accountability systems more equitable for all. He presented the initiative as a tool to recognize "the diversity of people," as an equalizer between research- and teaching-focused staff in terms of workload and outputs accountability, and emphasized the flexibility of the system. Furthermore, Ryan said, those who would be classified as Category I staff would not face dire consequences, and some of them could even be "comforted" by the fact that they would not be expected to do research or be "punish[ed]" if they did not. Those unhappy with being classified as Category I academics could be given the opportunity to prove that they belonged to a different group. On the other hand, Ryan

simultaneously employed – sometimes quite harsh – discourses linked to performance management, starting with how he described each staff category. That is, although his descriptions pointed to an inclusive definition of research (section 6.3.2), they also included references to the REF measures (see also the beginning of section 6.4.3). Moreover, Ryan made it clear that the system would support a management-by-objectives approach, where people who did not meet their objectives would be moved to another category. Furthermore, Ryan took the position that to be an academic you could not only teach unless you did “a lot of” it, constructing research and scholarship as central to being an academic and seeming to label teaching as a lower status activity, in line with the more widely present tension between research and teaching (section 5.1.3.2). The process of assigning categories itself was top-down and raised questions about Ryan’s commitment to inclusivity and to making initiatives “meaningful” to people (section 6.1.3.1). Finally, when Ryan spoke of Category III academics, he suggested that there would be no excuses for them if they did not meet their research objectives, hinting at a rather punitive attitude.

This combination of statements shows that Ryan arguably employed “antagonistic discursive resources” (Clarke et al., 2009). It suggests that Ryan constructed a sense of managerial self that was relatively equally informed by discourses of inclusion and support on the one hand, and performance management and division on the other; seemingly without causing further significant identity tensions. It is noteworthy, however, that some of Ryan’s own attitudes, which I presented earlier, seemed to be at odds with those he assumed when talking about staff categories. For example, Ryan seemed to suggest that one of the basic premises of the new system was the assumption that staff might not achieve the targets set for them. This appeared to contradict Ryan’s previously described “non-punitive way of managing” (section 6.4.1.2) and his criticism of “punitive” approaches and “starting from the position where poor performance is your driver” that he spoke of when characterizing – and disidentifying from – the initiatives of the NewU’s previous management (section

6.1.3.1). This contradiction was also evident in Ryan's remarks after the launch of the new system. On the one hand, Ryan reaffirmed an inclusive definition of research (section 6.3.2) by noting that most people would still be expected to contribute to the goals of the research strategy. On the other hand, when asked about the reception of staff categorization among the Visionary Department members, Ryan legitimized the new approach to research management by making a rather negative message about the unsatisfactory performance of the Faculty UOA 1 in the REF 2014. Furthermore, in doing so, he seemed to construct better REF performance as a central objective. At the same time, however, he combined this with a more positive narrative of not emphasizing the fact that people belonged to different categories in order to avoid introducing divisions in the team. These statements were at the same time consistent and inconsistent with Ryan's notions of a managerial identity as leader of Visionary Department. On the one hand, it appeared that Ryan accepted "poor [research] performance" as the "driver" of this initiative (section 6.1.3.1), an approach he criticized on another occasion. On the other hand, he maintained that he wanted to avoid creating divisions in the Department, even though he had previously explained the creation of Category III group, which in itself made the division between Category III staff and the rest of the Department rather explicit. Thus, Ryan claimed a sense of managerial self that was informed by a kind of 'inclusive performance management' devoid of further identity tensions. However, Tommy's reflections (section 6.4.3.1) suggest that this managerial identity was possibly to be questioned by at least some Visionary Department members, who struggled to see the introduction of staff categories as "meaningful" in the way Ryan intended.

6.5 It's About Making an Impact and Engaging With the World

The above sections of this chapter showed that establishing a strong departmental research culture was a top priority for Ryan as the Visionary Department HoD. However, it is important to emphasize that Ryan's vision for research was defined in a particular way. Not only was he promoting an inclusive definition of research (section 6.3.2) – although, as shown earlier, Ryan's approach to this was not without ambivalence (sections 6.3.2, 6.4.3.4) – but he also made a point of engaging in research projects that could have a positive impact on the world outside NewU. One way to do this was to build external partnerships. In this section, I first explore the perspectives of Ryan's colleagues on this type of research and partnerships. I then turn to Ryan's views, vision and challenges he experienced in relation to implementing this agenda, paying attention to the process of his discursive identity work.

6.5.1 A Changing Landscape

During my time in Visionary Department, I heard various people share their perspectives and reflections on the state of socially impactful research and external partnerships in the Department. On an individual level, most of the Department members I interviewed emphasized the importance of making a difference in communities and fostering external partnerships. For example, Morgan described their work with organizations that support “marginalized” groups, adding that their “research is not only theoretical, it's also policy-orientated.” Similarly, Sage explained that their work was driven by “social ... injustice,” and Tommy noted that they had “always been interested in ... society and social issues and things that affect all of us.” Moreover, Tommy expressed scepticism about research conducted for the sake of “academic game” – which, for example, dictates, “you gotta get into this journal” – as opposed to “research that ... might have a policy impact ... or change the way that people think

about the world,” and called for an increase in the weighting assigned to research impact in the REF.

In this sense, there seemed to be a fairly strong alignment between my interviewees in the Department and Ryan’s own vision with regard to social impact and external engagement. Most of my interviewees acknowledged the efforts Ryan had made towards this agenda and many of them recognized the successes he had had. For example, in contrast to the situation some years earlier – the Dean spoke of “big partnership issues” and the Department not “working with anybody” – Frankie described how “Ryan’s come in [with] this big agenda to change things, to get us involved with people ... going off meeting politicians ... you know, we have radical changes.” Similarly, Finley described how Ryan “has done a lot of ... advocacy for our department” with various political, voluntary and non-governmental organizations. Finley continued,

[o]ne of the effects of that is that we’ve had many more people, organizations coming and saying, will you do some research for us? And therefore it ... opened up the relevance of this place to be more of a city-based university with relationships beyond it and nationally, particularly with Members of Parliament.

Furthermore, Ryan also pushed for changes in the Visionary Department’s curriculum, which also emphasized the importance of the Department’s engagement with the outside world. He drove the development of a new module, which I refer to as Community Engagement, in which students worked with outside organizations, and the development of a new master’s degree that was distinctly dedicated to the “public” discipline of concern. Although a couple of my interviewees expressed some (initial) scepticism about developments of this kind, Sage acknowledged that Ryan

[has] tried very much to shape [a discipline] towards public [discipline] and, you know, to bring a real steer and a real direction. ... he has pushed and pushed and

pushed the public [discipline] and, you know, people have taken on that agenda, you can absolutely see that, that agenda's really working.

In summary, when I asked Tommy about the values of Visionary Department, they shared,

I think the ethos of taking knowledge out into communities is a strong one, it comes across really strongly ... what makes us different is that we're not ivory tower-ish, that we are trying to get out there and make difference to the communities. That's [a] strong value within the Department.

In addition to these developments in Visionary Department, as noted in chapter 5, some of my research participants commented that activities related to research impact and external partnerships had also gained prominence at the level of the Faculty (section 5.3.2) and NewU as a whole (section 5.2.2), and a few explicitly acknowledged Ryan's role in these efforts. For example, a Faculty Management member remarked,

I'm very, very optimistic about the external engagement aspect of [the Faculty]. Which I think we haven't done well in the past, and I think Ryan's particular take on that and his enthusiasm and his abilities are leading us very, very well in terms of our external-facing work.

Similarly, another Faculty Management member described Ryan as “very outward-focused” and “an incredible ambassador for the university.” Later in this section, I present selected examples that demonstrate the Faculty's (section 6.5.2.3) and NewU's (section 6.5.2.4) commitment to impact and external partnerships, particularly those that featured prominently in relation to Ryan's efforts in this area.

To summarize, several interviewees in Visionary Department placed significant value on research resulting in a positive impact on the world outside NewU. One research participant specifically pointed to the link between such research efforts and research impact as measured in the REF (section 5.1.3), a dynamic I will explore in more detail later from Ryan's point of view (section 6.5.2.4). These department members' perspectives suggest an alignment with a related departmental discourse that was prominent at the time of my fieldwork, which placed emphasis on the Department's engagement with external organizations and socially impactful research. This commitment was evident in the unit's connections with numerous non-academic institutions, its involvement in research projects that served such organizations, and in parts of the Visionary Department's curriculum that drew on a definition of relevant academic disciplines as public-oriented. Importantly, a number of my interviewees stated that this had not always been the case and described Ryan as instrumental in bringing about and implementing this discourse, not only at the departmental level, but also in the Faculty and beyond.

6.5.2 Putting Impact and External Engagement Front and Centre

As mentioned earlier, an important part of Ryan's research agenda focused on increasing the impact of Visionary Department – and subsequently the Faculty and NewU – on the communities outside its walls. In the continuation, I describe Ryan's perspectives on this issue and the related processes of his managerial identities construction from multiple angles. First, I demonstrate Ryan's general dissatisfaction with the state of external engagement at the time of his appointment and shed light on his determination to change this situation. I then look at Ryan's work in this area at the level of the Department, the Faculty and NewU as a whole, paying attention to the identity tensions that arose and Ryan's responses to them.

6.5.2.1 Challenging the Lack of Engagement With the Outside World

During our first interview, as Ryan reflected on the time of his arrival at NewU, he mentioned early on something about his previous institution that shaped the way he perceived NewU, the Faculty and Visionary Department. That was the fact that “there were some things about the previous place that were really, really strong, and their strengths were in their entrepreneurial spirit. And by that I mean the recognition that they could do work beyond their borders, beyond the campus.” In contrast, Ryan noted later in the interview that he felt that NewU did not support such efforts “in a strategic way” at the time of his appointment. He explained what he meant by that, “what I found in the first couple of years, it was, you’re doing it in spite of the university. The university will benefit, it will release some money if you need it, but ... they didn’t quite get it.” Ryan further illustrated this by reflecting on how his role as HoD at NewU was defined, “there’s nothing in my job description, for instance, that says part of my role is to be outside.” Additionally, in Ryan’s view, this lack of outward orientation was also reflected at the faculty level. For example, as Ryan mentioned in a meeting with Reilly, an administrator recently tasked with assisting him in his faculty-wide external engagement efforts (more on this in section 6.5.2.3), at the time of his arrival there was “no [faculty] strategy” for building strategic partnerships with external organizations. Ryan therefore thought, as he explained during our second interview, that the “partnership working” at the Faculty “was nowhere near the level ... that I felt should be here.” The situation was similar at the departmental level, as Ryan described during our first interview; compared to his previous institution, Visionary Department was “much more conservative in terms of ... that work outside.”

This state of affairs contradicted Ryan’s ideas of how a university should function in terms of its external engagement. He demonstrated this in a number of ways, starting with how he defined what “an academic” meant to him. As he explained in our first interview,

an academic for me is somebody who creates an environment of teaching and learning, generates new knowledge, but also seeks to make an impact. ... with that knowledge. Be that academic impact or something outside. So I've always thought of academics as practitioners, people who do ...

Furthermore, during the same interview, Ryan introduced other elements that strongly influenced his view of the importance of impact and external engagement. For one, in line with the quote above, Ryan saw himself as a practitioner in a particular policy area. As such, he explained, “[y]ou want to impact and change things that are going on outside” and he saw this as “a really critical part of my job.” Moreover, Ryan explained, it was also his “political identity” and “values” that “invariably [shaped]” this agenda, elaborating, “I couldn’t do that if I didn’t have the kind of political identity that I have, really.” Additionally, just before joining NewU, Ryan led “a university community engagement pilot” at his previous institution, demonstrating that he already had experience of running successful external engagement projects.

In summary, thinking back to the time of his appointment as the Visionary Department HoD, Ryan characterized NewU, the Faculty and the Department with discourses that pointed to a lack of commitment to developing external partnerships and engagement, which was consistent with the views of some of his colleagues interviewed (section 6.5.1). These circumstances contradicted Ryan’s position on the issue – signalling an identity tension – which he demonstrated using several discursive resources that challenged the discursive organizational context of which he had become a part. These included his experiences at another university; the notion of “academics as practitioners” and his own sense of self as a practitioner in a particular policy area; his “values” and “political identity,” the latter indicating Ryan’s identification with selected broader political discourses; and previous successes in running a “community engagement” project. In doing so, he rejected the university’s expectation that HoDs should not take on or further develop external work and related faculty- and

department-level discourses, claiming instead a managerial identity in which impact and external partnerships played “a really critical part.”

In the remainder of this section, I elaborate on how Ryan addressed the multi-layered identity tension described above. In doing so, I also highlight further identity frictions that arose from Ryan’s successful assertion of the aforementioned managerial identity and the concurrent changes in his broader discursive environment (sections 5.2.2, 5.3.2, 6.5.1).

6.5.2.2 Committing to the Visionary Department’s External Engagement Agenda

Given Ryan’s statements above, it is not surprising that his vision for Visionary Department included an external- and impact-oriented focus from the outset. As he explained to me during our second interview, one of the things he wanted “for our department ... was about being at the forefront of influencing policy and practice. And that for me was always the conception of taking [a discipline] beyond the borders.” As he put it during a strategic meeting of the Department Leadership Team, “we should move outside ... J. S. Mill Hall to [the city’s] communities.”

Upon his appointment, Ryan immediately began pushing a department agenda that recognized the importance of social impact and, relatedly, external engagement. Ryan emphasized on several occasions that he devoted a lot of time to this agenda during his first year as the Visionary Department HoD, which was also supported by the Dean. During our second interview, he described it this way, “probably about 40 per cent of my first year here was spent building external partnerships and building alliances.” He went on to talk about how during this time outside the university, for example, he “[w]ent off to Westminster to meet our local MPs [Members of Parliament]” and met with a local partnership that was addressing a social issue. The result of these efforts was, as Ryan described during our first interview, “one of my ... proudest achievements I’ve had since I got here,” that is

completely refocusing the work of this department from being a really inward-facing, you know, do the business, to getting out there and doing work outside, forming really exciting new partnerships. I'm actually trying to make a difference to ... policy [in a particular area].

In Ryan's view, this was "critical to the success of any department like this ... going forward" and he explained that he believed it was "because of those partnerships" that "we have the offers that we have and why we've grown how we've grown." Indeed, in a strategic meeting of the Department Leadership Team, he shared that since his appointment, their research-related funding had increased significantly, due in large part to a few people in Visionary Department working closely with the community. Not surprisingly, the impact agenda – including the vision to grow the Department's external engagement – was also included as one of the four priority areas in the Department research strategy.

Ryan's impact and external engagement plans also extended to the Visionary Department's curriculum and, more broadly, to the way in which the disciplines homed by the unit were defined within the Department. During our first interview, he explained to me, "if we're doing [different disciplines], I don't know how you can do these subjects without being connected to the outside world. So I don't know how you can be inward-looking. It's alien to me." Building on this perspective, as mentioned earlier (section 6.5.1), Ryan drove the development of the Community Engagement module, in which students worked with a variety of external organizations on a range of social issues. He also led the development of a master's programme specifically focused on doing a "public" discipline of concern. Referring to the Community Engagement module, Ryan explained during our second interview that they "fundamentally redesign[ed] what our courses were for. ... we took [two disciplines] which were largely theoretical, inward-looking disciplines, and ... made them outward-facing, engaged in the community. Engaged in work with partners." Similarly, in relation to the new master's programme,

Ryan described that they transitioned “[f]rom doing a ... degree [in a discipline] about some theory and some people to half of that degree being based outside,” for example through “community organizing.”

However, although Ryan did not mention any issues in relation to building external partnerships in other contexts, he explained to me during our second interview that the inclusion of this aspect in the curriculum had met with some resistance from the Department staff. He explained that both the introduction of the Community Engagement module and the development of a master’s programme in a “public” discipline were “an intellectual, academic challenge,” as such a transition represented “a massive shift” in terms of how these disciplines were defined in Visionary Department. As he explained in relation to the new master’s programme, the question was, “what is [a discipline] for? What do we want, why are we here? What do we want to get out of it?” Even though Ryan was aware that they had “to preserve the integrity of the degree” and that it was “not a vocational training course,” the transition still meant a “challenge of bringing people along and not everybody being signed up for [it],” while “accepting some people will privately never go all the way.” Nevertheless, Ryan assessed that “many people have. ... And now are engaged in it [more] than I would have been led to have believed if I just listened to everybody else.”

Indeed, despite some challenges to this agenda in the Department, Ryan continued to make significant efforts to further it. During my time with him alone, I was present in several meetings and events that attested to this. To name a few, I attended two public guest lectures organized by Ryan, featuring an individual working in national politics and the head of a prominent organization working to create social impact (the Association). The latter had also previously been appointed Visiting Professor in Visionary Department, and Ryan continued to seek ways to further strengthen the Department’s partnership with the Association (more on this in section 6.5.2.4). In addition, Ryan was involved with a nationwide non-governmental

organization and, at the time of my fieldwork, was busy organizing this group's local event, which drew a very large crowd. At the event, Ryan was on stage representing NewU, and part of the programme was informed by the research done by the Visionary Department students enrolled in the Community Engagement module.

To summarize, and as already indicated in the previous subsection, Ryan's statements above point to an initial disconnect between his vision for the Department in terms of external partnerships and an impact agenda, and a prevailing departmental discourse at the time of Ryan's appointment that neglected such an orientation. As noted above, this pointed to the presence of an identity tension, but also demonstrated Ryan's determination to change the departmental circumstances and thus address the associated identity friction. The above shows that in order to place Visionary Department "at the forefront of influencing policy and practice," Ryan claimed a sense of managerial self as an HoD – which was supported by the Dean but, as explained earlier, was not in line with the NewU's conception of HoDs' responsibilities at the time (section 6.5.2.1) – to which the development of external partnerships was central, as evidenced by the significant amount of time he invested in this matter. Moreover, these efforts were related to Ryan's idea of reforming much of the Department's curriculum for the disciplines represented by the unit in order to reach "beyond the borders" and "to [the city's] communities," although he acknowledged some staff's resistance to this and the need to balance such – applied – disciplinary definitions with the 'academic' aspects. The latter may point to another example of Ryan adopting of what some might see as contradictory discourses. That is, he wanted to make Visionary Department more 'academic' by increasing research activities (see e.g. sections 6.2.2.4, 6.4.3.4), but also promoted disciplinary notions that were at odds with 'traditional' ideas of research; although these definitions were consistent with the more recent REF impact agenda (section 5.1.3), about which more below. According to Ryan, by the time of my fieldwork he had successfully implemented the notions of external partnerships, impact and "outward-facing" disciplines in his unit. This was evident in the

establishment of various partnerships and, consequently, in the growth of the Department and the increase in the Department funding, as well as Ryan's suggestion – which was also supported by some of his department colleagues (section 6.5.1) – that this agenda and the discourses associated with it had flourished and been accepted to a significant degree in the Department. Overall, then, this data suggest that Ryan was able to largely resolve the initial identity tension mentioned above, with the discourses central to his managerial identities construction – and a sense of self as an HoD who was a practitioner and even affiliated to select organizations beyond NewU – also becoming dominant in Visionary Department.

6.5.2.3 Becoming the Faculty Head for External Engagement

Ryan's commitment to this agenda within Visionary Department soon led to the creation and Ryan's appointment to a faculty-wide role in which he was responsible for heading the Faculty's external engagement, as mentioned in chapter 5 (section 5.3.2). In our second interview, he explained how he

got the faculty lead for it, but only because I started doing it as soon as I got here. ... and in the first year of that, because it was going so prosperous and well, Terry [the Dean] then said, at a faculty level, to have this kind of Faculty Management portfolio responsibility for external engagement.

The extent to which Ryan was committed to this agenda and convinced of its necessity for the Faculty was evident, for example, when at the first meeting of the aforementioned (sections 5.3.2, 6.1), soon-to-be-launched Academic Unit-wide “research, policy and practice centre” (more on this in the continuation of this subsection) he referred to the Faculty – without hesitation or explanation – as the Faculty of *Applied* Political and Social Sciences (emphasis added).

As the Faculty Head for External Engagement, Ryan developed the Faculty strategy for strategic partnerships, which emphasized the importance thereof for growing “research income,” facilitating and strengthening “research impact,” “student engagement,” including through “work-based” experience, and enhancing the NewU’s “local, national or international reputation.” Furthermore, as he told Reilly, he made a commitment to the Dean to work on developing “much more across-faculty work.” During my time in the Faculty, Ryan arguably made significant progress on both of these aspects. One example is the aforementioned “research, policy and practice centre,” an Academic Unit-wide effort based in Visionary Department and temporarily led by Ryan at the time of its creation. Funded by the NewU’s internal strategic fund on the basis of a successful bid that Ryan had coordinated, the mission of this centre was “to improve the lives of” a specific population, as Ryan explained in our third interview. At the first meeting of the centre, which was attended by representatives from all departments in the Faculty and a few representatives from another faculty in the Academic Unit, Ryan explained that this would be done through “cross-disciplinary research” and proactive work “with external partners.” In this way, the centre would “contribute to national debates” on the topic while facilitating and strengthening impact and creating opportunities for “staff and student engagement in civil society.” Moreover, in a marketing-related meeting, which focused on strategic partnerships, Ryan proposed that each department in the Faculty appoint a person responsible for partnerships and raised the idea of forming a dedicated faculty-wide committee, both of which were welcomed by meeting participants. It could be argued that the Faculty’s external engagement agenda was continuously moving forward, and Ryan assessed in a Faculty Management meeting attended by a representative of the NewU’s strategic planning team who came to discuss the idea of the university as a social enterprise, “we [the Faculty] probably do the lion’s share of socially valuable work” at NewU.

Despite the progress in strengthening the Faculty’s external engagement, Ryan experienced some friction in this regard at the time of my fieldwork, particularly in

relation to his dual role as HoD committed to this agenda and as the Faculty Head for External Engagement. For one thing, he explained to me during our second interview,

[t]he problem is it's a good idea [the faculty-wide role]. And I've managed to do some of it ... but actually it's a very time-intensive role, anyway, at a faculty level. So we can only ever do a little bit, we can only get some of it off the ground, and I think probably when the dust is settled on our department's reform, the next phase, then I can think about the faculty level more ...

In addition to the time constraints that prevented Ryan from prioritizing the two roles equally, he also faced challenges arising from the intertwining of his department and faculty-wide roles. For example, in a meeting with Reilly, he explained that he had been “lobbying hard to get [the] Faculty’s fund for external engagement,” but until then all funding for events such as the public guest lectures came from “my budget.” Thus Ryan seemed to imply that such external engagement efforts should have been considered by the Faculty as part of his faculty-wide role, not his HoD role. Moreover, Ryan felt that a clear distinction between the two roles was sometimes unhelpful. For instance, assigning an administrator to support Ryan in his faculty-wide role – although this could be seen as an attempt by the Faculty to further increase support for external engagement – caused Ryan concern as it resulted in him being assisted by two administrators; this one in addition to an administrator supporting him in his HoD role. In our final interview, he shared why this was a challenge, “personally, I would prefer to work with one person because the work I do externally is so tied up in my role as Head of Visionary Department, the two don’t disentangle very easily.”

To sum up, Ryan’s performance as HoD in relation to the Visionary Department’s external engagement described in the previous subsection – and his creation of a managerial identity as an HoD that placed this agenda at the centre – subsequently led to the Dean’s support for the establishment of a new, faculty-wide role dedicated to such efforts at the faculty level. In this role, Ryan applied the same

discourses of importance of external partnerships, impact and applied definitions of relevant disciplines at the level of the Faculty – and even in parts of the Academic Unit – as he did in the Department. This was evident, for example, in the guiding principles of the Faculty strategic partnerships strategy, the Academic Unit-wide “research, policy and practice centre,” and Ryan’s initiative to establish a faculty-wide external engagement committee. These developments pointed to Ryan’s successful attempts to help give more importance to external partnerships in the Faculty in line with the Dean’s vision (section 5.3.2). Moreover, the NewU funding the aforementioned “research, policy and practice centre” demonstrated the university’s changing attitude towards such efforts (section 6.1), which closely aligned with Ryan’s own views on the subject. In light of these analytical reflections, it could be argued that Ryan successfully resolved the identity tension he experienced due to the initial discrepancy between the important place of external partnerships and related activities in the formation of his sense of managerial self and the lack of such an agenda in the Department and the Faculty. However, Ryan’s statements above also suggest that taking on a faculty-wide role resulted in further identity tensions for him that seemed to remain largely unresolved during my time with Ryan. First of all, due to time limitations, Ryan had to choose which of his two roles he wanted to prioritize. Ryan indicated that he prioritized his HoD responsibilities over his faculty-wide post, signifying a managerial identity to which the HoD role was primary, despite his commitment to the Dean to work on enhancing “much more across-faculty work.” At the same time, however, Ryan signalled his intention to focus more on the faculty-wide role at a later date. Second, the intertwining of the two posts led to further tensions, as the Faculty management’s discourse about Ryan’s faculty-wide role and Ryan’s conception of that role did not align. That is, Ryan’s sense of managerial self was challenged by the Faculty management’s indication that activities initiated by Visionary Department related to external engagement were not always seen as contributing to his faculty-wide efforts, which was reflected in the Faculty funding arrangements for these activities. Moreover, Ryan’s managerial identity – wherein his HoD and faculty-wide roles represented closely

intertwined discursive identity resources – was at odds with the Faculty’s reformed administrative support arrangements that differentiated between the two positions.

6.5.2.4 In Sync With the New Vice-Chancellor’s Perspectives?

Although I earlier mentioned that at the time of Ryan’s appointment, NewU was not particularly supportive of the external engagement agenda in Ryan’s view (section 6.5.2.1), by the time I shadowed Ryan, the situation had changed. As he explained in our first interview, “certainly we’re noticing the difference since the new Vice-Chancellor came,” and Ryan was optimistic because “the word from the top is, more of this. From across the university.” An example that confirms the alignment between Ryan’s agenda and that of the new VC was the latter’s involvement in the public guest lectures I mentioned above (section 6.5.2.2). Although these were originally proposed and to be organized by Ryan on behalf of Visionary Department, the VC got involved in the organization.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier (section 6.1), not only did the VC agree to support the aforementioned Academic Unit-wide “research, policy and practice centre” homed by the Faculty, but Ryan explained during our second interview that the VC tied the funding for the centre to the establishment of a university-wide think tank. At a meeting between Terry and a couple of HoDs, including Ryan, about planning the bid for the think tank to be competing for the NewU’s internal strategic funding, Terry at one point summarized on which fronts the think tank was to deliver: from disseminating research to influencing policy, to generating funding and providing opportunities for student work experiences. Additionally, Terry noted that the “end goal” of the think tank would be the REF 2020, that is it would serve to evidence the impact of the NewU’s research for the purposes of the REF 2020 submission.

The latter aspect of the nature of the think tank was something that caused Ryan some issues, as he explained to me in our final interview, after the university

funding had been approved and it had also been agreed that the aforementioned Association (section 6.5.2.2) would partner with NewU on the think tank. At that point, Ryan was “shepherding” the think tank while planning the appointment of a new director and staff. When I asked him about developments regarding the think tank and the partnership with the Association, Ryan told me about some of the complex issues he was facing. For one thing, he recounted,

the VC ... has a driving stake in this, [they're] very interested in it, it's essentially partly [their] genesis, [their] idea, yeah? So I've got suddenly a lot of senior level gaze on [me] ... that I didn't have before. ... So that's that side of it. Then there's the Association side, so building a partnership with that magnificent and significant organization and ... trying to ... get that completely right.

The difficulties Ryan faced went beyond his perception of oversight by two important, high-level entities. They were also related to the differences between NewU and the Association in how they viewed the think tank's potential for contribution. Specifically, Ryan spoke of NewU seeing the think tank as a mechanism through which it could enhance the university's standing in terms of research impact in the REF 2020, as opposed to the Association, which was “much more think tank-y.” He explained,

NewU will have some very instrumental objectives. It wants to get better research impact, it wants to ... do more research that has policy impact, very, very, kind of, yeah, I say instrumental, but they are very selfish impact needs. Versus the Association, who want to see this as ... very innovative, exciting, transformative. So we're trying to balance a bit of that ...

A short time later, I asked Ryan what he meant by saying “that NewU had more selfish objectives” and he elaborated,

I guess self-interest is better than selfish. ... [silence] yeah, I need to be careful in how I describe that, because what I mean is, not selfish in terms of we're in this for ourselves, but I do mean that actually there's a very instrumental, self-interested reason why NewU would do this. So if I give you a really practical example, in [the] REF 2020 we have to have impact case studies for our UOAs, and impact is judged on reach and significance. So if you have some really great research but it doesn't have any impact, it gets scored really low. ... So the think tank is meant to be a mechanism through which some of the impact case studies can have more of an impact, can kind of come in a much stronger, meaningful way in shaping policy in practice. So when I say self-interested, the Association obviously has an interest to generate income, raise its profile, do meaningful work. ... But they're much more think tank-y. You know ... let's define impact for a year. No. [Ryan and I laugh] Because if we do that, we've lost a year. ... So ... that's what I'm balancing ...

In some other contexts, however, Ryan's discussions of the meaning of impact led to another set of frictions and placed him in a similar position to the one he constructed for NewU in his comments above. For example, during the above-mentioned meeting of the "research, policy and practice centre" (section 6.5.2.3), Ryan responded to a comment about the centre's apparent focus on the REF as opposed to its "impact" on issues in the city by saying that he "should have started with our public value statement." Given the various problems in the city, "we would definitely want to give something back [to the city], but [the] REF is your temperature check for what you're doing." He similarly navigated this tension when introducing the idea of strategic partnerships at a marketing-related meeting mentioned earlier (section 6.5.2.3). In this context, Ryan brought up impact by saying that developing such partnerships "isn't only about [the] REF, but also about influencing the society," however, "this brings us to research impact."

To conclude, in contrast to Ryan’s initial criticism of the NewU’s lack of external engagement at the time of his appointment (section 6.5.2.1), by the time I shadowed Ryan, he acknowledged that the university had recently begun adopting a discourse that placed more value and importance on external partnerships and engagement. This led to a closer alignment between Ryan’s own view and the NewU’s view on the matter – as evidenced by the VC’s support for some of Ryan’s initiatives – which further helped to resolve Ryan’s initial, multipronged identity tension explained in the previous three subsections. However, this also brought about further identity frictions, such as those outlined in relation to the NewU-wide think tank established in collaboration with the Association. In his role as temporary lead of the think tank, Ryan found himself under pressure from both the NewU top management and the Association, as he had to represent the – different – interests and approaches of the two organizations at the same time, resulting in Ryan signifying a “liminal” managerial identity wherein he did not appear to identify fully with either organization (Ellis & Ybema, 2010). One of the frictions arose from the organizations’ differing ideas of the think tank’s goals and contributions. On the one hand, Ryan described the Association’s approach as “very innovative, exciting, transformative” and “think tank-y,” which he noted could be very time-consuming. The NewU’s focus, on the other hand, was on how the university could benefit from the think tank in the REF 2020 – specifically in terms of the impact case studies to be submitted to the next REF – which Ryan saw as “instrumental” and “self-interested.” This seemed to raise a broader identity tension in relation to Ryan’s managerial identities and the place of different discourses of impact in his construction thereof. Ryan’s description of the NewU’s goals as “self-interested” and “instrumental” suggests that he may have distanced himself from a focus on the REF-based discourses of research impact as a discursive identity source. In some other contexts, however, Ryan was the one who was perceived to be advocating the kind of “instrumental,” REF-informed research impact discourses. In these cases, to resolve the associated identity tension, Ryan constructed the two ways of defining impact – that is research impact as measured in the REF and actual societal impact (section 5.1.3.2) –

as complementary; mirroring his characterization of the REF as “crude” while at the same time seeing it as a useful “health check” (section 6.2.2.1). This indicates that Ryan created a managerial identity that drew on both – sometimes seen as mismatched (section 5.1.3.2) – discursive resources, arguably accommodating both his sense of self as a manager required to deliver based on the REF-informed impact discourses emanating from the NewU top management and the national research environment, as well as his identity as a practitioner in a particular policy area and his political identity (section 6.5.2.1), which informed his goal of creating real societal impact.

6.6 Summary

This chapter shed light on the discursive identity work of Ryan Quinn, HoD of Visionary Department, focusing on his positions and activities in relation to research management. It demonstrated how Ryan drew on various discursive resources – some of which have already been introduced in chapter 5 and others identified in this chapter – to construct his managerial identities, with an emphasis on Ryan’s experiences of identity tensions and his responses to them.

The early part of the chapter acknowledged Ryan’s experience of an ongoing identity tension due to his simultaneous role as manager and his sense of self as academic, the former preventing him from engaging in academic activities to the extent he would have liked. The first section of the chapter then addressed Ryan’s managerial identities formation in an organizational discursive environment that challenged his notions of change and the HoD role, as well as put him at odds with the prevailing departmental discourses at the time of his appointment. As a result, Ryan experienced several identity tensions. First, Ryan rejected the university’s sometimes “punitive” approaches to management and the institution’s “underambitious” definition of the HoD post as sources of his sense of managerial self. Instead, he claimed a managerial identity that was informed by discourses of “meaningful” change – which did not

negatively affect the Visionary Department staff – and ambition. Second, Ryan challenged rather than accepted the Department’s gloomy discursive context as a possible identity resource, and asserted a managerial identity as a “positive,” “transformational” and “ambitious” HoD. Ryan’s responses to these identity tensions related to his dominant sense of managerial self as a “leader” – trusting and supportive of his staff – a managerial identity that he linked to the discursive identity resources of his experiences of “leaving school,” doing community work and his political activity. However, Ryan’s predominant focus on leadership – to do with “set[ting] strategy” and “inspir[ing] people” – was sometimes at odds with the expectation, including on the part of his staff, that Ryan was responsible for “manag[ing] processes.” Ryan associated the latter with being a “manager,” a discursive identity source he acknowledged with far less enthusiasm, suggesting an ongoing identity tension.

The remainder of the chapter examined in detail Ryan’s discursive identity work specifically in relation to research management. The first of these sections focused on the multi-layered identity tension Ryan experienced due to the discrepancy between his attitude towards research and the dominant research-related discourses that characterized his environment at the time of his appointment. In response to these frictions, Ryan challenged the national discourse that constructed post-1992 universities as predominantly teaching-oriented institutions and rejected the university and departmental discourses discouraging of research as possible discursive identity resources. Instead, he asserted a managerial identity as an HoD determined to make research central to Visionary Department. Discursive resources that supported Ryan’s formation of such a sense of managerial self included his experience at another modern university, the Dean’s supportive attitude and the REF; the latter despite Ryan’s ambivalent attitude towards it, indicative of an additional identity tension. Another ongoing identity tension related to Ryan’s strong commitment to the research agenda was evident in his reluctance to have a senior department colleague oversee departmental research. Returning to Ryan’s initial, multipronged identity tension,

notably, the changes in university research discourses promoted by the new VC indicated a better alignment between NewU and Ryan's attitudes to research, and signalled at least a partial de-escalation of Ryan's identity frictions related to the issue.

The next section of the chapter highlighted how Ryan dealt with the identity tension that arose from the discrepancy between his commitment to making research a central activity in Visionary Department and the departmental – and related broader – discourses that discouraged research. As some of these discourses related to the Department staff resistance to, or fear of, a research agenda, Ryan, in response to the identity tension, promoted a discourse of research as inclusive of the more broadly defined teaching- and practice-related scholarly activity. This was consistent with Ryan's claims of a managerial identity as an HoD who wanted to bring about "meaningful" change and was attentive to his staff's diverse needs. In doing so, however, Ryan experienced a further identity tension. Namely, this inclusive approach to research was at odds with another discourse that was prevalent nationally – and also found within the Department and the Faculty – that is the discourse of research as an endeavour consistent with the more 'traditional,' exclusive definitions. In response, Ryan insisted on promoting the notion of research as an inclusive activity. At the same time, however, Ryan indicated that a REF-informed aspiration for Visionary Department to produce "world-leading research" also held a place in his managerial identity construction.

The penultimate section of the chapter addressed Ryan's perception of the discourse of research as a central departmental endeavour gaining ground at a slower pace than he had envisaged – indicating a persisting identity tension for Ryan as the alignment between his strong identification with this discourse and the Visionary Department's discursive realities remained incomplete – and Ryan's responses to these circumstances. The latter included the appointment of several research-active hires, as well as Ryan's enthusiastic adoption of the university-wide reformed staff performance review format and the proposal of staff categories, all of which were seen as

mechanisms for advancing the Department research agenda. However, these responses to the original identity tension sometimes led to further identity frictions for Ryan. The setting of criteria for the new, research-oriented appointments, and their arrival at Visionary Department, at times resulted in an identity tension due to Ryan's ambivalent attitude towards the REF, for example, with respect to the requirement for Professor post candidates to have been entered in the REF 2014, and Ryan's reluctance to speak of departmental research in "crude" – REF-informed – terms. In response to these frictions – in line with other instances where he did not appear to experience acute REF-related identity tensions – Ryan accepted, albeit reluctantly, a managerial identity informed by the REF discourses. Notably, this could be seen as at least partially at odds with Ryan's use at other times of an inclusive definition of research as a crucial discursive identity resource. It is also noteworthy that Ryan's adoption of the reformed performance review format and his introduction of staff categories signalled Ryan's construction of a managerial identity that was importantly informed by performance management discourses. Although this did not appear to trigger any further identity tensions for Ryan, it did result in Ryan's formation of a sense of managerial self informed by the arguably contradictory discourses relating to staff categories. That is, Ryan characterized the implementation thereof with reference to both a sometimes rather harsh performance management discourse and discourses that were consistent with his previously described sense of managerial self as an inclusive and supportive leader.

The final section began by highlighting Ryan's early, multi-layered identity tension arising from the mismatch between his commitment to an external partnerships and impact agenda, and the absence of organizational discourses signifying such commitment at the time of his appointment. Drawing on alternative discursive identity resources, including those related to his prior experiences, his sense of self as "practitioner," the applied definitions of relevant academic disciplines, and his "political identity," Ryan claimed – arguably very successfully – a managerial identity to which

external engagement and impact discourses were central. Indeed, Ryan's proactive formation of such a sense of managerial self as an HoD also contributed decisively to changes in the departmental and faculty discursive contexts in relation to the issue, including by informing the decision to create the Faculty Head for External Engagement post. These developments – along with the university's recent increased emphasis on external engagement and impact – suggested a resolution of Ryan's initial, multipronged identity tension. However, Ryan's successful managerial identity claims brought additional frictions. These included, for example, identity tensions related to an ongoing discrepancy between the Faculty management's notion of Ryan's faculty-wide external engagement role and Ryan's perception of the latter; Ryan's responsibility for coordinating the differing interests of an external organization and NewU in the context of a common venture; and Ryan's positioning vis-à-vis arguably conflicting discourses of research impact as real societal impact versus research impact as measured in the REF. In response to the latter, while Ryan seemed at one point to distance himself from a focus on the REF-informed definition of research impact, on other occasions he seemed to embrace both notions of impact simultaneously, presenting them as complementary.

The next chapter examines the processes of discursive identity work of Karen Fowler, HoD of Reinvigorated Department.

7 Determined, “Through and Through”

My first meeting with Karen Fowler, Head of Reinvigorated Department (the Department), took place on a spring afternoon a few weeks after my arrival at New University (NewU). Karen had agreed to meet me to discuss and plan my fieldwork with her, which was to take place the following autumn.

Karen’s office was located at the centre of a corridor of Faculty of Political and Social Sciences (the Faculty) where, by the time it became one of my bases while shadowing Karen, part of the Reinvigorated Department staff and the academics of Small Department were based. The two inner walls of the office were made of glass. Thus, as I approached the office, I could see Karen working at her desk, which was placed opposite the door under the window. I hesitated before knocking as I saw a note on the door that read, “Please, do not disturb.” I also felt a little uneasy as I thought of Karen’s uncertainty about her participation in my research when we had first exchanged emails earlier in the year. After a few moments, I decided to put my hesitation aside and

knocked. My discomfort quickly dissipated as Karen and I introduced ourselves; I liked her right at her firm handshake.

As we sat at a small meeting table on the left side of the office, Karen almost immediately explained why she had initially been hesitant about participating in the research. When I had first contacted her, Reinvigorated Department was undergoing a realignment, as a result of which five staff were being made redundant. Furthermore, Karen shared that she would probably be leaving her position as Head of Department (HoD) by the autumn to take on the role of the Faculty Head of Research full time, a function she was then performing in addition to her HoD responsibilities. The conversation soon turned to Karen's reflections on, among other things, her varied roles and the multiple hats she wore as the Department HoD, the Faculty Head of Research and active academic, while she also shared her thoughts on the aspects of leadership and management in her work and mentioned her busy schedule. As Karen and I discussed the details of my research, our exchange was not only about the practical aspects of it, but Karen also offered me advice on various theoretical, methodological and content-related aspects of my work.

In hindsight, that first conversation with Karen was a rather accurate indication of what my time with her would bring and what impressions I would gain of Karen as I shadowed her. At a time when both Reinvigorated Department and her personal career were being reshaped, Karen came across as very busy, sometimes literally rushing from one responsibility to the next. However, in tackling a multitude of tasks and solving countless emerging issues, she gave the impression of possessing an air of focus and determination. Although Karen's drive was interspersed with occasional spells of self-doubt and uncertainty, her habitual reflection on how she operated as a leader and manager, and the importance she placed on self-management, helped her perform her job in the way she envisioned it.

In the continuation of this chapter, I first introduce Reinvigorated Department and then outline selected prevailing discourses in this organizational unit as conveyed by organizational members other than Karen. This is followed by an introduction of Karen Fowler. I then present some of the overarching discourses Karen employed in relation to her roles at NewU and show the place they occupied in the process of Karen's identity work. In the continuation, I turn to various research management-related issues Karen faced in her multiple roles during my fieldwork. In particular, I highlight Karen's experiences of identity tensions and her responses to these tensions as she constructed her managerial identities in light of the following challenges:

- promoting and implementing a research agenda in an environment characterized by a limited research culture, while at the same time experiencing the pressures associated with this agenda at the individual level;
- responding to various institutional and structural features that hindered the research agenda;
- addressing the limited research experience of the Reinvigorated Department members – which was in part related to the professional disciplines homed by the Department – in order to promote research as an important component of the unit's endeavours; and
- ensuring sufficient research support and robust departmental research structures, given the Department's limited research activity at a time of increased research pressures.

I conclude the chapter with a short synopsis.

7.1 Introducing Reinvigorated Department and Its Head

At the time of my fieldwork in Reinvigorated Department, the unit consisted of about 30 academic staff, including a few research assistants; about a dozen postgraduate research students; and approximately 500 undergraduate and taught postgraduate students. The offices of the Reinvigorated Department members were located along two perpendicular corridors on the Faculty's lower floor. The Department was organized around courses in three disciplines, with most of the staff coming from professional and practitioner backgrounds.

In the few years prior to my fieldwork, Reinvigorated Department had undergone several structural changes. The faculty-wide reorganization (section 5.3.1) resulted in the Department, which had previously homed two professional disciplines, absorbing another department. This meant a significant growth of the unit and an added area of expertise. However, as mentioned in chapter 5 (section 5.3.1), just weeks before I arrived in the Department, this team left Reinvigorated Department to join Visionary Department, and a course and associated staff previously based at Visionary Department were incorporated into Reinvigorated Department. This resulted in a significant reduction in the number of staff in the Department and a change in the unit's name. Furthermore, this new arrangement came on the heels of several staff being made redundant in the previous academic year and roughly coincided with an influx of new hires replacing the laid off members.

When I arrived at the unit, Reinvigorated Department members were organized into three research groups which, unsurprisingly given the significant changes in personnel and disciplinary orientation, were undergoing a transition in terms of their focus and possibly their numbers (more on this in section 7.5.2.1). The formation of research groups within the unit as such was a relatively recent development put in place

about a year earlier as part of the Department's first research strategy. This was related to the broader plan to better organize and support the members' research efforts and thus enhance the Reinvigorated Department's research culture and profile in terms of staff's research capabilities and engagement in various research activities, including producing research outputs, applying for research funding and developing opportunities to create impact on practice and policy. As noted in chapter 5 (section 5.3.2), only a handful of the Department academics were entered in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 (HEFCW et al., 2014), as part of the Unit of Assessment (UOA) submission that also included Visionary and Different Departments members (the Faculty UOA 1) and achieved modest results. At the time of my research, Reinvigorated Department was already focused on the REF 2020 – which was particularly evident during a department-wide away-day about half of which was dedicated to developing a department research agenda – and was planning a REF submission with members of Visionary Department and possibly Small Department (section 5.3.2).

At the time of my field research, Reinvigorated Department was running multiple undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes in the three areas represented by its staff, as well as offering a portfolio of continuous professional development for professionals already working in the relevant sectors.²⁵ Student numbers in one of the undergraduate teaching areas (hereafter referred to as Big Course) were significantly higher than in the other (hereafter referred to as Small Programme). This was related to the fact that Small Programme was a qualifying,

²⁵ Although Reinvigorated Department was home to staff and courses in three areas, the narrative in this chapter focuses largely on the two disciplinary areas that represented a constant in the unit's recent organizational history. When my interviewees spoke about the Department, they largely focused on developments in these two areas, as the former third team had only recently left the unit and the incorporation of the new area had just taken place.

professionally approved course that was informed by national developments in the profession. These external factors also partly affected some of the recent – and possibly further future – changes to Small Programme, including the establishment of a master’s course which implied a greater emphasis on the research components of training, and the layoffs and new hires mentioned earlier, all of whom were primarily affiliated to courses offered within this professional discipline. In addition to these quite significant changes to Small Programme, Big Course was also undergoing a reshaping of the curriculum, albeit on a smaller scale. In the few years prior to my fieldwork, overall student satisfaction in the two areas of teaching, as measured in the National Student Survey (NSS), fluctuated between satisfaction rates in the 70s or below from a possible 100 per cent satisfaction to high 90s, decreasing to high 80s in the academic year prior to my research.

Given the recent and ongoing changes described above, the management structure of Reinvigorated Department was in a transient state at the time of my fieldwork. In fact, Karen did not assume full management responsibility for the entire unit until about a month and a half before I began my research with her. This arrangement came into effect after the Department had been divided into three parts along the then three teaching areas for a couple of years, and each part was headed by a different person, namely Karen Fowler and two other members of the Faculty Management Team (the Faculty Management). Thus, although Karen was HoD of the whole unit all along and was at least peripherally involved in important developments in the other two areas, her main responsibility was for the aforementioned Small Programme portfolio changes and the staff realignment. The latter – which was still in progress at the time of my fieldwork – also meant changes in the Department’s senior membership. This partly explains why, during my time with Karen – although I was able to observe a few one-on-one meetings between her and individual Principal Lecturers who oversaw the Department’s teaching provision, as well as a Reader who undertook various research-related responsibilities – there were no regular meetings in

place between Karen and the senior department members as a group. However, by the time I conducted some of the final interviews in the Department, Karen had brought together the revamped senior membership responsible for managing both the unit's teaching and research activities.

Having introduced a selection of the Reinvigorated Department's general features, in the following subsection I present some of the prevalent departmental discourses as conveyed by the Department members.

7.1.1 A Department in Constant Transition?

Overall, many of the discourses regarding Reinvigorated Department drawn on by my interviewees in one way or another pointed to the Department's years of seemingly constant state of transition, which took place prior to and continued to unfold during my fieldwork.

The general atmosphere of Reinvigorated Department in the relatively recent past, prior to the multiple realignments mentioned in the subsection above, was largely described in positive terms by the interviewees who commented on the matter. Ellis, for example, reflected, "[w]e'd been quite a cosy department," and described the team as "just very nice." Sam similarly characterized the team as "very warm," "very friendly" and "cosy." In Sam's view, under the leadership of "incredibly supportive" senior department members, the team "had very regular meetings" and "it felt ... very kind of egalitarian." Similarly, Emerson, for example, recalled explicit ways in which they were made to feel "appreciated" as part of the team. However, Ellis and Sam also pointed out some of the downsides of such departmental culture. Ellis described how the team was "perhaps not very professional." They explained that the "very egalitarian team ... was uncomfortable to be a part of" because some members "didn't do much work" or "made a lot of mistakes." Sam talked about how the "warm and friendly" atmosphere and "very laissez-faire management" had a negative impact on the quality of course

offer, explaining, “there were a lot of practices that people kind of got away with that were not acceptable.”

The appointment of Karen Fowler as the Reinvigorated Department HoD, the addition of an extra team to the unit and the subsequent division of the management of the three departmental groups led to a change in the way staff perceived their workplace. First, Karen was described by a couple of my interviewees as a driven leader who differed in her approach from the unit’s recent previous HoDs. Ellis described her as someone who wanted to “achieve” and “drive things” and who would “get frustrated when we couldn’t get there, and wanting to ... challenge staff’s performance ... wanting us to go somewhere, take us somewhere new.” Sidney also viewed Karen as “a mover and a shaker,” saying, “I think there’s been a real attempt from Karen to drive the strategic leadership forward.” At the same time, however, most of my interviewees felt that Karen’s busy schedule as the Faculty Head of Research and active researcher in addition to being an HoD – although they very much understood and respected her commitment to multiple roles – meant that she was “just not here” (Sam), could “seem very inaccessible” (Jessie), and was “not someone who’s necessarily available for people” (Ellis).

Moreover, some of my interviewees pointed out that recent changes in Reinvigorated Department had led to fragmentation between different teams and people. Sam described how the Faculty reorganization (section 5.3.1) – which resulted in an additional team joining the Department – was “a big disruption. And then the department just became huge. ... from it being like this really tiny little group. And it just all became really unwieldy and distant,” with gradually “fewer departmental meetings.” Furthermore, this period of departmental expansion was followed by a couple of years of an explicit division of the unit into three sections, the management of which was shared by three people. In Dawson’s view, this development led to a separation between the different course teams. Dawson explained how the new

management arrangement introduced relatively soon after the additional team joined the unit “broke those early connections” in the new, expanded, Reinvigorated Department. They added, “people were working in separate teams. ... things like Christmas party ... [were] separate, whereas we had done things together [before]. People just were separated by that.” This view was also reflected in Ellis’ remark that, over time, the teams “moved further away ... [and] fragmented from” each other. Sam echoed this perspective, explaining that the “involvement” between the two teams had “gradually” become “very limited,” resulting in “no real exchange” between courses. Jessie similarly spoke of a lack of “fit across the two [teaching areas].”

In addition to these perceptions of fragmentation, most of my interviewees also acknowledged the effect of the recent Small Programme layoffs on the general atmosphere in the Department. Indeed, the impact of the redundancies went beyond those directly affected. Dawson felt that the layoffs “had an impact on staff morale, without question.” Sam also acknowledged that “on a personal level, because they were colleagues, that was ... upsetting for a lot of people.” Sidney, for example, described themselves as “very bitten” by the “really difficult six months in that transition.” Robbie also expressed that they felt “extremely uncomfortable about the way ... [the] staff were made redundant.” Some of my interviewees spoke of the fear that the layoffs caused for the remaining staff. Sidney, for instance, spoke of a “culture of fear ... that you all feel kind of potentially vulnerable ‘cause you’ve seen it happen in front of you.” Dawson expressed similar sentiments, “people see change differently now. See it more as a threat potentially or a kind of, needing to not stand out, not to be negative, and not to be difficult,” later adding that the “ripple effect for everybody else was that, now, we next?”

The above suggests that Reinvigorated Department had undergone another set of significant transitions that left some scars. As a member of the Faculty Management put it, “[n]ow, the new challenge, of course, is for the new department ... to come together and get to be strong again after a difficult period of being split up.” Although

plans were developed at the time of my fieldwork to undertake this task of “com[ing] together” – with a departmental away-day bringing together and launching the new department, and a meeting of the revamped senior department team – the reflections of some of my interviewees suggested that this would be a difficult goal to accomplish. Before the away-day, for example, one department member commented,

I don't feel like I really know what the Department is ... almost since Karen arrived, because it ... all just, you know, changed completely. ... I think we don't have an identity as a department. And now we've got this away-day coming up, but unfortunately because we haven't met for such a long time, people are more kind of [laughs] suspicious of it than anything else. But there just has not been a sense of a departmental identity, and hopefully that will start again ... now that we've got rid of this split that had happened, but I think we just don't have a sense of each other ...

This research participant also stated that they needed a “sense of ... what our strategies are for the department,” implying that these were not in place at the time. Sidney expressed a similar view, “I’m not quite sure of the strategic direction of the Department and what the priorities are,” but they were open to the possibility that the upcoming away-day might give the unit “some focus.” Others echoed this view that direction was lacking even after away-day. Emerson, for example, said, “I don’t think we’ve got a very clear, specific direction of travel.” Jessie also perceived a lack “of a strategic sense” among senior department members, adding, “people haven’t got a clear direction [and] I think they’re partly resisting the direction that they’re being given.”

However, despite the difficulties that all these changes brought, some of the interviewees also acknowledged the improvements in which the changes resulted. Ellis, for example, described that the team had become “much more elevated.” Sam stated that the course quality was “better, NSS scores are [better],” and Emerson commented, “we have done significantly better [in the NSS].” In terms of the Department’s

leadership, Sidney was positive about “Karen heading it [Reinvigorated Department] up at the moment,” both in terms of the “continuity” this brought to the unit and the “sense of belonging and focus now.” Additionally, Sidney felt that the departmental identity would benefit from the most recent reorganization, which saw a team leave the Department and staff from a course previously based in Visionary Department join, explaining, “I think [this] is a potentially productive ... move, it’s certainly given, I think, more identity to this particular department.” Robbie agreed, noting, “I think there is a coherence about the Department that maybe it didn’t have up until this year. So I think that’s a good development.”

To sum up, the above reflections of the Reinvigorated Department members paint a rather contrasting discursive picture of the unit’s relatively recent past compared to its reality during my fieldwork. Previously, the Department had been characterized by discourses of a “friendly” and “cosy” atmosphere and “supportive” and “laissez-faire” leadership, but these were combined with discourses that pointed to a lack of professionalism and issues with course quality. By the time of my research, these discourses seemed to be largely replaced by rather contrasting departmental discourses. The organizational changes described above led to the prominence of discourses of a driven but absent HoD; fragmentation between departmental teams as a result of growth and a divided management approach; low morale and fear due to recent redundancies; and a lack of sense of departmental identity and strategic direction. However, despite these developments, some of my interviewees pointed to the positive impact of a more driven HoD and some departmental reorganizations on the unit’s professionalism, course quality and identity.

In the remainder of this section, I show how these – and additional discursive resources – fed into Karen Fowler’s construction of her managerial identities. I begin with a brief outline of Karen’s reflections on her career and roles at NewU as I reconstruct her professional path, and continue with a more detailed exploration of the

identity tensions that played out in Karen's discursive identity work during my time with her.

7.1.2 Karen Fowler on Her Career and the Roles at the Faculty

At the time of my fieldwork, Karen was in her early fifties and had held the role of HoD in Reinigorated Department for “just over five years.” When I asked Karen about her professional path during our first interview, she explained that her interest in working with specific populations was crucial to her career choice (see also section 7.4.2.3). She began her studies in the academic discipline concerned with investigating these populations' issues and then qualified and began to work as a generic practitioner in a related professional area that aligned with the focus of the Department's Small Programme. Over time, Karen acquired the additional qualifications necessary to work with the specific populations within her professional discipline. However, while working as a practitioner, Karen's responsibilities from the outset also included “developing other people,” working interdisciplinarily “with multidisciplinary teams” and conducting “evaluation research.” Arguably, this had a significant impact on Karen's future career path. After working as a practitioner for several years, Karen transitioned to a “joint appointment post” between a practice-oriented institution and a university. In this “part academic ... part practitioner post” she continued to develop her training and research profile. Next, Karen took on a full-time position as a lecturer at the same university and then progressed to a Reader post at another institution. Having gained more and more management and leadership experience, Karen took on the HoD role at NewU and rose to the rank of Professor, subsequently also completing a PhD. Since moving into the higher education sector, Karen held various national roles in her area of expertise. In light of all this, Karen summed up who she was in the following words,

I think, first and foremost ... I'm [Karen's field of work] through and through, that's why I guess I've got the [professorial chair] title I've got, but I'm also, I guess, a manager and a leader through and through. So you bring the two things together, and here I am.

As mentioned earlier (section 5.3.2), Karen was not only HoD of Reinvigorated Department, but also the Faculty Head of Research (more on this in sections 7.1.3.2, 7.2.2.1, 7.2.2.3). As a result, Karen often expressed that her job was very busy and, in this context once shared with me, "I can't do everything, and some things have to go, because I'm not a superhero, I have to remind myself of that from time to time." In particular, although Karen protected certain days of the week for her research, and I observed her engage in various research and teaching activities, she frequently raised the issue that her HoD and the Faculty Head of Research responsibilities ate into the time for her own academic work. In our first interview, for example, Karen told me,

if you looked at my priority list probably over, you know, days, weeks, you would see that my own [academic side of things] drops, drops, drops, drops. And it's always either to do with ... stuff to do with the Faculty Head of Research role or stuff to do with the HoD role. My own stuff is the stuff ... that tends to kind of drop off.

However, as already indicated, Karen recognized that this was to be expected,

I think that goes with the territory though ... if you're gonna take on this kind of role, you have to accept that that's gonna be a consequence of it. And not beat yourself up too much if you don't feel that you're delivering academically as well as you could.

In explaining some of the challenges she experienced, Karen also drew on discourses related to her values and personal characteristics. This will be discussed in

more detail in section 7.1.3.3, but to start off, during our first interview Karen shared that one of her “key values” was “humility.” She argued that this “humility” – in combination with “not [being] good at self-promotion” and, as she put it in our second interview, being “too accommodating” – was an obstacle to her being better positioned, for example in terms of the time allocated for her academic activities and the administrative support she received. During the time I spent with her, Karen’s “humility” – and even outright self-doubt – was perhaps most evident as she prepared for and delivered her professorial inaugural lecture. In the run-up to the lecture, she mentioned her worries about it on countless occasions, sharing that she was “dreading it,” that she was “afraid that I will be standing there like a first-rate idiot,” and telling a colleague to “lower your expectations.” Even at the beginning of the lecture, Karen expressed hope “that the lecture will be worthy.”

To summarize, Karen began her career narrative by noting the important role of her interest in a particular population group. She described herself as a Professor who was “first and foremost” dedicated to her field of work, and as will be discussed in more detail later (section 7.1.3.2), this discursive resource continued to occupy a significant place in Karen’s construction of a sense of self. A later part of the chapter (section 7.4.2.1) also discusses how Karen used the above-mentioned combination of practitioner-, and training- and research-oriented discourses – the latter typically associated with an academic identity – in her identities formation. The essential role of research-related discourses in Karen’s managerial identities construction was further exemplified by her position as the Faculty Head of Research, which is explored in more detail at various points later in the chapter (sections 7.1.3.2, 7.2.2.1, 7.2.2.3). While Karen constructed being a Professor in a particular field as a primary element of her sense of self, the data presented above also point to the centrality of management and leadership discourses to her identities (see also section 7.1.3.2), which is consistent with with the prevalent national discourse on the HoD role (section 5.1.2). In line with the existing research on academic middle managers (AMMs; see discussion in section 2.2.1),

however, Karen's dual identity as both academic and manager, holding the posts of HoD and the Faculty Head of Research, resulted in an identity tension as Karen was unable to claim her academic identity as much as she would have liked given her heavy workload as a manager. During our first interview, Karen suggested that the identity tension was ongoing, but she addressed it by acknowledging that the existence of such friction was to be expected (further discussion of this identity tension and Karen's responses to it follows in section 7.1.3.2). Lastly, while this will be discussed in more detail below (section 7.1.3.3), Karen acknowledged that her values and personal characteristics – including humility – were essential discursive resources in the construction of her identities. Indeed, the above suggests that Karen's perceptions and my observations of her humility at times led to Karen not claiming a favoured sense of self or doubting herself as a Professor about to deliver her inaugural lecture, respectively.

7.1.3 Managing Others, Managing Oneself

In the next three subsections, I present some additional selected discourses that, on a general level, fed into Karen's discursive identity work. I begin by outlining the details of Karen's approach to managing change in Reinvigorated Department. I then explore two aspects of how Karen managed herself – the balancing of her multiple responsibilities and the importance of reflection and self-management for Karen – and the ways in which this impacted on the shaping of her managerial identities.

7.1.3.1 Managing Change

As described in detail earlier in this chapter (see the beginning of section 7.1 and section 7.1.1), Reinvigorated Department had undergone several changes in the years preceding my fieldwork. Structurally, the composition of the Department at the time of my research represented the third 'version' since Karen's appointment some five years

earlier. Below I describe some of Karen's reflections on this long period of instability and her approaches to managing these transformations.

To begin with, echoing some of her colleagues' reflections above (section 7.1.1), Karen described in our second interview, "I've been very mindful that when I came here, this department was very comfortable. People did a lot of looking after [each other]." This, Karen continued, "in itself brought a number of challenges, so people were too busy, in some respects, looking after each other. And that was why some of the jobs didn't get done." As she shared in the first interview,

when I first came in, there was a lot of, well, you know, we'll do it this way one day, oh no, we don't feel like doing it that way today, we'll do it differently, and that caused an awful lot of problems.

In response to these circumstances, Karen described during our second interview how, while she "tried to do some of that [looking after people]," she decided to "also ... take a step back as time had gone on and maybe do a bit less of that [looking after people] because I just felt that that was the approach that I needed to take." As Karen told me in our first interview, this went hand in hand with her work of "putting governance structures in place," particularly in relation to Small Programme, and making the processes in the Department "a lot more systematic and robust."

In addition to addressing these issues, Reinvigorated Department underwent numerous other changes. The unit absorbed an entire additional department, which, as Karen noted in our first interview, resulted in "my department doubl[ing] in size," and, as she reflected in our second interview, the unit becoming "the most diverse department in the Faculty." Furthermore, as Karen shared in our first interview, "we didn't really get a chance to consolidate as a department before ... we started to think what we're going to do about Small Programme." This eventually led to an expansion of course offerings, layoffs and planning for new hires, but also to the decision to split

the management of Reinvigorated Department – for the time being – among three managers. In Karen’s view, this arrangement provided her “the dedicated time” to undertake this significant realignment. However, it also meant, as Karen described in our second interview, that she had limited involvement in the management of the other two departmental teams. She explained, “my main energies were taken up with Small Programme. ... during that period it was very difficult to kind of extricate myself from it to be doing other things, and the idea was that I wouldn’t.”

Given this raft of changes, it was not surprising that at the time of my fieldwork Karen hinted that the Department needed to be better integrated. In our first interview, she pointed to “a bit sporadic” nature of the meetings of the unit’s senior members and suggested that the Department’s management arrangements needed to be reorganized. Furthermore, in a meeting with an Academic Unit accountant, she assessed that the Department had been “very divided in the last year,” and in our second interview noted that the courses offered by Reinvigorated Department were “very different.” Nevertheless, in the same interview Karen was also “really positive” about the effect of the recent changes on the future of the unit. In a meeting with a newcomer, Karen described the Department as “re-emerging” and “a bit like a phoenix.” She told another recent appointment that the Department had recently “kicked off more or less fresh.” As Karen elaborated during our second interview, she was determined, first, to revitalize her “meetings with that senior group [Principal Lecturers and Readers] about how do we take the direction of the Department forward” and, second, to use the recent changes as an opportunity to reintegrate the unit,

we’ve got a lot of new staff, we’ve got a new departmental title, so I think we’ve got a real opportunity now to bring people together and ... we can kind of set the direction of travel from this point onwards. ... I think the fact that we’ve got new staff starting all together is good ... I think it means that Big Course can come back into the department almost not feeling that they are, I suppose, constrained by

where they were before ... because they're coming back to a new load of staff in Small Programme, some of whom will be able to teach into their programme. ... so I think we've just got to look for new synergies and new opportunities.

By the time I completed my fieldwork at Reinvigorated Department, both efforts were underway: Karen brought together the Reinvigorated Department senior members and already prior to that organized a department-wide away-day, which she referred to as the “launch [of] the new department.”

Although Karen was optimistic about bringing the new department together, she was nevertheless prepared for the fact that she would have to continue managing this change, as she told me in our first interview,

I hope that the new team is gonna settle down and gel and everything ... but I think ... it's still quite a bit of a job to do because I don't think you can just assume that even though you've got the right people and you maybe know where you want them to go as a leader, I still think there are some management things that need to be tackled if we're going to perform on the metrics that we're being asked to perform against. So I can't ... sort of become complacent in that area at all.

To conclude, Karen, like some of her Reinvigorated Department colleagues (section 7.1.1), discursively characterized the atmosphere in the Department at the time of her arrival as “comfortable” and acknowledged that the staff “did a lot of looking after [each other].” At the same time, she emphasized the difficulties this posed for the unit’s operations. In recognizing this challenge, Karen’s response to the implied identity tension demonstrated her decision to largely reject the then dominant departmental discourses as the source of her managerial identities as the Reinvigorated Department HoD. Instead, Karen created a sense of managerial self that contradicted the said departmental discourses by focusing less on “looking after” her staff and more on solving the Department’s operational issues (see also section 7.1.3.3). Karen’s early

challenge to the status quo was complemented by the Faculty reorganization that led to the Reinvigorated Department's growth and increased diversity, and soon after, signals that there were issues with Small Programme. It is possible that these developments caused further identity tensions for Karen as they challenged her previously established sense of managerial self as the Department HoD. Specifically in relation to the Small Programme realignment, this led Karen to temporarily identify primarily with one of the Department's three teams rather than the unit as a whole, although Karen suggested that no identity tensions emerged from such a positioning as it had been agreed upon. However, like her colleagues (section 7.1.1), Karen acknowledged the challenges posed by recent changes and on a few occasions drew on departmental discourses that pointed to the need to revamp the Department's leadership and a lack of departmental integration at the time of my fieldwork. Nevertheless, unlike many of the Reinvigorated Department members interviewed, Karen discursively constructed the impact of recent changes in a largely positive manner and was optimistic about the Department's future. This suggests a better alignment between Karen's sense of managerial self as the Reinvigorated Department HoD and the unit's – emerging – characteristics. Still, Karen pointed to an ongoing identity tension by implying a distinction between her sense of self as the Department leader and its manager (see e.g. Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; more on Karen's notions of these two aspects in the following subsection). That is, on the one hand, Karen was positive about her work and plans for the unit's direction, which she associated with her role as a leader. At the same time, however, Karen acknowledged that she needed to make further efforts to also succeed as a department manager responsible for meeting the university performance metrics requirements – signifying a managerial identity informed by the latter – and thus to avoid possible further identity tension that would result from not meeting these expectations.

7.1.3.2 Balancing Multiple Responsibilities

As already indicated (section 7.1.2), Karen did not only hold a busy HoD role, but also served as the Faculty Head of Research and strove to maintain her academic profile. In this subsection, I explore why Karen wished to combine these roles, and examine how taking on this combination of responsibilities – although central to how she wished to operate – regularly caused friction when it came to Karen’s ability to dedicate herself to each function.

Already in our first interview, Karen made it clear how important it was for her to serve in multiple roles, particularly in relation to being both an HoD and the Faculty Head of Research. She shared, “I didn’t quite take the job as advertised. Because I took the job [HoD role], plus the Faculty Head of Research role.” In fact, she explained, “I wouldn’t have come here had I not been able to negotiate [that] with the [Dean].” Explaining why this was the case, Karen implicitly made a link between the two posts and the different levels of management and leadership that each of the positions entailed, “I wanted a role that combined ... sort of the management side with the leadership side. And strategy side. Because that’s what I’d always done throughout the whole of my academic career.” To elaborate, later in the interview Karen described leadership as “to do with the vision and ... the where are we going,” as opposed to management, which she associated with “how we’re going to get there.” Although Karen acknowledged that aspects of management and leadership were “quite interlinked,” and she pointed out on multiple occasions that the HoD role encompassed both (see e.g. section 7.1.3.1), she nevertheless sometimes seemed to associate the management and administrative responsibilities more explicitly with her HoD post. This was hinted at, for example, in our second interview when Karen said, “if you took the [Faculty Head of Research role] away from me, I would be [a] very different HoD.” When I enquired what she meant by this, Karen elaborated,

[silence] *I would struggle, I think ... just to administrate. ... I would find it very hard to do, I wouldn't get job satisfaction and ... I would probably be a very disgruntled HoD.* [Karen and I laugh] *A very unhappy HoD.*

Furthermore, in one of our conversations, Karen explained that she had “fought hard” to keep the Faculty Head of Research role and to continue to support the development of the Reinvigorated Department’s research profile, as both importantly contributed to maintaining her “academic credibility while leading and managing.” Even though Karen felt that she might not have been required to engage in such activities from the university’s perspective, for her, she later added, it was “about how to be an academic and not just an administrative manager.”

Despite the centrality of Karen’s “dual focus” to her sense of managerial self, and the fact that, as she noted in our first interview, “the Dean ... has been very supportive of my role, doing that job [Faculty Head of Research] as well as doing the HoD job,” Karen acknowledged that this arrangement caused some issues. Referring to the atypical nature of this arrangement, Karen explained to me in our first interview that it was difficult to achieve a “balance” between these two roles, sharing, “that’s not been easy ... there are only two of us in the university that hold those joint roles now ... in all the other faculties, that’s [the Faculty Head of Research] been created as a separate role” (for more on Karen’s Faculty Head of Research role, see section 7.2.2.3). Karen again pointed out this balancing difficulty during our second interview. She laughingly described herself as “bipolar” in relation to the question of how closely she related to her HoD versus the Faculty Head of Research responsibilities, adding,

I think the emphasis comes and goes. ... So this time last year, obviously, I had to be more aligned with the Department. Because I had a job to do [the Small Programme realignment] and I had to get it done.

However, as she went on, Karen pointed out that she sometimes had to perform important departmental and faculty-level duties at the same time, describing it thus,

[b]ut, at the same time, I had to get the Faculty research strategy written. ... and I wasn't allowed not to do that, and I didn't go to anybody and say, can I not do this because I've got to do that ...

This implies, as Karen noted, that the arrangement was not “necessarily good for my workload [*laughs*].” Moreover, she added, “I’m not sure that that’s necessarily good from other people’s perspective, because I’m sure they would like more of me in each of those two bits.” On the one hand, Karen suggested that she could invest more time in her Faculty Head of Research role if she did not have so much to do as HoD, “there’s a lot more I could do there [as the Faculty Head of Research] ... but I don’t do it because ... I’ve been doing so much [as HoD].” On the other hand, Karen could not always fulfil all the department-related tasks. Although, as she shared during our first interview, she “delegate[d] an awful lot to the Principal Lecturers in terms of” teaching-related management and administration, in one instance I observed Karen decline an unforeseen invitation to a Small Programme-related meeting. Karen explained to the person on the other side of the phone call that although at the moment – until an additional Principal Lecturer arrived – she was “holding the Small Programme side of things, I can’t hold it all.”

As will become clear by the end of the paragraph, this last example implies an added complexity to Karen’s “dual focus.” That is, Karen was also determined to maintain her academic activities, which in practice seemed to result in Karen having not just a “dual,” but a triple focus. During the time I spent with her – and possibly more acutely due to her forthcoming inaugural lecture – there were regular timing clashes where Karen attempted to free herself of, or (re)schedule, tasks related to one role in order to meet the demands of another, primarily related to Karen’s desire to ensure that her HoD- and Faculty Head of Research-related duties did not interfere with her

academic work. While Karen often expressed frustration at not having enough time for her research and teaching (see also section 7.1.2), on several occasions I observed her successfully – though not always – prioritizing these activities. In fact, Karen’s avoidance of the above-mentioned Small Programme-related meeting was a consequence of her wanting to protect time for the preparation of her inaugural lecture. In other cases, for example, Karen (re)arranged the timing of her HoD-related meetings to plan research data collection, or she decided not to attend a performance management workshop to preserve a day of “research-protected time.”

To summarize, drawing on her previous experiences as a discursive identity resource, Karen indicated that she preferred job positions that involved both management and leadership and strategy aspects, again suggesting that both management and leadership discourses held a place in the construction of her managerial identities (see also sections 7.1.2, 7.1.3.1). However, although she constructed management and leadership as “quite interlinked,” Karen implicitly gave different meanings to her roles as HoD and the Faculty Head of Research, and therefore claimed different managerial identities in relation to the two positions (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003); the former tended to lean more towards management and administration, while the latter was more prominently a leadership post. Thus, anticipating an identity tension that would arise from the discrepancy between ‘only’ being an HoD and Karen’s favoured sense of self as both manager and leader, Karen from the outset negotiated a dual role that suited her preference. Additionally, Karen explained how – by fighting to continue to perform departmental and faculty-wide research management and leadership responsibilities, despite claiming that this might not have been expected by NewU – she prevented another potential identity tension that related to a mismatch between her determination to continue to claim an academic identity and the well-documented likely scenario in which, as an AMM, she would be able to uphold ‘only’ an identity as manager (see the discussion in section 2.2.1).

Karen's determination to sustain a sense of self defined at a basic level by the manager-leader-academic trio, however, brought with it additional identity tensions, many of which remained unresolved for the time being or which Karen was only able to resolve temporarily. First of all, while the Faculty's Dean supported Karen's dual management post and thus Karen's sense of managerial self informed by both roles, this put Karen at odds with the prevailing university discourses about the roles of HoD and the Faculty Head of Research (more on how Karen wished to resolve this friction follows in section 7.2.2.3). Moreover, Karen was required to oscillate between the importance she attached to the two positions and hence the sense of managerial self she prioritized – the one predominantly associated with Reinvigorated Department or the one related to the Faculty – essentially making her a “perpetual liminar” (Ybema et al., 2011). This balancing act – although as HoD Karen “delegate[d] an awful lot” – could prove particularly difficult at times of Karen's simultaneous intensified responsibilities in the Department and the Faculty. Relatedly, Karen was not always able to fulfil the responsibilities associated with the two roles she wanted or was expected to perform, which was reflected in her assessment that this was not ideal from the perspective of others. This points to another – unresolved – identity tension related to the difference between others' expectations of Karen and her way of managing the dual responsibilities. These frictions were exacerbated by Karen's aforementioned determination to maintain a strong academic identity, which meant that Karen often sought to prioritize the latter over her identities as a manager and leader related to her roles as HoD and as the Faculty Head of Research. According to the existing research (section 2.2.1), the fact that these attempts were often successful meant that Karen managed to achieve something that many AMMs do not manage to do, which is to repeatedly assert an academic identity over a sense of self as manager or leader; albeit, as indicated above, with consequences for the meaning Karen attached to her roles as HoD and as the Faculty Head of Research.

7.1.3.3 *The Importance of Reflection and Self-Management*

The two aspects of Karen's work discussed in the previous two subsections – balancing her multiple responsibilities and managing change – were significantly influenced by the importance Karen placed on reflection and managing herself as a manager and leader. This, according to Karen, helped her to overcome some of the challenges she experienced.

To begin with, the rather practical aspects of Karen balancing her multiple responsibilities, described in the previous subsection, were complemented by her constant efforts at reflection and self-management. During our first interview, Karen explained, “I don't think I could do any of those things [leadership, management, administration] if I wasn't constantly engaging in reflection,” adding, “I tend to... do a lot of [*silence*] reflecting ... on how and what I'm doing.” The versatility of her work could be “a challenge intellectually,” which meant that besides “manag[ing] all of that,” Karen said, you needed to “manage yourself.” This involved Karen being conscious about “rebalanc[ing] things [leadership, management, administration].” She went on to explain, “[i]f I feel that things are getting a bit ... out of balance, then I will try and recalibrate.” On days when Karen had numerous very different tasks to do in relation to her multiple roles, this meant,

sometimes you just go home and you just think, my god, you know, everybody's had a piece of me today. And then you've somehow got to regroup. And that's where I think this comes in. The reflection, the reflexivity. And the, how do I manage myself as a manager.

This reflection and self-management – in combination with Karen's “key values” of “humility” (see also section 7.1.2) and “being as true to yourself as you can possibly be” – proved important in how Karen managed herself in terms of managing

others and managing change. In our first interview, pointing to recently making several staff redundant, Karen shared,

sometimes as a leader and a manager ... you are gonna experience uncomfortable situations ... which leave you feeling let down, which perhaps leave you feeling ... that your goodwill ... has been tried to the limits ... And ... you have to feel that. Because I think if you don't feel it, you then start to lose touch with the people who you're managing.

Still, Karen thought, “you have to find ways of dealing with feeling it,” and explained how she dealt with such situations,

sometimes it is just about accepting that what you've had to do today is pretty crap. And it's right that you should feel ... pretty crap, [laughs] because if you didn't ... you wouldn't be a human being anymore. And again I think that goes back to the humility. ... and it brings in this reflection.

Nevertheless, although Karen did not want “to lose touch with” those she managed, as the interview progressed she expressed her commitment to implementing changes that she felt were necessary, even if her staff did not agree with them or the changes affected them negatively. Karen reflected,

I hope I don't come across as cold and unfeeling ... I think sometimes ... I can be quite task-focused, I suppose. And I guess that's what we're getting to here, really, it's the bit about managing people versus managing the business. And sometimes ... I can be quite, well, you know, we've still gotta manage the business irrespective of the personal or the people issues that are happening. And I think that's where at the end of the day you just got to be true to yourself and ... give as much of you as you feel comfortable giving ... but then have ways of managing that.

What Karen was referring to at the end of the above quote related to what she considered to be one of her strengths, namely her ability to manage the “boundary between personal and professional.” She shared during our second interview,

I seem to be very good at ... manag[ing] this boundary between personal and professional. Maybe that comes from my training, I don't know, but so I don't tend to take things personally, so, you know, if the NSS scores are terrible ... and Small Programme was in a bad place ... I mean, yes, I felt for it, don't get me wrong, 'cause that makes me sound really callous, but ... if I'd taken it personally, I suppose, I could just have gone home and thought, oh my god, it's all awful ... to the point at which I couldn't operate, I couldn't have done anything about it. But I suppose I'm able to somehow – and I think it is through the process of reflection – [silence] allow people to have bits of me. ... I've somehow been able to get to a stage where I can allow that to happen without me going into melt-down [laughs] and becoming totally dysfunctional.

In managing herself, others and change, Karen not only drew on her values and personal characteristics, but also often employed various established management and leadership concepts and discourses. This was at least partly related to her scholarly interest in these and related phenomena, as evidenced during my time with her through Karen's supervision of doctoral students working on these topics and her active involvement in the delivery of a course module on these subjects. To give a few examples, in one of our conversations, while showing me her lecture slides, Karen talked about change management and told me that it must involve directing people and helping them to develop “identity” and “belonging.” She went on to talk about the necessary ingredients of change management, that is that people need to feel “allowed,” “able” and “willing.” This led Karen to also talk about Donald Schön's work on reflective practice (Schön, 1983). In another conversation about organizational change, Karen described herself as generally “positive” about organizational change,

but shared that she sometimes had to be mindful of keeping a balance between being “an activator” and being “a blocker.” Karen went on to reflect on the importance of “organizational memory” and the need to preserve it to avoid “reinventing change.”

To sum up, the above suggests that in Karen’s responses to the rather habitual identity tensions that arose from her holding multiple roles, examined in the previous subsection – the answers to the questions of “how and what I’m doing,” and relatedly who Karen was as a manager – discourses of self-management and reflection played an important role. Moreover, Karen constructed these – in addition to the discursive identity resources of “humility” and “being as true to yourself as you can possibly be” as her “key values” – as crucial to managing difficult circumstances related to her people and change management responsibilities. In response to an identity tension related to implementing difficult personnel changes and associated “uncomfortable situations” – a friction arising from being responsible for these types of changes while experiencing negative feelings due to them – Karen discursively constructed these challenging sentiments as a necessary identity resource for her as a manager to remain connected to the people she managed. In doing so, Karen thus employed the latter as a discursive resource that informed her managerial identity in such situations. Karen went on to suggest that the solution to identity tensions of this kind for her was to accept a negative sense of managerial self by “accepting that what you’ve had to do today is pretty crap.” Nevertheless, Karen indicated that there were limits to identifying with her staff. While seemingly suggesting that others might perceive her “as cold and unfeeling” because of this, Karen stood her ground in responding to an identity tension between embracing a discourse of “managing people” with respect to “the personal or the people issues” and a discourse of “managing the business,” constructing the latter as central to her sense of managerial self (see also section 7.1.3.1). Moreover, while Karen strove “to be true to yourself” – suggesting that she sought coherence between her “key values” and her sense of self as manager – she also made a point of drawing a line between “personal and professional,” which she suggested may have been related to her professional

training. In doing so, rather than attempting to integrate what the identity literature refers to as personal and social identities (see e.g. Alvesson et al., 2008; Coupland & Brown, 2012; Webb, 2006; and the discussion in section 3.3.1) – a process that many researchers see as central to identity work (section 3.4.1) – Karen indicated that being personally invested in some of the departmental issues would have prevented her from acting on them as an HoD. She thus deliberately avoided a complete conflation of the two, pointing to an attempt to prevent identity tensions that could arise from a mismatch between these two aspects of her identity. Additionally, in reflecting on and managing herself “as a manager,” Karen also drew on various scholarly leadership and management discourses, constructing an identity not only as a scholar in the field, but also a sense of managerial self informed by these discourses (van Grinsven et al., 2020).

Having outlined some prevailing discourses that characterized Karen’s discursive settings, the identity tensions she experienced and her responses to them, in the continuation of this chapter I examine Karen’s discursive identity work in relation to various components of research and research management in which she was involved as the Reinvigorated Department HoD, the Faculty Head of Research and active researcher.

7.2 Under Research Pressure

As indicated at various points in this dissertation (see e.g. sections 5.2.2, 5.3.2), NewU and the Faculty had begun to pay increased attention to research efforts prior to my fieldwork, a development that continued during my time at the institution. In this section, I demonstrate that Reinvigorated Department was no exception and describe Karen’s central role in promoting and implementing the research agenda. However, I also show that the Department members’ response to this was mixed at best, if not largely uneasy.

In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss in detail the multiple reasons for such a reception of the research push and Karen's management of it, but before doing so, in this section, I draw a general discursive picture regarding the research agenda as conveyed to me by the department members interviewed. This is followed by a presentation of Karen's role in shaping and her responses to the research push in her multiple roles as the Reinvigorated Department HoD, as an active researcher, and as the Faculty Head of Research, through the lens of Karen's discursive identities formation process and her experiences of identity tensions.

7.2.1 Mixed Reception of the Research Agenda

In conversations with my interviewees in Reinvigorated Department, most of them commented at one point or another on the greater importance attached to research over the years. Although some noted that such a focus was not new – one interviewee suggested that this transition was related to the institution's transformation from a polytechnic to a university, leading to the NewU's "aspirations" to become a more "proper university that balances teaching and research" – a few interlocutors emphasized that the calls for research became louder over time. Sam, for example, described "the research focus" as "very recent," with the "pressure" continuing to grow. Sidney linked this in part to the appointment of the new Vice-Chancellor (VC), noting, "I think recently we've seen with the advent of the new Vice-Chancellor more of a focus on research." Whereas previously there were staff who "were doing bits and pieces of ... research," Sidney described, "there's been a much more ... focused push ... on the idea that we need ... better sets of output, [to] develop research environment and have more impact in some of the research that we're actually developing." Jessie's observation pointed to just how central the research agenda had become, noting that "the message" in relation to research at the aforementioned departmental away-day "was almost get with it or go somewhere else."

Moreover, a number of my interviewees pointed to the important role Karen played in research-related developments at both the departmental and faculty levels. First, several of them acknowledged Karen's own research background and activity. Furthermore, Dawson described Karen as "key ... in leading that [push] for people to become research-active, definitely." Sidney also noted that "Karen was certainly part of that ... process." One interviewee, referring specifically to Small Programme, felt that "there was a greater commitment to professional and research standards with Karen" and that the team "became more research-minded since Karen came." In Sam's opinion, the focus on research was "one of the biggest changes since Karen came." Indeed, Emerson described Karen as "appointed to take a significant lead [in research] ... within the Department," while adding that she also "became ... Head of Research for the entire Faculty." In relation to the latter, one department member considered that Karen's faculty-wide appointment importantly fed into the Department research agenda. They noted that "because of Karen's [faculty-wide] role, the priority of the Department is research," and earlier described that this led Karen to be "really anxious to try and up ... the ante in terms of people publishing." In relation to Karen's role as the Faculty Head of Research, as mentioned in chapter 5 (section 5.3.2), some interviewees both within and outside Reinvigorated Department pointed to the changes that had taken place since her appointment to this position. They spoke of Karen "reconstitut[ing] the Faculty Research Board" (a Visionary Department member), "beginning to gee up some support" (Ryan Quinn) and introducing "significant ... developments ... like research bulletins ... and ... the Research Away-Day ... where ... we get together as a faculty to talk about research and research development" (a Reinvigorated Department member).

In the context of Reinvigorated Department, while not everyone felt equally pressured to respond to the increased research demands, most of my interviewees saw the research agenda as a challenging development for a variety of reasons. While the specific reasons will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter, I note here some

of the general sentiments and reactions to the research pressure among the Department members. On the more favourable side of the spectrum, several interviewees – although they also saw problems with it – acknowledged the positives of the research push in various ways. As will be shown later in the chapter (see e.g. sections 7.3.1, 7.4.1), some Reinvigorated Department members described the increased emphasis on research as “encouraging,” “appropriate” and “the right way to go.” On the other hand, Jessie spoke of “anxiety” and “negativity in the room” at the aforementioned away-day, noting, “I think there’s still some resistance to some people being as research-active as the Department might like them to be.” Similarly, Dawson commented, “[s]ome people have managed that [becoming research-active] successfully and others not,” and speaking about the Big Course team members, one interviewee acknowledged, “I don’t think [the Big Course staff are] ... particularly comfortable with it [the research regime].” Sam described the “emphasis ... on research” as “very, very frightening for a lot of people.”

To reiterate, the comments of the Reinvigorated Department members interviewed point to an increasing prominence of discourses that placed emphasis on research within the Department and beyond, although they cited different timelines and sources for this phenomenon: from the NewU’s transition from a polytechnic to a university (section 5.1.4.3) to the recent appointment of a new VC (section 5.2.2) and in relation to REF-related categories of research quality (section 5.1.3). Moreover, several interviewees commented on the central role Karen had played in the recent promotion of research-related discourses (see also section 5.3.2). Not only did they speak of Karen as an active researcher, but they also discursively constructed her as a central figure who had contributed to making Reinvigorated Department more research-oriented, as well as someone who had made an important contribution to advancing research efforts at the faculty level. However, my interviewees’ responses also pointed to the presence of conflicting departmental discourses in relation to developments of this kind. A discourse of the research push as “encouraging” and

“appropriate” was combined with – sometimes by the same individuals – a discourse indicating “resistance,” “anxiety” and fear of growing emphasis on research and increased research expectations. This was in addition to a variety of other organizational discourses that challenged the research agenda, which I discuss in more detail later in the chapter.

7.2.2 Karen Fowler as a Driver and Subject of the Research Push

As indicated in the above comments by the Reinvigorated Department members, raising the Department’s and the Faculty’s research profile was a central aspect of Karen’s work as HoD and the Faculty Head of Research. However, the subsection above also signalled some of the challenges Karen faced in developing a research agenda. In the coming subsection, I present Karen’s responses to these and additional frictions, highlighting her role in promoting and implementing the research push in the Department and the Faculty. In contrast, the following two subsections explore how the NewU’s recent increased research focus also affected Karen on an individual level, as a researcher determined to meet the university research requirements for the next REF submission (section 5.2.2), and as someone whose planned career transition was rendered uncertain due to these pressures. Throughout, I pay attention to Karen’s discursive identity work, including her experiences of and responses to identity tensions arising as a result of these developments.

7.2.2.1 Driving Research in Reinvigorated Department and the Faculty

Karen arguably expressed a strong drive to involve in research management and leadership at NewU even before she joined the institution, as evidenced by the fact that she accepted the HoD post only on the condition that she also be appointed the Faculty Head of Research (section 7.1.3.2), a role previously held by a Different Department member. Thus, in our first interview, Karen explained that when she arrived at NewU, besides “deal[ing] with the ... issues connected to the main [teaching] subject areas” in

Reinvigorated Department, “my remit was to raise the profile ... of research in the Department and across the Faculty.”

However, the state of research in Reinvigorated Department and the Faculty was less than ideal at the time of Karen’s appointment. At the departmental level, Karen explained in our first interview,

I was told ... that the door was open for research, but there was a lot to do. And that, you know, we were starting from a low base ... in terms of ... where people are and where we need to get to. So I knew I had a task on my hands.

Circumstances were also challenging at the faculty level, which Karen attributed to two main factors. First, in Karen’s view – as indicated in chapter 5 (section 5.3.2) and discussed in more detail in chapter 8 (section 8.2) – the research endeavour was largely limited to Different Department. Additionally, Karen argued, as others also mentioned (see e.g. section 6.2.1), that “one of the reasons” for the “issues with the ... strategic direction of research in the Faculty was” the “manufactured” UOA entered in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) 2008 and the fact that “by the time I arrived, all of the staff [entered in this UOA] but one had left.” Moreover, “there’d been no succession planning around research ... there was no strategy between 2008 and 2010,” the year Karen joined the Faculty. Given these circumstances, “one of the first things” Karen did after her appointment “was [to] write a research strategy for the Faculty,” with the aim of “build[ing] from the low base elsewhere in the Faculty and hopefully work[ing] with my colleagues in Different Department to keep them going from strength to strength whilst raising the whole sort of profile.”

The above shows that despite the unfavourable circumstances, Karen was determined early on to enhance research efforts in Reinvigorated Department and the Faculty. Moreover, Karen indicated that her commitment to this goal further strengthened a few years into her tenure at NewU when it became clear that the former

VC would be retiring. Karen “anticipated” that the new VC would “probably ... be somebody who would have more of a thrust around research,” and as a result, Karen explained,

certainly in my head I had a sense that we needed the Faculty research strategy and the planning framework to be robust enough so that, you know, if we did have somebody like [the new VC] coming in ... we could stand up to scrutiny, really ...

As indicated in the quote above, Karen’s predictions proved correct: the new VC had by the time of my fieldwork clearly demonstrated their determination to strengthen the NewU’s research profile (section 5.2.2). As a result, on several occasions during my time with Karen, I was able to observe her pushing for local implementation of the research agenda set by the NewU’s top. One occasion where this was particularly evident was the Reinvigorated Department’s away-day. First, about half of this department-wide meeting was dedicated to planning the unit’s research efforts. Moreover, in the introduction to the research-related part of the away-day, Karen explained that research and scholarly activity were related to one of the themes of the recently developed NewU strategic plan, signalling the expectation that the Department would align itself with this strategic direction. Furthermore, she introduced the “now-not-very-new VC” as someone who “comes from a research-intensive [university],” suggesting that this aspect of the VC’s background had an important bearing on their vision for NewU. These remarks became even more tangible in light of some recent research-related decisions made by the university’s top (section 5.2.2). As Karen explained to her staff during the away-day, “[t]he VC said that [they’re] not going to continue to invest where we can’t produce” three star and four star publications, adding, “[the VC]’s upping the game.” She went on to share that available research money had decreased and described what this meant for funding research in the Department, “we have very little money which we will invest into people who will potentially be

submitting three star and four star publications.” Thus, only “[a] small group of people will be supported” with these funds. Moreover, the Faculty UOA 1 had to make their case to be included in the NewU’s REF 2020 submission by the spring of the coming year. This essentially meant that the research output production was to increase as much as possible by then to ensure that the UOA would receive additional research funding from the university. With this in mind, Karen appealed at one point during the away-day, “we need to go to the VC with results, and we don’t have a lot of time.”

Karen’s statements above clearly showed her commitment to meeting the VC’s requirements. Indeed, her determination to improve the Reinvigorated Department’s research profile persisted although Karen pointed out the – still – unfavourable departmental circumstances. In our second interview, while she acknowledged that “[s]ome people have embraced it [the research push],” Karen continued, “a lot of the Big Course staff are still, I would say ... kind of denying the direction of travel?” In addition, Karen indicated several times during my fieldwork that some research-active department members were not responding to instructions regarding required research quality standards, and suggested that she was struggling to find effective ways to manage these staff (see also section 7.4.2.1). Moreover, despite the recent appointment of several colleagues with stronger research profiles to the Department’s Small Programme team (details on this development follow in sections 7.4.1, 7.4.2.1), Karen indicated at several points her perception of limited research staffing resources (see also 7.5.2.2), which at the same time hinted at a complex interdepartmental dynamic in the Faculty. In one instance, Karen warned a newly appointed staff member that they should not be approached by Visionary Department “because this isn’t an appointment for Visionary Department.” She continued, “we need to be careful because they are well resourced” whereas “we are struggling a bit here [in Reinvigorated Department].” A similar interdepartmental dynamic played out in relation to a research assistant. As Karen explained in our second interview, “the idea originally had been that [the research assistant] would be funded [by]” and work for Reinvigorated Department, Visionary

Department, and Small Department, but “it’s ended up that [they’re] taking the lion’s share of resource from this department.” In a meeting with an Academic Unit accountant, Karen noted that the situation did not seem “fair.” To address the issue, Karen shared in a meeting with the Dean, “[i]n a way I don’t mind that we’re paying, but then Reinvigorated Department should get the lion’s share of [the research assistant’s] work,” with which Terry agreed. During our second interview, Karen further emphasized this point of view, adding that the research assistant should in particular “focus a bit more on ... help[ing] people get outputs for [the Faculty UOA 1]. Which is the main reason that we’ve continued [their] contract.”

Given the departmental and wider organizational circumstances described above, Karen acknowledged during the away-day that producing more and higher quality research outputs was “going to be a challenge, it won’t be easy,” while also “accept[ing]” that there was “anxiety in the room.” On a couple of occasions during the away-day, Karen even openly acknowledged the possibility that the Faculty UOA 1 would not be entered in the REF 2020, but noted, “I would be sad if that meant that research would stop completely.” While this thought signalled both Karen’s acceptance of the Department’s relatively low research profile and her determination to continue working to improve the unit’s research efforts, even if at a lower level than required by NewU for the REF (more on this in section 7.3.2.2, 7.4.2.2), Karen was nonetheless persistent about achieving the research objectives set for them. Despite all this, towards the end of the away-day, Karen asserted, “we have targets around NSS, employability ... and we also have targets in research.” Indeed, when I asked Karen about the Department research plans in our second interview, she replied, “[w]ell, we’ve got to have more staff producing [research outputs], that’s the first thing. More staff producing, and more staff producing higher quality. So we’ve gotta get to grips with that.” The importance Karen attached to meeting the VC’s research requirements was also evident in our first interview when I asked her to share “three wishes for the future.” The first wish Karen expressed was the following,

I would like to see the [the Faculty UOA 1] – we've got a stay of execution 'till next year – I would like to see us meet ... the requirements that the VC set us, and I would like to see that [UOA] going forward. From strength to strength, really.

To summarize, as detailed earlier (section 7.1.3.2), the above suggests that discourses that elevated research were central to Karen's managerial identities from the very beginning of her time at NewU, as evident in Karen only accepting the HoD role on the condition that she was also named the Faculty Head of Research. Moreover, the salience of these discourses in Karen's shaping of her sense of managerial self was sustained over the years, although several departmental and faculty discourses challenged this. Indeed, while Karen indicated a congruence between her managerial identity and management communicating to her "that the door was open for research," she also pointed to an early identity tension due to the discrepancy between the essential place of discourses promoting research in Karen's construction of her sense of managerial self and the prevailing departmental and faculty discourses indicating limited – and at the faculty level uneven and non-strategic – research efforts. The latter was evident, for example, in the Different Department's research prominence in the Faculty and a lack of faculty-wide research strategy after the RAE 2008. In response to this friction, Karen rejected these organizational discourses as her potential identity sources, instead committing to building a stronger departmental and more equal faculty research profile. Karen's commitment to improving the Faculty's and the Reinvigorated Department's research standing was further strengthened by the prospect of a new VC and indeed seemed to be validated by the arrival of one. Although requiring Karen to invest further effort in implementing the research agenda, the appointment of the new VC arguably led to an alignment between Karen's sense of self as a manager dedicated to advancing research and the university's reshaped research discourses (section 5.2.2). This implied at least a partial resolution of Karen's identity tension related to the lesser focus on research of the NewU's previous top management, which I discuss in more

detail later (section 7.3.2.1). As illustrated in the examples above, Karen embraced the NewU's recently established research discourses and the university's associated decisions and requirements, thus signifying a managerial identity as an HoD for whom these VC-led, REF-informed university-wide discourses were central. In doing so, she established herself as a "performance driver" (Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020) introducing a very tangible research pressure on the Department members, telling them that they had to produce higher quality outputs at a time when funding was being decreased and granted only to those who were likely to achieve the required quality levels, and that they had to prove themselves to the VC under considerable time pressure.

Although the above analysis signalled a recent better alignment between Karen's and the NewU's attitudes to research, Karen continued to experience an identity tension related to the discrepancy between her commitment to promoting research and the Reinvigorated Department's low research profile. In response to this tension, Karen continued to challenge in various ways the prevailing departmental discourses that pointed to the unfavourable departmental research circumstances and a largely unenthusiastic response to the research push (section 7.2.1), both among research-active academics and among staff – particularly in the Big Course team – who had not previously engaged significantly in research; arguably not always successfully. Moreover, the departmental situation was at times further complicated by interdepartmental dynamics, as in the case of Karen's perception of the Department's limited and at times unfairly distributed research staffing resources compared to some other departments in the Faculty. This led Karen to claim a strong sense of managerial self as an HoD protective of the Reinvigorated Department's research staffing resources, even as she was simultaneously invested in improving the research profile across the Faculty UOA 1 as the Faculty Head of Research. However, despite her efforts to address the Department's research shortcomings, Karen also acknowledged her department colleagues' "anxiety" and the challenge that strengthening the research profile would pose to Reinvigorated Department, even to the point of recognizing that

the Faculty UOA 1 might not be entered in the next REF. This – and Karen’s call for sustained research efforts among the Department members even if outside of a future REF submission (see also sections 7.3.2.2, 7.4.2.2) – indicated that dominant departmental discourses also found a place in Karen’s construction of a managerial identity as HoD. Nonetheless, Karen simultaneously maintained a contrasting managerial identity to which a focus on the VC-mandated, REF-defined research success was central, as evidenced by her placing the Department research performance requirements on a par with the teaching- and student-related performance indicators the unit was required to meet. This was also reflected in Karen’s sense of managerial self in her role as the Faculty Head of Research, which was evident in her aspirations to meet the VC’s requirements for the Faculty UOA 1 to be submitted to the REF 2020. The final quote, as Karen’s first of the three “wishes for the future,” also pointed on a broader level to the importance Karen attached to her managerial identity in relation to her faculty-wide role, an aspect of Karen’s discursive identity work in line with her hopes of becoming the Faculty Head of Research on a full-time basis (section 7.2.2.3).

7.2.2.2 Maintaining a Personal Research Profile

As observed by some of my interviewees in Reinvigorated Department (section 7.2.1), Karen not only sought to ensure that others – be it the Department or faculty colleagues – responded to the NewU’s research push, but she herself strove to be research active at the level required by the university for the next REF submission. She was one of the few Reinvigorated Department academics to be entered in the REF 2014 (HEFCW et al., 2014), the only Professor in the Department and one of the most research-active members of the unit at the time of my fieldwork. During the time I spent with her, I observed Karen talking about, planning and engaging in various research-related endeavours, a non-exhaustive list of which included Karen:

- regularly – often on a weekly basis – conducting data collection for two research projects;
- twice speaking to a research assistant to discuss, among other things, the methodology and logistics of a research project;
- twice meeting with a colleague from another university and a research assistant to discuss another ongoing research project – which involved, among other things, publication planning and conducting data analysis – and the possibilities of expanding the project by applying for another grant, including conversations about the focus and logistics of their potential future research and the type of funding they would apply for;
- in connection with the above research project, together with her two colleagues, also meeting with a person charged with advising researchers on the various types of funding and the details of their possible funding application;
- giving a keynote talk at a conference and participating as a panellist at a public event on her field of expertise;
- preparing and presenting her professorial inaugural lecture;
- chairing several doctoral supervision meetings; and
- performing duties in her capacity as Editor-in-Chief of an academic journal.

Karen's research efforts demonstrated her commitment to contributing to the NewU's research agenda on an individual level as well. Although she did not always make this explicit, her work on and planning of publications, seeking research funding and supervising several postgraduate research students would all feed into a potential REF submission. At times, however, Karen made it very clear that her research efforts were guided, at least in part, by the standards set by NewU for the REF 2020 submission. Perhaps the most notable example of this occurred during the departmental away-day when Karen described her publication strategy. While she stated that she

would not stop producing two star outputs, Karen shared that she had published three publications that year, two of which were likely to be assessed as two star and one as three star. This meant, Karen continued, that she would need four more three star or some more four star outputs by the REF 2020 to reach the required three star average, pointing to the need to “think strategically” in one’s publication plans.

However, Karen’s undeniable commitment to the NewU’s research agenda also led to some frictions. As mentioned earlier (section 7.1.2), Karen sometimes expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of time she was able to devote to research, and at times had to actively prioritize her academic activities over other tasks if she wanted to undertake them. While this could be seen as purely a workload issue, Karen hinted in our first interview that there might be more to it. Talking about her academic activities and in turn describing herself as a “thinker,” Karen reflected,

because of the climate in which we work and operate, thinking [laughs] ... I suppose if you were sort of seen to be sitting at your desk, gazing ... [laughs] into space or whatever, or even sometimes just reading a book ... is somehow seen as lower priority than some of these other things [to do with her other responsibilities].

However, Karen stressed that “thinking” was crucial to “manag[ing] yourself as an academic” and later added, “you have to make time somehow to do some of this,” even if “it’s not always easy.”

In conclusion, the above illustrates that Karen was not only committed to the implementation of the NewU’s research agenda as HoD and the Faculty Head of Research, as outlined in the previous subsection and explained in more detail throughout the rest of the chapter, but also sought to actively contribute to it through her own research activities. The long list of research-related endeavours presented above signals that Karen managed to maintain a sense of self as academic, something that, as mentioned earlier (section 7.1.3.2), put her at odds with many of her AMM

peers. Of note, Karen's remark on her publication strategy – expressed in terms of the NewU's REF 2020 goals, using REF-defined quality categories – demonstrated the centrality of the REF and related university discourses to Karen's construction of her identity as researcher, seemingly without any questioning or ambivalence towards either. However, despite this alignment between the NewU's emphasis on research and Karen's attitude towards the latter, Karen pointed to the presence of an identity tension in relation to her academic identity. The friction arose from a discrepancy between Karen's sense of self as “thinker” and the importance she attached to activities that inform one's academic work, such as “thinking” and “reading,” and a discourse of the “lower priority” given to such pursuits in her work environment. In response to this identity tension, Karen rejected the dominant organizational discourse as a potential identity resource and insisted on claiming an identity as “an academic” for whom these endeavours were crucial, even if this meant experiencing continuous workload pressures.

7.2.2.3 The Faculty Head of Research?

While the above subsection showed how the NewU's research agenda affected Karen as a researcher, this was not the only way in which the recent research push impacted on Karen on a very personal level. As mentioned earlier (section 5.2.2), a change in the research management structure was taking place at NewU at the time of my fieldwork, which – given Karen's position as the Faculty Head of Research – led to Karen's acute uncertainty about the nature of this role in the future.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Karen informed me already at our first meeting – several months before my fieldwork with her – that a plan existed within the Faculty for her to take on the Faculty Head of Research role full time by the autumn of that year. While the news was confidential at the time, the arrangement was made official a few weeks later by the Dean in a Faculty Management meeting. At that

meeting, Terry expressed that they had “wanted a dedicated Faculty Head of Research” ever since their arrival, and confirmed that Karen would take on that function. However, by the time I began shadowing Karen that autumn, circumstances had changed. Due to the revision of the university’s research management structure, it became unclear whether and/or in what form Faculty Head of Research roles would exist. As a result, Karen’s appointment to this position in the Faculty had not taken place at the time originally planned. When I asked her about this during our first interview, she explained that it was still “not clear” when it would happen, adding, “[b]ecause we still don’t know what the structure is going to be within the university.”

These circumstances placed Karen in an uncertain position regarding her future faculty-wide research management role. Highlighting Karen’s uncertainty and the impact this had on her was one of Karen’s three wishes I asked her about in our first interview,

by the end of the year, I would like to feel that I’m more sorted in terms of ... my role. ‘Cause it does feel a bit like I’m kind of, you know, straddling the unknown at the minute ...

At that point in time, an additional strain for Karen arose from the fact that the Academic Unit Dean for Research was to retire shortly and NewU had advertised an interim position for this post while it finalized the new research management structure. Karen explained that she was not applying for the position “because I’ve got seven new staff starting and also because I’ve got two big research projects which I need to get finished, really, before Christmas.” However, Karen also indicated that this decision, at least initially, gave rise to her concerns about being considered for a potential future research management post at academic unit level,

[s]o I had a conversation with ... the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and explained why I wasn’t going to apply for the acting up position. ... But ... I’ve

been reassured that that wouldn't disadvantage me ... were the post to become substantive ...

Despite this assurance and the further development of the situation over the weeks I spent with Karen, she remained unsure of what to expect. At one point Karen and Terry were invited to a meeting with the NewU's Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) – Research and a Human Resources representative, but Karen was not informed in advance of the nature of the meeting. Unsurprisingly, this seemed to cause Karen additional concern. In a phone call about the meeting, I heard Karen ask, “what am I going to be told, that I am no longer the Faculty Head of Research or what?” In a meeting with her research collaborator and a research assistant later that day, Karen, in telling them about the meeting, said, “I don't know what I will be told.” Even on the day of the meeting with the PVC, when we were sitting outside the meeting room and I remarked that the situation felt “like waiting in front of a doctor's [practice],” Karen responded, “at least when you're going to a doctor you know what you're going in for, I don't know that now.” Contrary to Karen's hopes, the meeting did not resolve her insecurities. When I asked Karen about it, she told me she “swore” not to talk about what had been discussed, however, she shared that she was still “trying to manage the uncertainty.” She added, “the consultation is in process, but we don't know when we will know about what has been agreed on,” and later expressed her unease about the way the process had been undertaken. By the time I spoke about the issue to the Dean a couple of months later, the NewU management still had not made a final decision.

To sum up, while the previous two subsections showed that the NewU's recent discourses elevating the status of the institution's research efforts were central to Karen's identities as a manager and academic, the above points to an aspect of the university's recent increased attention to research – namely, the reorganization of the NewU's research management structure – that troubled Karen (for another example of Karen's scepticism about the NewU's approach to research management, see section

8.2.1). Having previously demonstrated how important the Faculty Head of Research post was to Karen's managerial identities (section 7.1.3.2) – to the extent that she accepted the HoD job on the condition that she was also given that position, and later aspired to transition into the role full time, which was supported by the Faculty's Dean – the NewU's disruption of Karen's planned transition posed a threat to Karen's sense of managerial self. This was further complicated, at least initially, by Karen's decision not to apply for an interim Academic Unit-wide research management post, as the departmental circumstances and Karen's individual research agenda required Karen to prioritize her role as HoD and researcher over her longer-term interest in a full-time research leadership position. As the process slowly evolved, Karen's remarks pointed to her sense of an ongoing identity tension due to the discrepancy between her sense of managerial self, in which she employed the role of the Faculty Head of Research as a central discursive identity resource, and the possibility that the revision of the NewU's research management structure might result in Karen losing this post. Moreover, the above indicates that Karen felt a lack of agency to attempt to resolve the identity tension, so for the time being she was limited to “trying to manage the uncertainty.”

7.3 Overcoming NewU's Features Hindering the Research Push?

While the above section outlined some general discourses employed by the Reinvigorated Department members and Karen in relation to the research push, in the remainder of the chapter I go into the details that explain the reasons for the challenges indicated earlier. I begin this section by providing the perspectives of the Department staff who suggested that the research agenda challenged several NewU's institutional characteristics, including the aforementioned fact that the university was a traditionally teaching-oriented post-1992 institution, workload issues that limited staff's ability to devote time to research, and excessive administrative responsibilities (section 5.2.1). I

then present Karen's positioning in the face of these hurdles and her responses to them, addressing Karen's related identity tensions and her attempts to resolve them.

7.3.1 Research as a Challenge to the Existing Modus Operandi

To begin with, a few of my interviewees pointed to the challenges that the research push posed with respect to the NewU's characteristics as a post-1992 university and the associated perceived friction between the teaching and research functions of the institution. In Sidney's view, the research push emerged in a context where, due to "the [post-1992] legacy" NewU "was really good at teaching ... but now [we] have been tasked with developing a research ... angle." According to Sidney, the emphasis on the "research agenda and the ... imperatives of the Vice-Chancellor" marked a departure from the Department's previous focus "on developing teaching and building ... a community of practice." Sam felt that the research push resulted in "the lack of acknowledgement of ... value that teaching is giving." This, Sam said, was "deeply hurtful and offensive [*laughs*] to a lot of ... staff ... particularly since ... as a post-1992 university it's a vocational university, emphasis was always on teaching." Related to this tension between teaching and research activities, Jessie shared their observation – though one they considered "unfair" – that some Reinvigorated Department staff perceived Karen as not "interested in teaching" but "only interested in research."

Even though research might have been perceived to be given higher priority, according to several of my interviewees, in practice NewU continued to prioritize teaching and administrative activities over research. Indeed, the Reinvigorated Department research strategy acknowledged that if the unit's staff were to deliver on the research requirements, the Department would have to "challenge institutional barriers" through "imaginative and creative timetabling and workload planning," assigning equal importance to research as to "teaching and other institutional demands," for example, by ensuring "regular research days" or times in the year. While the

administrative burden on staff will be discussed in more detail in the later part of this subsection, I here focus first on the prioritization of teaching over research. An example of this is a Reinvigorated Department member explaining that they were not “writing a lot more” publications in relation to a current project because “at the moment ... it’s still the day-to-day teaching job that needs to be done.” Another research participant suggested that “the job you’re employed for” was primarily to do with teaching and therefore, although “appropriate,” it might not be feasible to develop a strong research profile given the demands of course “maintenance.” Yet another interviewee explained that although staff in one of the teams were supposed to have “a day a week” with no teaching which they could devote to research, “the day a week is admin, marking and lesson planning. And that’s the reality.” This observation hinted at what Dawson made explicit, namely that the tension was exacerbated by the university system of workload allocation. Dawson opined that this “blunt instrument” did “not really reflect some people’s [teaching] workloads as well as it could” because it did not take into account “the huge volume of activity associated with one hour’s teaching” such as “preparation time,” “follow-up admin and emails.” This in turn made the “stitch between teaching and research ... really contested and difficult and not easily solved.”

Closely related to the above, most of my interviewees suggested that the research time allocated to them was insufficient given the research expectations set for them. For example, one Reinvigorated Department member, while finding that “the shift towards research” was “encouraging,” also noted, “we don’t have the time or support to do those kind[s] of things.” To illustrate this tension, later in our interview, this interviewee gave an example of the Reinvigorated Department members who were pursuing doctorates but did not have “the institutional support for that. So they don’t get a clear day a week to be able to do the ... research.” Similarly, another research participant said, “on top of everything else, even though my workload is like 95 per cent, I’m still expected to publish. And there’s no time given for that at all.” As a result, a few of my interviewees noted that they would be or were only able to engage in

research activities outside of their working hours. Sam, for example, explained that they tried to “protect” one day a week for research, but did not always succeed, so “mak[ing] the time” for research meant “work[ing] weekends,” “evenings” and “holidays.” Alexis similarly reflected, “you need to arrange your time for doing research.” Moreover, they linked this situation to the fact that NewU was a post-1992 university, explaining that due to this there was not a “big difference” in research time allocated to research-active and non-research-active staff. In light of these circumstances – though without explicitly referring to the NewU’s proposal for different staff categories (section 5.2.2) – two of my interviewees spoke of the possible introduction of a division between research and teaching staff, but held contrasting views on this. Sidney expressed “fear” of this possibility, as for them it represented a step backwards in eliminating the distinction between the research-intensive and the new universities. Sam, on the other hand, saw this as a solution to the problem, saying, “to me, that’s the way you do it ... you have certain staff whose main focus ... is research, and then the rest, you know, do the teaching.”

As indicated at a few points earlier in this subsection, the tension between teaching and research was exacerbated by the administrative responsibilities of the Reinvigorated Department staff, such as maintaining the student register (Dawson), “uploading grades,” or even being responsible for the practicalities of paying “temporary staff” (a Reinvigorated Department member). Dawson, for example, in reflecting on the various barriers to research, spoke of, among other things, the “time-consuming ... administration around” teaching and acknowledged the lack of “administrative support to do things which you might consider an admin role, really.” Ellis similarly commented that “a lot of the academics’ time is taken up with administration,” and Sidney spoke of the “increas[ing] administrative creep in terms of the stuff that we actually ... need to do.” Indeed, alongside teaching, Ellis referred to “the bureaucratic, administrative systems” as “the mandatory [that] gets done,” as a result of which “research gets lost” or “very much marginalized.” Moreover, Ellis

constructed a more general tension between administration and academics. In their view, “the administration” and other “centralized functions ... work against us, not for us. And so we spend a lot of our time serving that machine rather than that machine serving us.” This echoed the perspective of Sidney, who also acknowledged “the rise of the professional service class” at NewU and the associated “[d]evaluing of academics ... in terms of the trust that we seem to have.”

To summarize, the Reinvigorated Department members drew on several prevailing NewU discourses, which in one way or another posed a challenge to recently emerging discourses promoting research (section 5.1.1), signalling the presence of contradictory organizational discourses. First, in line with the existing literature (section 5.1.4.3), research was discursively constructed by some as contradictory to the NewU’s traditional focus on teaching and vocational training related to its polytechnic history. Giving research a more prominent role was therefore seen by some as devaluing teaching, mirroring the broader national discourse that points to the tension between research and teaching (section 5.1.3.2). At the same time, however, several interviewees drew on a discourse of teaching and administration as remaining *de facto* prioritized (section 5.1.4.3) – despite increased research expectations – as reflected in the institution’s workload arrangements and staff perceptions of inadequate allocation of research time. One possible answer to this situation – a categorization of staff (section 5.2.2) – was received contradictorily by the interviewees who commented on it. Moreover, discourses of the heavy administrative burden and the lack of administrative support were mentioned as additional obstacles to the research agenda. In addition, some interviewees perceived a deep divide between academics and administrators at NewU, which put the former in an underprivileged position *vis-à-vis* their colleagues in the administrative units (section 5.2.1).

7.3.2 Addressing the “Institutional Barriers” to Research

Like her colleagues in Reinvigorated Department, Karen noted that NewU had not been as explicitly research-focused in the past, and identified some persistent institutional stumbling blocks to research operations. However, unlike a number of my interviewees – and discussed in the remainder of this subsection – Karen welcomed the institution’s transition towards a stronger research orientation. As such, she sought to address some existing obstacles to research, including seeking to improve workload-related aspects to ensure higher research production in the Department, and wishing to transform the university’s administrative system and arrangements to better accommodate the needs of academics, including those related to research activity.

7.3.2.1 Welcoming the NewU’s Research Orientation

When, during our first interview, I asked Karen to compare her experience at NewU with that of the two – research-intensive – institutions where she had previously worked, she began by acknowledging that at “NewU ... particularly undergraduate teaching is on a much bigger scale.” Nevertheless, she noted that there were “a lot of similarities” between the different universities, but soon pointed out an important difference,

[E]bis place, when I arrived here, I think we were very, embarrassed almost, about calling ourselves a research institution. We were fine in terms of ... you know, the teaching and learning side, but I think there was ... rather a reluctance to say, well, we do research and we’re proud of it.

Karen made a similar comment during one of our later conversations, “under the previous Vice-Chancellor you had to do research under the radar, it was always said, we don’t do research at NewU.” On both occasions, however, Karen also noted that the

situation had changed since the new VC took office. As she put it during our first interview,

with the new VC ... [we are] getting back to what we really are, which is an organization that, yes ... you know, we are a teaching and educational establishment, but we also do have excellent research and ... research that is internationally acclaimed and world-leading, and ... we should boast about that, we shouldn't be embarrassed by it. So I think it's changing here.

To conclude, Karen pointed to her experience of an identity tension in the period before the appointment of the university's new VC, when, under the NewU's previous top leadership, the prevailing organizational discourse regarding research constructed it as an inferior function of the institution (section 5.2.2). In response to this friction, Karen – to whose sense of self research was central, as noted earlier (see e.g. sections 7.1.3.2, 7.2.2.1) – rejected this discourse as a possible identity resource and claimed an identity at odds with the NewU's dominant discursive context. However, Karen's remarks also suggest – in line with her statements earlier in the chapter (section 7.2.2.1) – that with the arrival of a new VC she experienced a better alignment between her sense of self, to which research was essential, and the NewU's recently reshaped research discourses, which placed a high value on research. This suggested that Karen's initial identity tension had begun to resolve.

7.3.2.2 Finding Research Time for the Reinvigorated Department Members

Although Karen was positive about the NewU's recent turn towards research, she also suggested that some adjustments still needed to be made if the university was to achieve its research goals. As Karen acknowledged in our first interview, the NewU's previous "reluctance" to place a higher priority on research "created some tensions." When I asked her about the nature of these tensions, Karen elaborated further on the friction

between teaching and research that she alluded to in her comments presented in the previous subsection,

I think there's that tension in any university about what leads and what follows [research or teaching and learning]. So, you know, what are you known for ... and it's almost as though you've got to make a decision, whether it's one or the other, it somehow can't be both. ... which doesn't seem ... to me ... to make any sense, really. ... and I think that's still the case, you know.

Karen went on to say that this tension arose from the difficulty of balancing research and teaching time, “[i]t’s always that juggling act between ... finding time for staff to undertake meaningful research which brings in income, and also making sure that, you know, students are taught and get a good experience.” Karen continued, describing how at her two previous universities she experienced different ways of ensuring academics had enough time for research, whether through sabbaticals or arrangements that enabled them to engage in research throughout the academic year. At NewU, while Karen did not think “that we’ve got a lot more teaching ... than research-intensive universities have,” she thought “that because of the way that our estate is and our timetables are, we struggle to give meaning for chunks of time for staff to do research.” Nevertheless, Karen seemed optimistic, acknowledging that “that’s changing,” adding, “I think ... we’ll be ... a very different ball game within the next sort of two to five years.”

Nevertheless, at the time of my research – as noted by several interviewees in Reinvigorated Department (section 7.3.1) – what was perceived as insufficient research time continued to be an issue. To address this challenge, Karen was working towards various solutions. During the away-day, where anxieties about workloads and the balance of research and other responsibilities were raised more than once by the Department members, after having explained the VC’s focus on high-performing researchers (section 7.2.2.1), Karen asserted, “we still want to support people who don’t

produce these [three star and four star] publications; the question is how to do that with no money.” Karen also reflected on this tension – and her determination to overcome it – towards the end of the meeting,

we’ve moved the [research] culture for miles since I came here, but the difficult part is that the money [for the Faculty UOA 1 had decreased significantly]. ... the VC supports ... centres of excellence [which did well in the REF 2014], but what I am saying is that I will try to support people who are not on that level of research. We will need to be creative about how to do it, however.

In these circumstances, Karen pointed out on a couple of occasions during the day that staff could undertake research and scholarly activity during the hours allocated for their professional development. In line with the Department research strategy, Karen also noted that it was “a lot about timetabling more creatively” and stated that she would meet with the Department Principal Lecturers to identify if and when staff had time for research. Although Karen acknowledged that this would require a degree of creativity, she seemed to suggest that it was possible to engage in research within existing workloads, citing as an example the success of Different Department in the REF 2014, which was largely based on the research of academics who were also heavily engaged in teaching (see also section 8.3.1).

At the same time, although the above suggests that Karen was committed to finding more research time for most, if not all, of the Reinvigorated Department staff, she also explained that the Department would only be granted additional research time if it could demonstrate that it was producing more research outputs within the existing workload constraints, at least for the time being. Given these limitations – combined with the VC’s exclusive funding support for those producing three star and four star research outputs, and the time pressure the Faculty UOA 1 was under to make a case for inclusion in the next REF and thus for additional university research funding (section 7.2.2.1) – Karen focused on supporting those academics who were likely to

produce research at the required level of quality. For example, during the away-day, Karen explained that research-intensive periods such as writing leaves were possible, but only if she was “convince[d] ... that the writing leave will yield a three star output.” The focus on high-quality research outputs also seemed to be implied in Karen’s description of those eligible for research assistant time. That is, when informing the Reinvigorated Department members about the research assistant they could turn to if they needed help with literature reviews, data analysis, transcription, and grant application review, Karen also clarified that “[n]ot everybody can go to [the research assistant], I manage [their] workload, but if you make a case, [they] can help.”

Furthermore, on a few occasions during my time with her, Karen explained that those department members who were likely to produce high-quality publications would be allocated more time for research – and less for teaching and administrative tasks – compared to those who were not producing outputs at the required level. During our second interview, for example, Karen shared her reasons for the limited allocation of teaching duties to research-active staff, pointing to the time pressures faced by Reinvigorated Department and the Faculty UOA 1,

we’ve got some new staff who potentially can produce some really high-quality stuff, so we’ve gotta be careful that we don’t overwhelm them with teaching ... because we’ve got this sort of window of opportunity until [spring next year] when we’ve gotta convince the Vice-Chancellor that [the Faculty UOA 1] is a goer. So we really need people to be producing stuff.

Later in the interview, Karen reiterated the importance of ensuring that REF-suitable researchers in the Department have sufficient time to produce REF-appropriate research outputs, which was to be supported by increasing the teaching responsibilities of those who were unlikely to meet the REF submission threshold,

what we've got to do is create a group of people who can produce at that three star and four star level. And make sure that they're given enough time to do that ... make sure that those folk who are, if you like, going to have to produce the three [star] and four star outputs have got enough time to do it. ... some of the new staff in Small Programme, I think, will get there, whether they'll get there for [the] REF 2020 or not, I don't know, but certainly I know there will be some staff who won't make it, and they're just gonna have to do more teaching.

Similarly, at a meeting with a senior department member, during which administrative responsibilities of the Reinvigorated Department members were also discussed, Karen shared her plan to “give more admin remit to people who aren't research-active.”

To sum up, Karen rejected the broader discourse that made a strict distinction between research- and teaching-focused universities (section 5.1.4.3) and argued for a more balanced approach between the research and teaching functions of a university. Discursively drawing on her previous experiences at two other, research-intensive, universities that had managed to achieve a better balance between these two aspects, Karen – although she had noticed some recent positive changes at NewU – indicated an identity tension arising from a discrepancy between her viewpoint on this and her previous experiences and the NewU's approach that resulted in limited research time for academics. This suggests that Karen, like many of her staff (section 7.3.1), acknowledged the structural limitations of the university in terms of research time allocation, although in her view this had more to do with “estate” and timetabling issues than with the significantly higher teaching load compared to research-intensive universities.

Combined with the university's exclusive support for academics likely to produce three star and four star publications (section 5.2.2), this resulted in a further identity tension for Karen as HoD of a unit with relatively few staff eligible for such support (section 7.2.2.1). In response, Karen's comments above about the

Reinvigorated Department academics unlikely to be entered in the next REF suggest that Karen drew as a discursive identity resource on a discourse that acknowledged the unit's unfavourable circumstances in terms of staff research time, and a distancing from the VC's REF-focused discursive pressures that Karen willingly embraced at other points (see e.g. section 7.2.2.1, 7.4.2.3). Indeed, in doing so, Karen hinted at a definition of research inclusive of efforts that were not suitable for the NewU's next REF submission (for a detailed examination of this matter, see section 7.4.2.2). Nonetheless, while Karen adopted a managerial identity as HoD of a unit facing significant challenges in achieving the goals of the university's research agenda, she was determined to do what she could to overcome these difficulties by trying to "creatively" find research time for most of the Reinvigorated Department staff, drawing inspiration from the fact that the Different Department academics, who had heavy teaching workloads, were able to make a vital contribution to the success of the Faculty UOA 2 in the REF 2014. However, despite Karen's adaptation of strategies to support research efforts in the face of the Department's unfavourable situation, the latter part of the subsection showed that this scheme was nevertheless to be understood in a context in which Karen simultaneously continued to focus on the increased momentum of the NewU discourses promoted by the VC, which focused on high, REF-inspired research expectations to be met under considerable time pressure, and the university's exclusive support for 'REF-able' academics (section 7.2.2.1). In response to Karen's associated identity tension related to representing a department and UOA with limited research resources and time to prove they were REF-worthy, on the one hand, and Karen's determination to meet the VC's requirements on the other, Karen accepted and seemed to prioritize a REF-informed managerial identity preferred by the university, thus becoming a "performance driver" (Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020). In line with the VC's approach and the broader national discourses (section 5.1.3.2), Karen committed to granting more research time and support to those Reinvigorated Department members who were likely to produce research outputs at the level of quality required for the REF submission – even at the risk that some of the designated researchers might not

necessarily end up producing such publications – while increasing the teaching and administrative responsibilities of the other department members. Thus, while Karen maintained a discourse of research support for everyone in the Department, she also appeared to have taken steps to create a division between staff who were primarily dedicated to research and those who were primarily focused on teaching – even if she did not explicitly speak of this in the NewU’s staff categories terms (section 5.2.2) – arguably suggesting that she employed “antagonistic discursive resources” (Clarke et al., 2009) in forming her managerial identities.

7.3.2.3 *Challenging the NewU’s Administrative Structures*

Like some Reinvigorated Department members (section 7.3.1), Karen acknowledged that the large amount of administrative work for which academics were responsible, the lack of appropriate administrative support and the nature of the relationship between administration and academics had a negative impact on research activity.

To begin with, in our first interview, Karen commented on the large administrative workload that academics were tasked with. She reflected, “we do bureaucracy around quality assurance like it is an industry ... I mean, we spend so much time around that, it is phenomenal.” Moreover, earlier in the same interview, when Karen talked about the obstacles to a stronger research orientation at NewU and compared the situation to that at the universities where she had worked before, Karen cited the “lack of admin support” as one of the biggest barriers to research,

I don't think the blocks here were around the teaching. I think the big stumbling block for NewU was its ... lack of admin support. ... I mean, if I think about the [administrative] support that I had, certainly at [one of Karen's previous universities], compared to here, there's no comparison. I had far better [administrative] support at [a previous university]. And as a result, you know, I was probably able to do an awful lot more. Because I wasn't embroiled in things

like ... having to write stuff for marketing or ... I would go to the finance manager and I would say, I want to do this, how do I do it? And [they] would just say, well, do this, this and this, and that would be that. We've had a bit of that here. But it varies depending on the person.

Indeed, while in one of our conversations Karen spoke of a former administrator whose significant support enabled her to take care of “the bulk of one [course] module,” I also observed Karen complaining on several occasions that, for example, student services and student administration either did not respond promptly to her requests or did not take responsibility for tasks Karen expected of them. In addition, in our first interview, Karen pointed out the problematic relationship between administration and academics and compared NewU to her two previous institutions,

the admin staff [at Karen's two previous universities] ... saw themselves as primarily supporting the academic endeavour. Here it was very much the other way round. It was academics are incompetent, they don't know what they're doing, and so they need these [administrative] departments to sort them out and tell them what they're doing. So ... it was not an easy relationship ... and it still isn't.

However, despite the above frictions, Karen also hinted at some recent improvements with regard to administration, noting, “until we had the new VC ... there were lots of no-can-do things [in terms of administrative work].”

Although Karen acknowledged some improvements, her experiences of various administration-related challenges persisted. Most notably – in addition to the examples mentioned above – Karen’s struggle with the nature of administrative support and the relationship between administration and academics at NewU was on open display during my time with her, particularly in the shortlisting process of candidates for an administrative assistant post to support Karen across her different roles. To begin with, Karen had not seen the submitted application materials before the shortlisting

meeting with the administrative staff who oversaw the hiring process. When the administrative colleagues arrived at her office, Karen seemed uncomfortable with the idea that she would only be presented with verbal summaries of the candidates' profiles. She therefore asked to have a look at the pre-selected applications and told the administrators that she would call them back when she was ready. Once Karen had reviewed the application materials and her colleagues returned, the shortlisting process began. During the discussion about which candidates should be shortlisted, Karen raised concerns throughout the meeting about the background and skills of the applicants she felt were required for the job. In one case, Karen had doubts about interviewing a candidate who had no previous experience in higher education environments, even though the applicant had been pre-selected by the administrators. At another point, Karen emphasized, "the important thing is that the person has experience with research or isn't afraid of it." However, Karen also noted that she had to "infer [candidates'] research experiences" because they were not allowed to require such experience in the job specification. Indeed, Sloan, one of the administrators, clarified that applicants were not given any indication that they were applying for a "research-related function" and that the job descriptions were "generic." In Karen's view, however, "they [the candidates] need to understand what I do," and she later stressed, "it's not about the skills, it's about understanding the context." When Sloan asked Karen about the skills she required of candidates, Karen again shared her view that they should understand the demands created by "research activity." In response, Sloan noted, among other things, "[i]t's not in our gift to give you somebody who's done research ... We can offer you admin support. All they have in their gift is an administrator for you," later adding, "we are limited by the structure."

The day after the shortlisting meeting, Karen reflected on it in a conversation with me, pointing out two main sets of tensions that became apparent in her exchange with the administrators. First, Karen disagreed with the notion that the NewU administration was "managed centrally" and with the view that all administrators should

perform the same types of jobs and have the same sets of skills. While this was true “to a certain extent,” Karen explained, administrators should also be able to “adjust to the specific needs of academics.” Therefore, Karen said, “academics should have a say in the kind of admin support they want.” When I asked Karen whether she could inform the interview questions for shortlisted candidates, she replied that she could, but noted, “you can’t ask things that are too outside of the job descriptions and specifications,” as it would then appear that people had applied for a different job to the one they were being interviewed for. The second tension was related to Karen’s perception that she presented a challenge to administration because “I’m seen as a person dealing with research, and people are afraid of it.” The interview questions Karen wanted to ask candidates – and the responses she wished to hear – were related to this tension. For example, Karen wanted to ask applicants about the characteristics of a university like NewU compared to other organizations, hoping to hear that NewU was a research institution and not just a teaching establishment or that it was no different from other types of organizations.

In conclusion, like some of her colleagues in Reinvigorated Department (section 7.3.1) and beyond (sections 5.2.1, 8.4.2.1), Karen drew on discourses that constructed the NewU’s administrative systems and structure as problematic in a number of ways: from academics’ heavy administrative responsibilities, to the frequent lack of appropriate administrative support, to a difficult relationship between administration and academics in which the former found themselves in a privileged position vis-à-vis the latter. Moreover, although Karen pointed to some improvements since the arrival of the new VC, she presented these as significant barriers to enhancing research efforts at NewU, stating that better administrative arrangements at her previous institutions had enabled her “to do an awful lot more.” At the core of Karen’s grievances seemed to be a persistent identity tension, which resulted from the discrepancy between the meaning Karen attributed to the role of university administration in relation to the function and position of academics like herself – also

drawing on her experiences at other institutions as a discursive identity resource – and the NewU administration’s discourses regarding the functions and relationship between these different groups of university members. In response to this tension, Karen’s remarks during and after the shortlisting process for her administrative assistant show her challenging the notion that administrative appointments were not informed by the needs of academics, which in her case – given the centrality of research and research management and leadership to her identities – was linked to the need for candidates to have research-related experience or be willing to support Karen’s research-related endeavours. The latter was related to Karen’s view of NewU as a research institution (see also section 7.3.2.1), which she suggested created a further friction because the university was not seen in this way by many, hinting at the persistent strength of organizational discourses that emphasized the central place of teaching (section 5.2.1). Thus, the above are examples of Karen’s – arguably largely ineffective – attempts to resolve the two-pronged identity tension in order to claim, first, an identity as an academic and manager in control of the nature of her administrative support and, second, as a research-active academic and manager whose research efforts were appropriately valued by the university administration.

7.4 Shaping the Research Agenda in a Professional Department

In addition to the institution-wide barriers to research identified in the section above, there were several department-specific features that posed challenges to the implementation of a research agenda in Reinvigorated Department. In the first part of this section, I explore how the professional backgrounds of the Department members, their view of what their professional disciplines stood for, and their definitions of research affected their perceptions of the research push. I then shed light on Karen’s responses to these circumstances by presenting how she addressed the challenges to the

research agenda that arose from the particular departmental and disciplinary features, while exploring Karen's discursive identity work in relation to this process.

7.4.1 Research as a Challenge to Who We Are and What We Are About

Although the composition of Reinvigorated Department was changing significantly at the time of my research in terms of staff background and skills, particularly within the Small Programme team (more on this in the continuation of this section), many department members in the two staff groups had professional backgrounds, had largely focused on teaching, and did not have credentials and experience in research. Indeed, as mentioned in chapter 5 (section 5.3.2), only between 25 and 50 per cent of department members had a doctorate at the time of my research. These staff characteristics were highlighted by several interviewees who explained that most of the unit's staff "come from professional backgrounds" (Dawson and a Visionary Department member), many were "practitioners" who "like teaching" and "raising new ... students" (Emerson) and were "brought up to teach" (Sam), "very few" had doctorates (Dawson), "a lot of them ... don't have PhDs, have no background in writing, they've never published ... or only published very minimally" (Sam), "a number of staff [in Big Course] ... are not really research active" (Robbie) and "by and large, very few of [the Big Course and Small Programme team members] have a significant research interest" (Emerson).

Given the background of most Reinvigorated Department members – combined with additional tensions they experienced in relation to the research push, which I discuss elsewhere in this chapter – it was perhaps unsurprising that some department members expressed uneasiness about the higher research expectations or spoke of their unwillingness to engage more fully with the research agenda. For example, Sam spoke of staff "get[ting] quite upset about it [the research pressure]" and, given the lack of research experience of many department members, this pressure

resulted in “pleasing to [their] worst fears and inadequacies.” Moreover, several interviewees expressed their unwillingness to enhance their research profile, for example by pursuing a doctorate or producing research outputs that met the NewU’s REF quality threshold. For instance, one Reinvigorated Department member shared that although they felt “pressure” to strengthen their research profile, they did not “feel an emotional desire to commit more” and were unwilling to focus on this aspect at the time due to time constraints. Another interviewee also seemed unwilling to engage in research to a greater extent – partly due to their misgivings about the REF – and told me during our interview, “I could do, I shall do a bit more myself. [But] I’m not going to do as much.” Yet another department member suggested that they were not developing REF-suitable publications at the time, which led them to “[feel] an acute pressure, I suppose, between the REF outputs and the kind of stuff we’re doing at the minute.” One research participant, while acknowledging the pressure to produce three star outputs, indicated that they were not willing to make significant efforts to achieve this.

The research push and associated uneasiness were exacerbated by the recent portfolio changes and the resulting staff changes in Small Programme. As mentioned at the beginning of section 7.1, the change involved the establishment of a master’s course, which – among other aspects – was also associated with a stronger focus on the research component of training and required the programme’s teaching staff to be more research-active. A few of my interviewees pointed out that some team members had expressed their intention to further develop their profile as this agenda emerged, but that their progress was seen as insufficient. A senior NewU manager commented, “how could they teach at a master’s level if they didn’t even have a master’s for themselves? And they weren’t research-active.” This indicates that the new Small Programme appointments, as Robbie put it, were “expected much more to have a research background.” Indeed, one interviewee described the new staff as “committed to research in their own right.” However, this change in staff was met with a mixed

response. On the one hand, Robbie, for example, remarked in relation to the new hires being “comfortable with” the research agenda, “I suppose that’s all to the good.” Another Reinvigorated Department member commented that the new appointments “will change the culture, will influence others ... to be more productive with research.” Similarly, while Jessie expressed some doubt that the Small Programme team members would deliver on the research agenda, they noted that the new, “research-active” appointments could “[change] the balance” and thus increase the team’s research activity overall. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier (section 7.1.1), these changes also triggered some concerns among staff. For one research participant, the layoffs led to a fear of losing their job if they did not to become more research-active. Robbie was also uncomfortable with the redundancies and shared that in their view,

all the staff who were made redundant were all making very valid contributions to the life of the university. And just because they weren't prodigious researchers didn't ... mean that ... research could not carry on in the hands of others ... I wait and see whether their replacements will add anything significant ...

The above quote from Robbie – and the aforementioned reflections of my interviewees on the predominantly professional rather than research backgrounds of the Reinvigorated Department members – suggest that one of the tensions arising from the research push related to the question of whether and what role research should play in the professional disciplines homed by the Department. This tension was evident in the Department research strategy, the first page of which focused on why a research strategy was needed in the first place. Indeed, the document acknowledged that Reinvigorated Department could be seen as predominantly focusing on “practice” rather than research. Some of my interviewees seemed to similarly point to an inherent connection between the nature of these professional disciplines and the lack of research orientation among the Department members. A Visionary Department academic commented that “by its [the discipline’s] very nature ... research wasn’t really in their

remit.” Dawson also suggested that the disciplines homed by the Department did not have as much “of a research approach than [some] others do.” In terms of the Big Course team and the field of work the programme represented, Robbie felt it was understandable that the staff’s “calling is in course delivery, course management, professional development.” While they thought “it’s a good idea” to “publish” about the work staff do, they added, “I don’t think that is what’s necessarily to validate [it].”

On the other hand, however, the Department research strategy also posited that the basis of practice, which was at the heart of the work of many Reinvigorated Department members, rested not only on “experience” but also on “a knowledge base.” Consequently, the document stated, “we are bound to get involved in the production and evaluation of that knowledge base.” Indeed, the nature of the recent Small Programme realignment seemed consistent with such a view, and my interviewees who commented on this issue acknowledged the importance of this aspect. One interviewee said, “I think that [the move towards research] is the right way to go, professionally.” Another Reinvigorated Department member – although they also expressed some reservations about this at other points – similarly reflected,

I feel it’s appropriate ... because [the profession represented by Small Programme] ... is a profession which, by and large ... [silence] it’s been quite resistant to the modes of thinking which underpin research ... there has been, nationally, quite a big move to enhance the sort of research capacity of [the profession]. ... so locally, I think it’s actually quite a good thing that we do have people who are more research-active ...

Yet another research participant also supported such a definition of the profession, but noted that the Small Programme team still lacked real commitment to this approach, “it [the profession represented by Small Programme] finds it still hard to take those [theory and research methods] seriously somehow. ... And I think a large part of [the] team is still like that.”

In this context, several interviewees suggested that if Reinvigorated Department was to become more research-oriented, the nature of the departmental research efforts should be consistent with the background of the staff and the basic premises of the professional disciplines that the Department was home to. However, this led to further tensions as such a view of research was largely perceived as contradictory to the prevailing, REF-informed definitions of research. As Sidney noted, there was “a clash between an instrumental ... rationality of managerialism and the more humanistic sensibility of the actual discipline base we’re working in.” Demonstrating this tension, the Department research strategy and several of my interviewees called first for an inclusive definition of research and second for a focus on research that addresses concrete social issues. To start with the first point, as outlined in the Department research strategy – which was informed by the model presented in the Visionary Department research strategy (section 6.3.2) – research in Reinvigorated Department was to be a rather broadly defined, “truly inclusive” endeavour. That is, departmental research was to include activities that did not typically fall into the category of ‘traditional’ academic research. This reflected Sam’s opinion that for department members who were not primarily responsible for research, “the emphasis ... should be on you staying current, attending conferences, networking, maybe disseminating something about your own practice, but not on being, you know, a REF-able researcher,” that is efforts that Sam seemed to equate with “scholarly activity” at other points in our interview. A Reinvigorated Department academic echoed this sentiment, saying that “staff are to be encouraged to develop research activities by whatever means ... at their disposal” and was “not entirely comfortable with the way in which the whole thing is being driven by [the REF] and ... this expectation that we’re all supposed to generate three star outputs.” They continued, “I think ... it’s unrealistic and it’s unnecessary.” Moreover, the Department research strategy called for research committed to “mak[ing] a difference” as a way to translate the Department members’ motivation “to ‘shape lives and society’.” Mirroring this, Robbie expressed support for various forms of “research for public benefit.” They went on to share their experience

with this type of research, “I was undertaking some extremely valuable research activity, but it never generated outputs that could be returned to the REF.” However, they added, “I feel that research ... does not need to be validated in that way.” One research participant expressed doubts about the way research was defined and measured in the UK research environment, stating, “there’s more to research than [the] Research Excellence Framework is.” While they argued that “the drivers [of research] will be production of published papers ... in international journals,” they later explained, “people don’t go into [one of the professions represented by Reinvigorated Department] in order to publish stuff, they might go into [that profession] to do useful research, but they want to see it applied.” Despite these misgivings about prevailing approaches to defining and measuring research, however, this interviewee seemed relatively positive about the research impact agenda, even as they called for a greater focus on the latter. Robbie similarly acknowledged, “the emphasis on impact is a good one.”

To summarize, the interviews with the Reinvigorated Department members revealed that in addition to the previously described discourses relating to the NewU’s traditional teaching orientation and workload issues that resulted in academics’ low research times (section 7.3.1), another set of dominant departmental and discipline-related discourses clashed with university-promoted discourses that elevated the status of research and emphasized the increased, REF-focused research expectations (section 5.2.2). Although the above paints a mixed discursive picture, with a number of my interviewees acknowledging both the appropriateness and the challenges of these recently introduced research discourses, overall, departmental discourses that opposed the recently introduced research-related developments seemed to dominate. For one thing, in line with the existing research on this topic (section 5.1.4.3), the management-promoted research discourses were perceived by several of my interviewees to be at odds with the professional backgrounds of many Reinvigorated Department staff and their lack of research experience and credentials. This partly affected how the

Department members reacted to the research pressure and indicated the prominence of a departmental discourse of uneasiness and unwillingness to respond to this in any significant way. Furthermore, an increased research focus posed a challenge to the prevailing discourses regarding the professional disciplines homed by Reinvigorated Department, as well as the lesser place of research compared to practice and training in these disciplinary discourses. As demonstrated in my interviewees' reflections on the Small Programme realignment – which related in part to increasing the Department's research capacities – and the broader observations made in relation to their professional disciplines, the emphasis on research, and in particular REF-informed expectations, remained contested in the context of these professional fields, in line with the broader national discourse on this issue (section 5.1.3.2). Indeed, some of my interviewees felt that a discourse that promoted research could only gain ground in the unit if it was consistent with the background of the staff and the values of the Department's professional disciplines. That is, research would need to be defined firstly as an enterprise that was inclusive of the broader scholarly endeavours and not just focused on REF-suitable efforts, which also seemed to be recognized in the NewU strategic plan (section 5.2.2), and secondly research would need to be focused on benefitting the society. However, this was perceived – despite the university's recognition of the importance of scholarly activity, and with the possible exception of the increased emphasis on impact in the REF (section 5.1.3) – to be largely inconsistent with the dominant REF-informed research discourses promoted by NewU and the university's three star quality threshold for the REF submission.

7.4.2 Redefining the Discipline and the Role of Research

Karen acknowledged many of the misgivings that the research push raised among the Reinvigorated Department members, but she remained determined to do everything in her power to raise the unit's research profile. The following subsections describe Karen's take on reshaping the Small Programme team and the professional discipline it

represented; demonstrate her emphasis on meeting the REF-inspired research requirements, even if this sometimes ran counter to her staff's calls for an inclusive and socially impactful research agenda; and discuss Karen's own research endeavours which, discursively in part at odds with her approach to departmental research efforts, were often designed to help specific populations.

7.4.2.1 Raising the Research Profile, Re-examining a Professional Discipline

Like the members of Reinvigorated Department interviewed, Karen acknowledged the lack of research experience and limited research activity of her staff. In our second interview, Karen noted that “many” Reinvigorated Department members “aren’t research-active,” remarking shortly thereafter that “a lot of the Big Course staff” would “never go into [the] REF 2020.” Furthermore, on several occasions during my time with her, Karen pointed out performance issues with some of the research-active members who she felt should have engaged in research activities at a higher level than they had. In particular, Karen thought that, among other things, they should have focused on producing research outputs that met the standards set for the REF submission – three star and four star publications – or applied for more substantial amounts of research funding. These departmental circumstances led Karen to assess at the away-day, “before we were joined by new members of staff [in the Small Programme team]” only a small number of department members had produced publications that could be assessed two star or more.

However, Karen's latter comment also indicated that the unsatisfactory state of research in Reinvigorated Department was to be at least partially alleviated by several new appointments to replace recently laid-off Small Programme staff. The change in the staff profile of the Small Programme team members was related to the (potential) changes in the national directions for training the new generations of professionals in the field (see the beginning of section 7.1). This included, among other things, a shift

towards a greater emphasis on provision at master's level and a stronger role for research in the discipline. However, the circumstances in Small Programme had not previously been conducive to such a transition. Karen explained in our second interview, "we had a number of staff in the Department who didn't have an MA [a master's degree]." To address these inadequacies, the new hires

had to have an MA [a master's degree] ... or be able to achieve it within a ... certain amount of time. They had to have ... up-to-date knowledge of the change in [the professional discipline] and what was happening to the profession, research-active, so much more engaged with the whole kind of scholarly activity around [the professional discipline], and a track record of CPD [continuous professional development].

The above suggests that the layoffs were informed by the perceived weaknesses in the former staff's profiles and that – unlike them – their replacements, as mentioned earlier (section 7.3.2.2), could "potentially ... produce some really high-quality stuff [research outputs]."

In a broader sense, the changes in staff profiles described above also point to Karen's perception of the need to reorient the professional discipline represented by Small Programme. As mentioned earlier, on the one hand, this was related to changing requirements nationally and to the calls at the national level for professionals in the field to embrace the input of research in related academic fields and its principles more fully in their professional practice. Signalling her commitment to such a redefinition of the profession during my time with her, Karen was planning a public lecture by a renowned figure who also promoted such a view, and, as I heard her discuss on a couple of occasions, she was looking for ways to strengthen the research-informed teaching and research aspects of the training provided by Small Programme. However, such an approach to the professional discipline was not only related to recent national debates and subsequent changes in the Department, but also seemed to be an approach that

Karen herself had practiced since her early days in the profession. As she put it during our first interview,

I never thought of myself as just being somebody who [practiced the profession] without thinking about collecting data, collecting information. And I think the reason for that was because, as a result of my degree [in another academic discipline] I completed quite a large [research] project ... where ... I worked as a sort of [research] assistant ...

In the same interview, Karen shared that she found it difficult to “separate” her work as a researcher, practitioner and educator, suggesting that her work as a practitioner and researcher were inherently intertwined, “I think it would be artificial to try and separate those things out. Because I don’t think I could.” Karen went on to explain that, much like research had always been an inherent part of her practice, her “practitioner perspective” remained a part of the research she conducted, “because the research I do, I still work with people who are receiving services. So in a sense, I still see things from a practitioner perspective.”

In conclusion, as already indicated (section 7.2.2.1) and not unlike her department colleagues (sections 7.2.1, 7.4.1), Karen acknowledged the departmental discourse of limited research in her unit and pointed out her staff’s research performance issues, including by drawing on REF-defined measures of research quality. This again (see e.g. section 7.2.2.1) signalled the importance of the REF discourses to Karen’s managerial identities as the Reinvigorated Department HoD. However, as mentioned earlier (section 7.2.2.1), this resulted in an identity tension for Karen due to the contradiction between the unfavourable departmental circumstances and Karen’s determination to enhance the Department’s research profile. One organizational change that Karen saw as contributing to addressing this tension was the Small Programme realignment, which included the appointment of new, research-active staff. To explain the rationale for this change, Karen drew on a national discourse related to the further

professionalization and academization of the professional discipline in question. This pointed to Karen's attempts to resolve another identity tension, related to the discrepancy between the dominant departmental discourses relating to the professional discipline, in which research was seen as tangential to the purpose of the profession, and the relevance of the nationally promoted disciplinary discourse, which assigned a more prominent role to research in the profession, to Karen's sense of managerial self as the Department HoD. Moreover, the latter disciplinary discourse was the one Karen had embraced throughout her career as a professional working in the field. That is, Karen had always viewed research and practice as complementary, which she explained by drawing on her educational background as a discursive identity resource. However, despite Karen's efforts to improve the alignment between her sense of self as HoD and her departmental discursive environment, Karen's undertaking seemed to remain a work in progress at the time of my research, as evidenced by the mixed reactions to these developments from the Reinvigorated Department members interviewed (section 7.4.1).

7.4.2.2 A "Truly Inclusive" Research Agenda?

Although Karen strongly promoted the research push in Reinvigorated Department, the previous subsection also indicates that she acknowledged the departmental circumstances that limited the unit's research progress, including in relation to the professional background of the staff and their limited research experience. This led Karen to attempt to mitigate the frictions resulting from this discrepancy, including by working to find research time for the Department staff who were unlikely to produce three star and four star outputs, as mentioned earlier in this chapter (section 7.3.2.2), and employing an inclusive definition of research that was consistent with the approach set out in the Department research strategy, as detailed in the remainder of this subsection. For example, when Karen noted in our second interview that "a lot of the Big Course staff" would "never go into [the] REF 2020," she added, "[s]o the best I can

do is get them to be scholarly active, I suppose.” In line with this notion of research and scholarly activity, Karen stated early in the research-related part of the away-day that “research can be many things.” Following the Department research strategy, authored by the Department Research Lead, she went on to say that research was to include activities that were not traditionally considered academic research. In the context of Reinvigorated Department, Karen explained, research would also encompass continuous professional development, which may include reading, attending conferences, and working with a mentor; outputs such as internally or externally presented conference papers and various non-peer-reviewed publications, including textbook chapters and articles in professional journals; and the Department members applying for internal funding for student research projects. Thus, although Karen later noted – after talking more about the research plan for the Department – that they “can’t get away from this agenda,” she spoke of the “agenda” with reference to an inclusive definition of research, continuing, “gone are the days when it was okay not to have high degrees, not to be ... members [of a scheme awarding professional teaching qualifications],” they had to demonstrate that they were “scholarly active.”

However, although Karen presented this inclusive notion of research, there were a few significant differences between the way it was introduced in the Department research strategy document and the way Karen spoke about it at the away-day. In the research strategy – using the graphics from the Visionary Department research strategy (section 6.3.2) – the different possible research and scholarly outputs were presented in concentric circles and did not include references to the quality signifiers associated with the REF (one, two, three or four star outputs). Indeed, the research strategy seemed to push the departmental REF ambitions in the background, as evidenced by the use of phrases such as “a good research profile ... *may even* position us well for [the] REF 2020” (emphasis added). However, during Karen’s away-day presentation, the different ‘levels’ of research were presented in the form of a pyramid – with the bottom of the pyramid representing endeavours across the broader spectrum of research and scholarly

activity, and the top referring to more ‘traditional’ academic research outputs – and some REF-informed measures of quality were mentioned in relation to the different parts of the pyramid. Whether intentional or not, while such a visualization of research efforts was inclusive of the different types of research and scholarly activity and gave the impression that the research outputs located in the lower part of the pyramid accounted for much of the departmental research, it also conveyed a sense of hierarchy and superiority of the research outputs placed at the top of the pyramid, that is those REF-appropriate, rated at “three star and above.”

The combination of discourses of inclusivity and those that constructed REF-suitable publications as being ‘above’ other types of research activity could be observed at other points during the away-day (see also the following subsection). In one instance, while Karen acknowledged that it was “not expected that everybody will go into [the] REF 2020,” she also explained to her staff that “what happened in [the] REF 2014 was that the exercise was selective,” whereas “at the moment we don’t know, but there’s a bit more than a rumour that [the] REF 2020 will not be selective, which means that everybody will be included” (section 5.1.3.1, footnote 10). She went on to describe the possible consequences of such a move, stating, “the more people you have at the lower part of research, the more it will pull down [the] REF results, and this will be reflected in league tables.” Nevertheless, shortly afterwards Karen seemed to encourage her staff by telling them, “you should know what [a] two star [publication] means, it’s not bad, it’s internationally recognized,” adding, “that’s absolutely fine.”²⁶ A little later, she further reassured them, “don’t worry if your work will never be world-leading, that’s

²⁶ Here Karen constructed publications of “two star” quality as appropriate outputs, which was probably related to the Faculty’s goal – set out in its research plan – to increase the number of publications of two star or higher quality.

fine.” Shortly afterwards, however, Karen also brought up the NewU-required three star average, apparently conveying another mixed message.

To sum up, the data presented in this subsection again (see also sections 7.2.2.1, 7.4.2.1) point to Karen’s experience of an identity tension arising from the discrepancy between departmental discourses unfavourable to advancing a research agenda and the centrality of that agenda to Karen’s managerial identities, which was reinforced by the REF-informed university discourses that drove the institution-wide research strategy. In an attempt to overcome this tension and construct a managerial identity that represented both her department colleagues’ circumstances as well as her own determination to raise the unit’s research profile and the NewU’s research agenda, Karen drew on “antagonistic discursive resources” (Clarke et al., 2009), similar to her approach to finding research time for her staff described earlier (section 7.3.2.2). During the Reinvigorated Department’s away-day, Karen, on the one hand, employed a discourse that constructed research as an endeavour that was inclusive of scholarship – in line with the Department research strategy and the university’s more recent strategic plan, which gave a place to scholarly efforts (section 5.2.2), thus challenging commonly accepted discourses of what research stood for (section 5.1.3) – and spoke of two star publications as appropriate outputs, possibly implicitly invoking the goals set out in the Faculty research plan. At the same time, however, Karen employed REF quality signifiers in her visual and discursive explanations, referring to “league tables,” the rules of the REF and the NewU-determined threshold for REF-suitable publications. In doing so, Karen seemed to suggest that while the different types of research and scholarly activity she spoke of were considered research, they were not all of equal value. Thus, as in the examples relating to Karen’s management of her staff’s research time (section 7.3.2.2), REF-inspired discourses promoted by NewU seemed to prevail over the Reinvigorated Department’s discursive context as a source of Karen’s sense of managerial self (see also the next subsection).

7.4.2.3 *Research for the Purposes of the REF or for the Good of Society?*

The importance Karen attached to research activities that potentially resulted in REF-appropriate, three star and four star outcomes – and in particular to research publications – also brought her into partial conflict with the emphasis that the Department research strategy, and some of my interviewees, placed on research that was designed to “make a difference.” This tension was evident in some of her exchanges with staff about impact and applied research during the away-day. For example, when a staff member asked Karen a question about impact, Karen explained that it was relevant for the purposes of impact case studies for the REF submission, but also noted, “we’re okay when it comes to impact case studies.” She added that they knew they had two case studies that were rated three star and above in the REF 2014 and that they were already developing more case studies in case that was necessary for the REF 2020. However, Karen also remarked,

that’s [impact] not the issue; the issue is about convincing the VC about the number of people who are producing and who are producing the right outputs. We’re [also] fine with PGR [postgraduate research student] numbers, the biggest problem is output.

As the conversation continued to touch upon determining the focus of research efforts, Willie raised the question of whether research was primarily designed to address societal needs. Karen responded by saying, “we’ve already rehearsed that exercise, it has to be research that fits [the] REF.” When Willie remarked, “maybe in the long term we should have a word on what research is,” adding, “it’s about public good as well,” Karen replied,

it's fine to do this kind of research, but it won't give you two star publications.²⁷ We may decide that that's what we want to say to the VC but then the staff that are producing [higher quality research outputs] might go away and PGRs [postgraduate research students] will not want to come to such a university. We need to be careful what message we send out; our goal is to try to get to the top of the pyramid, [and] the first stage is about how to get the volume of research.

However, Karen's focus on impact predominantly in terms of what was needed for the REF 2020 – that is given that Reinvigorated Department primarily needed to increase the volume and quality of research outputs to meet the VC's requirements for further research support, impact was not constructed by her as a priority – appeared to be at least partially discursively at odds with Karen's own research approaches. While Karen, as illustrated earlier (section 7.2.2.2), was determined to produce research outputs that met the NewU's REF 2020 three star threshold, much of Karen's research was, at least in part, designed to improve the lives of the populations under study. That is, for Karen, 'real' societal impact and high-quality research outputs seemed to be complementary rather than at odds with each other. Moreover, Karen's interest in the specific populations she had focused on throughout her career seemed to be deeply personal in nature and, as she explained in her inaugural lecture, was crucially influenced by her personal experiences. Furthermore, as she described in our first interview, when planning her career path, Karen was not only determined to help these populations, but also wanted to achieve this goal in an inclusive way. That is, she wanted "to do things ... with people" and not "to people." In fact, on several occasions during my time with

²⁷ Here Karen seemed to construct "two star publications" as a minimum required research output quality level. Similar to the explanation in the previous footnote (section 7.4.2.2), this could have been related to the Faculty's goal – set out in its research plan – to increase the number of publications of two star or higher quality, but also to the previously mentioned REF rule (section 5.1.3.1), according to which impact case studies were only eligible for assessment if they were based on outputs of at least two star quality (HEFCE et al., 2011).

her, I was able to observe Karen planning and reflecting on research approaches that combined a determination to help specific populations with the active participation of research participants in the process of research and service improvement, for example, in planning her research data collection or future research projects and funding applications. Karen's practice of this kind was perhaps most strikingly demonstrated at her inaugural lecture, where she presented her pioneering contributions to this approach as a way of, among other things, improving services for the selected populations. Moreover, Karen's research approaches seemed to spill over into relationships with some of her research participants. Karen seemed genuinely moved when, at the end of the inaugural lecture, she read a poem she had written to thank those who had participated in her research over the years. In a conversation with me and a senior NewU manager after the lecture, Karen also expressed that it meant "a lot" to her that some of her research participants had attended the event.

To summarize, Karen's exchanges with her staff, described early in this subsection, pointed to her experience of an identity tension that arose from the discrepancy between the dominant departmental discourse described earlier, which constructed research as an endeavour primarily focused on creating positive social impact (section 7.4.1), and the centrality of the VC-promoted, REF-centric discourse that assigned considerable importance to publications of three star and four star quality to Karen's sense of managerial self as an HoD. While Karen's responses to similar identity tensions presented in earlier subsections pointed to Karen's attempts to construct a managerial identity that was simultaneously informed by "antagonistic discursive resources" (Clarke et al., 2009; sections 7.3.2.2, 7.4.2.2), in the above examples, Karen more clearly adopted a managerial identity as the Reinvigorated Department HoD to which REF-related requirements for the Department – that is increasing publication production overall, and in particular the production of three star and four star publications – were central, based on the VC's time-sensitive expectations; once again constructing herself as an HoD not unlike Gjerde and Alvesson's (2020)

“performance drivers.” Indeed, Karen suggested that no additional impact case studies were needed for the REF 2020, arguably diminishing the importance of the Department staff’s research for this purpose, and further rejecting the notion of departmental research addressing societal needs if it did not lead to outputs rated at least two star.

Notably, in contrast to Karen’s attitude towards departmental research endeavours, Karen’s own research projects – although aimed at resulting in outputs at the required three star average (section 7.2.2.2) – often sought to improve the lives of selected populations, indicating the importance of research for societal benefit as a discursive resource in Karen’s construction of an identity as researcher. Furthermore, Karen explained that her choice of study populations was strongly influenced by her personal experiences. Moreover, her methodology – inclusive of these populations – also represented a significant discursive identity source for Karen as a professional working in this field. Consequently, although I observed Karen being very supportive and empathetic towards her staff members and engaging in relaxed, informal conversations with her colleagues on several occasions, Karen’s attitude towards her research participants, and the inaugural lecture in particular, represented a distinct experience in terms of the extent of Karen’s openness towards others compared to how I perceived her interactions as an HoD and how Karen herself spoke about her attitude towards her staff (sections 7.1.3.1, 7.1.3.3). Such an approach to her research and the populations studied suggests that Karen constructed very different identities – drawing on mismatched discursive identity resources – in relation to the different roles she occupied (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003), in this case as an HoD versus a Professor working in a particular disciplinary area. This points to another example of Karen making a clear distinction between her multiple identities rather than seeking coherence between them (see also section 7.1.3.3), once again challenging the common finding that identity work often involves individuals seeking congruence between their different identities (section 3.4.1). Significantly, my analytical observations were echoed by an attendee of Karen’s inaugural lecture who reflected,

Karen's research methodology and her, like I thought her professorial talk was just lovely, and I loved the way she was so open and present in the room, but she isn't that way as a manager. And I think it's quite interesting that her research personality and probably her personal identity are very different ... from her managerial identity, to my mind. Certainly.

By making a distinction between her multiple identities, Karen seemed to prevent an identity tension that one could expect to arise from her use of dissimilar discursive identity resources regarding research for societal benefit and relationships with those around her in her various roles.

7.5 Towards Better Research Support and Structures

Several of the discourses presented earlier in this chapter – particularly those that acknowledge the various constraints on research (sections 7.3.1, 7.4.1) – linked to a departmental discourse of inadequate research support and structures in Reinvigorated Department. In the following subsections, I first demonstrate the Department members' calls for improving this support at the individual and group levels. I continue with Karen's response to this and related discourses, highlighting the identity tensions she experienced and her discursive identity work as she sought to ensure better research support and robust research structures in the unit.

7.5.1 Calling for More Research Support

During my time at Reinvigorated Department, while insufficient research time was constructed by many of my interviewees as one of the key barriers to research (section 7.3.1), the need for other forms of research support and improved research structures that addressed some of the developmental needs of staff and related to aspects of the departmental research culture more broadly was also raised by the unit's members.

During the away-day, for example, in a ‘speed dating’ exercise intended for staff to share their research interests and activities with each other, these were not the only topics raised. Following the exercise, the three academics tasked with reporting on the conversations mentioned hearing about anxieties, needs and support relating to research activities. Some department members, they reported, spoke of wanting to feel enabled to engage in research, and a need for research mentorship and collaborative research work, among other things. On a related note, Emerson assessed in our interview, “I don’t think there’s enough recognition that people need to develop quite systematically and in a step-wise fashion.”

The Reinvigorated Department research strategy appeared to be designed in part to address the above issues. In addition to a commitment to give research a higher priority in staff workloads (section 7.3.1), the document also planned for the establishment of research support structures at both individual and group levels, in line with faculty-wide directions. In terms of individual research support, the Department research strategy envisaged the introduction of a research mentoring scheme whereby all department members would be assigned a research mentor to support them in achieving their “research objectives.” As described in additional detail later in this section, the research mentorship scheme was being launched at the time of my fieldwork, but one of my interviewees pointed out that they were already running into some issues. This research participant shared that they were assigned as a mentor, but that some of their mentees were hesitant to meet. They themselves, on the other hand, had arranged to meet with their mentor. Moreover, one interviewee acknowledged another source of individual-level research support, namely the help they received from Karen herself. The Reinvigorated Department member described how Karen reviewed “all sorts of things” for them, “which aren’t necessary her job to do, really, you know, just because she says she’s happy to read things and comment on them.”

Like the above-mentioned individual research mentorship scheme, which was being introduced at the time of my fieldwork, the earlier establishment of departmental research groups as a form of research support intended to operate at the “cultural” rather than individual level appeared to have limited success, at least for the time being. For example, while the research strategy presented the first step of the launch of departmental research groups, which were to “provide mutual support” and encourage collaborative research, the document also acknowledged that they were “fairly ill-defined” at that point. One interviewee spoke about the issues with research groups,

I don't think [research groups] really worked that well, I think it's because they were rather amorphous, they were a bit lacking in focus, they tended to be kind of support groups for those who were interested in going along ...

They hoped, therefore, that Reinvigorated Department would “develop more focused research interest groups that can actually gel in terms of generating research projects. ... and where staff can actually be supportive of one another in the conduct of research.”

Related to the above, these interviewees also commented more generally on the limited collaborative and collegial research culture in Reinvigorated Department. For example, one of them shared their perception that most department members “seem to do things very individually, which I think is a bit of a shame.” Another research participant expressed a similar view, “I would like to see a greater sense of kind of collegiality.” While acknowledging that such collegiality was fostered to some extent within the Department’s two teaching teams, they wished “to see that developing around research as well, so that you would get teams working on particular research projects, and I think that would make research feel a lot less intimidating for people.”

In conclusion, in addition to the barriers to research mentioned earlier in this chapter, several Reinvigorated Department members identified issues with regard to

research support in the Department. While one interviewee spoke positively about the individual research support they had received from Karen, other discourses employed by some of my research participants in the unit pointed to a lack of sufficient research support, issues with the existing research structures intended to offer such support, and a lack of collaborative and collegial research practices in Reinvigorated Department.

7.5.2 Putting in Place the Needed Research Support and Structures

As will be shown in the remainder of this chapter, at the time of my research Karen was – in addition to protecting existing departmental research resources (section 7.2.2.1), committing to creating research time for her department colleagues (section 7.3.2.2), and appointing research-active staff (sections 7.4.2.1) – seeking to strengthen the Reinvigorated Department’s research support and structures in a few other ways. In the following subsections, I first examine Karen’s plans for improving departmental research support and structures at the individual and group levels, acknowledging the issues previously identified by the Department staff. I then shed light on the additional frictions Karen experienced in implementing these research arrangements due to the perceived inadequacies of the departmental research leadership.

7.5.2.1 Better Research Support – in Exchange for Increased Research Expectations

Given the aforementioned staff anxiety about research, limited research resources, and the simultaneous need to increase the quantity and quality of the Reinvigorated Department’s research outputs (section 7.2.2.1), Karen acknowledged the need for enhanced research support and more robust research structures, and envisioned multiple ways to provide better research support to her staff. As noted in the previous subsection, at the time of my fieldwork, Reinvigorated Department was in the process of developing research support arrangements at individual and group levels to increase and improve the unit’s research outputs.

In terms of research support at the individual level, as indicated in the subsection above, each member of staff in the Department was assigned a research mentor. During the away-day, Karen explained that each mentor was to spend fifteen hours a year mentoring their mentee, which would count as research and scholarly activity. Shortly after mentioning the mentorship scheme, Karen encouraged staff to “have conversations with mentors” about which journals to consider for their potential publications. She assured them that “this is where the more experienced of us in the room can help” to identify if and how it would be possible to turn a publication into a three star output. In addition to the introduction of the department-wide research mentorship arrangements and Karen’s participation in the scheme as a mentor to several department members, I was also able to observe first-hand during my fieldwork – in line with an interviewee’s earlier remark (section 7.5.1) – how Karen offered to support the research efforts of a staff member other than her mentees. For example, in an objective setting meeting with a department member – who expressed a need for support and further skill development but was eager to increase their research outputs – Karen offered to review a paper before they submitted it to a journal. In addition, Karen thought of other ways to support this academic, including offering to review the promotion criteria with them to eventually plan their potential promotion based on their research activity.

With respect to research support at the group level, the unit had envisaged several research groups, as mentioned earlier (section 7.5.1). During the away-day, Karen explained in an exchange with a staff member what she thought the purpose of these groupings was. She suggested that the research groups were to provide “opportunities for support” and “encourage collaboration,” but also noted that the groups were to enable a “more strategic” approach to research in the Department. This was particularly important because, as Karen signalled on several occasions during my time with her, Reinvigorated Department had not previously managed to establish robust research structures. As Karen explained during a meeting with a newly appointed

staff member, there used to be “departmental research and scholarship meetings” but these were “very generic” and, as Karen assessed during the departmental away-day, had not “delivered in terms of [research] production.” In the same breath, Karen acknowledged that the Department had made “an attempt” to set up research groups, but she added, “we didn’t come very far because we then had the department divided and people leaving into Visionary Department.” This led to the Department being, as Karen described it in a meeting with another new staff member, “in a different frame than we were a year ago when we were planning [the three existing research groups].” As a result, Karen explained in our second interview, “[at the away-day] we’re gonna relook at the research groups ... do we want the same ones, do we want different ones, and how are we gonna make sure that they work.”

As planned, Karen announced at the beginning of the away-day that “by the end of the day” the goal was to “re-launch the research groups” and to set up “actions” for each research grouping. During the research-related part of the meeting, after an introduction and an initial discussion between Karen and her staff about what was expected from Reinvigorated Department in terms of research, the staff members engaged in the ‘speed dating’ exercise mentioned earlier. As a result, a list of identified research areas was drawn up, and the Department members were then asked to select those to which they felt affiliated. An open discussion followed, the aim of which was to shape the future research structures within the Department and, in particular, the research groups based on the research interests of the unit members. However, this process was marked by numerous challenges, a selection of which I describe below.

The discussion about the research groups began with Karen noting that there were two main research areas emerging, and shortly afterwards observing that there was an additional “mixed group.” A conversation ensued between Karen and her staff focusing on the members of this “mixed group,” with the recognition that not everyone would fit into the main emerging research areas of Reinvigorated Department. When

Karen asked meeting participants for ideas on how to address this situation, a number of department members expressed concern. For example, to mention the view of a couple of staff members, Grey questioned whether the research groups were the best possible structure and at one point suggested a “looser” arrangement. Willie noted that some department members “don’t fit in[to]” the two main research groups identified, so the Department could set up a structure that would allow them to do so, and later suggested a possible third group. In response to such views from the Department members, Karen acknowledged the issues and noted that they were not in the same position as the year before when they were able to organize the research groups around three clearly defined research areas. However, she had earlier also said that there was “no sense” in staff trying to “fit” into groups they “don’t fit in” and went on to explain that group members would need to agree on research foci and develop action plans.

By the end of the discussion, it seemed to be agreed that two main research groups would be formed, in addition to two smaller groupings with less clearly defined research foci, which would meet on a more “ad hoc” basis. With this proposal, Karen appeared to be trying to solve three issues at once: while Karen was looking for a way to increase the quantity and quality of the Department’s research outputs, she expected that this approach would also “alleviate” some of the concerns expressed by staff during the away-day, namely that the Department members should feel part of the unit’s research effort and the increased research expectations more broadly. Karen shared that even the two loosely organized research groupings would be expected “to have some modest outputs,” but also explained that “we’re trying to alleviate some anxiety by having strong [research] people in the two [main] research groups, and that’s where the REF pressure will be,” while “the other groups can be more comfortable, they have more luxury, in a way.” By the end of the away-day, while Karen’s goals of “relaunch[ing] the research groups” and setting up “actions” for them were not quite achieved – Karen noted that “we ended on a flat note compared to the morning” – a

plan was discussed for the Department to meet again soon and bring the new research groups together to start their work.

To sum up, the data presented in this subsection, as at several points earlier in this chapter (see e.g. sections 7.2.2.1, 7.4.2.1), point to Karen's experience of an identity tension arising from the discrepancy between the dominant departmental research-related discourses (sections 7.3.1, 7.4.1), including those pointing to inadequate research support and issues with the Department's research structures (section 7.5.1), and Karen's determination to enhance the Reinvigorated Department's research profile, particularly in terms of increasing the number of research outputs that met the NewU's REF-based quality threshold of three star (see e.g. sections 7.2.2.1, 7.3.2.2, 7.4.2.2). One of Karen's responses to these circumstances was to create new or reform existing research structures – such as the research mentorship scheme and research groups – as well as to make her research support available outside of these programmes to staff who wished to further develop their research profile. However, while in the latter example Karen was able – because of the staff member's own interest in advancing their research career – to combine a discourse of support rather seamlessly with a discourse that emphasized the need for the unit's academics to enhance their research efforts, such attempts seemed fraught with tension with regard to the department-wide initiatives. On the one hand, Karen's promotion of these schemes signalled that she recognized and aligned with the prevailing departmental discourse regarding the need to reform the Reinvigorated Department's research support arrangements. Karen's recognition of this need, in addition to the perceived necessity to appease the Department members anxious about the research agenda, was evident, for example, in Karen's characterization of research groups as a means of providing “opportunities for support” and, in response to her staff's concerns, in the establishment of two looser departmental research groups with “modest” research expectations for the Reinvigorated Department members that were not aligned with the unit's two main research areas and were unlikely to produce REF-appropriate publications. On the other hand, Karen

constructed research mentorship and research groups as a means of increasing the Reinvigorated Department's REF-suitable research outputs, another REF-related discourse that fed strongly into Karen's sense of managerial self as the Department HoD throughout the unit's away-day (see e.g. sections 7.2.2.1, 7.3.2.2). Indeed, at one point she suggested that one of the functions of research mentors was to help staff turn their work into three star publications. Furthermore, Karen described the Department's previous research structures as ineffective "in terms of [research] production" and pointed out that the renewed research groups – following the departmental reorganization – were intended to support a "more strategic" approach to the Department's research endeavours. Moreover, she explicitly referred to the "REF pressure" that would be put on the members of two of the possible four research groups, seemingly in effect formalizing a division between 'REF-able' and 'non-REF-able' staff (see also section 7.3.2.2). While Karen's remarks above indicated that she saw the research support- and performance-related goals of these department-wide research structures as complementary, by the end of the away-day – with the new departmental research arrangements not yet finalized and the anxieties of several meeting attendees arguably not seeming to be allayed, as implied in Karen's remark about ending the day "on a flat note" – it appeared that Karen's attempt to adopt a managerial identity that combined the two discourses that could be considered "antagonistic" (Clarke et al., 2009), was called into question, and likely indicated the presence of a persisting identity tension for Karen.

7.5.2.2 Struggling With the Reinvigorated Department's Research Leadership

While Karen was establishing various research support systems and structures, as demonstrated in the subsection above, she pointed out at several points during my time with her that Reinvigorated Department was struggling with research leadership. From Karen's perspective, this led to further challenges in relation to the unit's research

endeavours, both at the level of the Department as a whole and with regard to the specific research support structures that were being put in place.

For one thing, Karen was the only Professor in Reinvigorated Department, which she felt led to problems in delegating departmental research leadership responsibilities. Karen pointed out during our first interview that “we’re not as well-off as some other departments” in terms of “academic [leadership], [so] in terms of delegating that, it’s more difficult in this department. Because we haven’t got a [Professor].” As she explained at the away-day, the Department did not “have resources for a Professor.” Nonetheless, Karen expressed some optimism on the matter, sharing in our first interview her hope that she would soon “be able to delegate some of the research leadership in the Department” to a new hire. However, a far more dominant narrative that I identified during my time with Karen addressed concerns about selected department members who, according to Karen, “for different reasons” were not able to provide the kind of research leadership that she envisioned.

Thus, for the time being, the issues with academic leadership persisted and seemed to translate into challenges with research leadership on several levels. In terms of research leadership in the Department as a whole, although a Reinvigorated Department academic held the Department Research Lead function – and had previously been responsible for the development of the unit’s first research strategy and research groups, for example – during my time with Karen it occasionally appeared that she herself took on the Department Research Lead role. Karen did not speak about this in any of our conversations, but during a Faculty Research Board meeting, which Karen chaired in her role as the Faculty Head of Research, when she asked the Faculty’s department representatives to report on recent research developments in their respective units, Karen was the one who reported on Reinvigorated Department, for example. This was despite the presence of the Department Research Lead at the

meeting and the fact that other departments were represented by individuals who held department Research Lead and/or UOA Lead roles.

Moreover, the perceived insufficient resources at senior research staff level impacted on the Department's research mentoring scheme. The lack of a Professor – other than Karen – in Reinvigorated Department led Karen to negotiate that some of her unit's Readers be mentored by Professors from Visionary Department. As Karen explained to an administrator in the context of preparing a list of proposed research mentors for the Department members,

[t]here's no [Professor] in the Department, so I managed to negotiate with Ryan [Quinn] that [a Reader] gets [a Professor from Visionary Department] as a mentor, but there's nobody for [the other Readers] ... [who] would also need a Professor to get help from.

A later version of the research mentor list Karen shared with me suggested that she negotiated another Professor from Visionary Department to mentor a Reader, while Karen herself was to support another Reader. Thus, in this case, Karen sought additional research mentorship resources from Visionary Department, but also ended up taking on part of the task herself to ensure all Readers in the Department had appropriate research mentors.

Furthermore, Karen also saw problems in relation to the departmental research group leadership. That is, the necessary changes in the departmental research groups mentioned in the previous subsection were not limited to the need to reconfigure the groups in terms of their research foci, but, as Karen noted in our second interview, recent staff changes also included the departures of some former research group leaders. Moreover, Karen indicated that she was planning a more rigorous approach to the selection of research group leaders, suggesting that staff would no longer volunteer for

these roles, but that Karen would make the decision herself. As she explained during our second interview,

it may be that instead of people just putting their hands up and say, I'd like to do this, it might be me saying to three people, right, you're leading this one, you're leading that one and you're leading that one. Because obviously from my point of view, you've gotta get the right people leading them.

In conclusion, while some Reinvigorated Department members brought up a departmental discourse of lack of research support (section 7.5.1), in the context of a broader departmental discourse highlighting the many barriers to research, Karen's comments above point to her perception of the inadequate support she – as the Department HoD – received from the unit's senior membership in terms of the departmental research leadership. Karen implicitly constructed herself as the only Professor in the Department – pointing to the lack of research leadership at professorial level and the limited assistance she was able to receive from other senior staff – and Reinvigorated Department as being in an inferior position with respect to this compared to other departments in the Faculty, signifying the two as discursive resources that fed into her managerial identities as the unit's HoD. This indicated an identity tension for Karen due to the discrepancy between the Reinvigorated Department's circumstances and Karen's wish to claim a different role as the Department HoD overseeing the unit's research efforts in order for it to align with her favoured sense of managerial self, which would involve more delegation to her department colleagues. Karen did suggest that a recent appointment would, at least to some extent, help to remedy this friction, but during my time with her the identity tensions nevertheless seemed to persist. This was evident, for example, in Karen stepping into the role of the Department Research Lead at a Faculty Research Board meeting and, despite her efforts to find another solution, Karen ending up becoming the research mentor for one of the Reinvigorated Department Readers. Relatedly, Karen was determined at that point to take on a greater

– not lesser – role in managing the Department’s research efforts, for example by becoming more actively involved in the appointment of the departmental research group leaders, although the latter could be seen as an attempt to reduce Karen’s engagement in the departmental research management in the longer term.

7.6 Summary

This chapter examined the processes of discursive identity work of Karen Fowler, HoD of Reinvigorated Department. In line with the overall focus of the dissertation, it concentrated on Karen’s identity construction in the context of her research management responsibilities. The chapter focused on Karen’s experiences of identity tensions and the ways in which she addressed them, illustrating how she employed different discursive resources stemming from within and outside NewU in shaping her managerial identities.

The first section of the chapter provided general insights into Karen’s managerial identities formation and identity tensions related to the processes by which Karen managed others and herself. First, Karen indicated an identity tension that arose from the challenging departmental discursive context in which discourses of comfort and care among staff were combined with the recognition of operational issues in Reinvigorated Department at the time of Karen’s appointment. Karen responded by largely rejecting a dominant departmental discourse, which focused on staff “looking after each other,” as a discursive identity source, and instead claimed a sense of managerial self to which effective departmental operations were central. Indeed, Karen affirmed a managerial identity that, in times of challenging organizational change, was shaped more strongly by “managing the business” than by “the personal or the people issues.” Nevertheless, Karen suggested that the difficult actions she took as an HoD sometimes led to identity tensions resulting from the associated negative feelings, in response to which Karen accepted a negative sense of managerial self, thereby

connecting with the experiences of her staff. However, by the time of my fieldwork, Karen indicated that her managerial identities as the Reinvigorated Department HoD and the unit's emerging discursive realities had become more aligned overall as a result of recent organizational changes. Another set of (recurrent) identity tensions was related to Karen's dual managerial role – as the Reinvigorated Department HoD and the Faculty Head of Research – and her threefold identity as manager, leader and academic. Although Karen did not always succeed in claiming a favoured sense of self in relation to these three identity resources, she continually paid attention to their balancing and found effective ways to prioritize preferred identity aspects, including with respect to her sense of self as academic. It is noteworthy that Karen also engaged in discursive identity work that pointed to her anticipation of identity tensions and her attempts to prevent them. For example, with regard to Karen's goal of maintaining identities as both manager and leader, she negotiated a dual managerial role that would enable her to do so. Further, Karen spoke of maintaining a distinction between the “personal” and the “professional” to avoid major identity frictions when dealing with challenging departmental circumstances. Overall, Karen emphasized “reflection,” self-management and her “key values” as crucial discursive identity resources in managing identity tensions and constructing her managerial identities.

The remainder of the chapter detailed the processes of Karen's discursive identity work with respect to her research management responsibilities in particular. The first of these sections revealed Karen's early determination to claim a sense of managerial self as the Reinvigorated Department HoD and the Faculty Head of Research determined to elevate the then limited departmental and faculty research efforts. In doing so, Karen rejected as discursive identity resources the prevailing faculty and departmental discourses at the time of her appointment that challenged such a commitment. The arrival of a new VC, which led to a university-wide promotion of REF-informed research discourses that placed significant value on research, seemed to contribute significantly to the at least partial resolution of Karen's initial identity tension

indicated above, as Karen's arguably earnestly advanced these reformed NewU research discourses. However, despite Karen's ongoing efforts to enhance the Department's and, relatedly, the Faculty UOA 1's research and thus resolve the remaining identity friction, the latter lingered. This was exemplified by the fact that Karen's managerial identities were informed by both discourses that pointed to the persistently challenging departmental research circumstances, and her push to improve the Department's research in line with the VC-promoted, REF-informed discourses. Moreover, although Karen accepted the recent university research discourses, she signalled a discrepancy between the importance she placed on activities central to being an academic – such as “thinking” – and a work environment in which these activities were given “lower priority” compared to her other duties. Further, due to the NewU's reorganization of its research management structure, Karen's managerial identity was threatened by the possibility of Karen losing her faculty-wide research leadership role, which she constructed as a critical discursive identity resource.

The next section of the chapter first highlighted an early identity tension Karen experienced due to the discrepancy between the centrality of research discourses to her sense of self and the NewU's dominant discourse of research as inferior to university's operations under the former VC. Although this friction began to de-escalate with the appointment of a new VC, Karen nevertheless pointed to some identity tensions related to the NewU's remaining obstacles to research. Drawing on her contrasting experiences at research-intensive universities as a discursive identity resource, Karen mentioned the limited research time for the NewU academics and the university's problematic administrative arrangements. In attempting to address the first issue, the combination of university and departmental factors seemed to limit Karen's ability to do so and in fact led to a further identity tension. Namely, the NewU's exclusive support for REF-suitable researchers, combined with the Reinvigorated Department's limited number of such academics, restricted the ways in which Karen could act on finding research time for most of her staff; yet she expressed determination to do so. That said, this effort

was affected by Karen's attempt to address another identity friction, arising from the mismatch between the Reinvigorated Department's unfavourable research circumstances and Karen's goal to deliver on the VC's ambitious, REF-inspired research agenda. Karen's responses to these colliding identity tensions appeared to result in her predominantly affirming a managerial identity informed by the university's focus on granting more research time to the limited number of 'REF-able' researchers, rather than a steady commitment to finding research time for staff across her unit, suggesting that Karen drew on conflicting discursive identity sources. In terms of the discrepancy between university discourses and Karen's notions of the NewU administration and its relationship with academics, Karen most notably disputed the former in the process of selecting an administrative assistant. That is, Karen challenged the limited role of academics in the selection of their administrative staff and, in particular, pointed to the need for university administration to consider administrative requirements specific to her focus on research and research management. However, Karen's attempts to resolve this two-pronged identity friction seemed to largely fail, as her administrative colleagues stood by the prevailing university notions of administration.

The penultimate section of the chapter outlined how Karen responded to identity tensions related to the discrepancy between her research agenda for Reinvigorated Department and the departmental and disciplinary discourses prevalent in the unit, the latter constructing research as tangential while emphasizing the relevance of research unsuitable for the REF and research for societal benefit. Overall, the section suggested that Karen primarily claimed a sense of managerial self informed by research-related and REF-driven discourses, while largely rejecting the dominant departmental research- and discipline-related discourses as the source of her managerial identities. For one thing, informed by the changing national disciplinary discourses as a discursive identity resource, Karen led the reorganization of Small Programme, which included layoffs and the replacement of dismissed staff with research-oriented hires. This change

was intended not only to make Small Programme more responsive to national disciplinary developments and to help strengthen the Department's research activity, but it also meant a better fit with Karen's own view of the profession of concern. Moreover, while Karen promoted a definition of research inclusive of efforts deemed unsuitable for the REF, she also appeared to place a higher value on REF-appropriate research outputs; once again employing conflicting discursive identity resources in constructing a managerial identity as HoD. Furthermore, as the Reinvigorated Department HoD, Karen rejected the notion of socially impactful research if the latter was unsuitable for the REF submission. Notably, however, in her capacity as a professional working with selected populations, drawing on her personal life and inclusive methodologies as discursive identity resources, Karen signalled that research that benefited the society was an element important to her sense of self.

The final section explored Karen's attempts to address another identity tension related to the discrepancy between Karen's goal of raising the Reinvigorated Department's research profile and the unit's challenging research circumstances, in this case related to the departmental discourses of lack of research support and structures in the context of increased research expectations. In response to this identity friction, Karen set out to introduce new departmental research arrangements and enhance existing ones. In doing so, she drew on arguably opposing discursive identity resources, simultaneously constructing these efforts as aimed at providing better research support and easing the Reinvigorated Department members' anxieties, as well as indicating that these arrangements would foster "REF pressure" in the Department. However, given the continuing concerns of the unit's members on this matter, Karen's identity tension appeared to persist. Additionally, the issues surrounding inadequate research support in Reinvigorated Department created a further ongoing identity friction for Karen. While Karen aspired towards a sense of managerial self as an HoD delegating departmental research leadership responsibilities to a greater extent, for the time being she seemed instead to continue to take on tasks that she wished others would take on.

The following chapter details the discursive identity work of Dave Garner, HoD of Different Department.

8 Caring for

(a) Different Department

I first met Dave Garner, Head of Different Department (the Department), late one afternoon a few weeks into my fieldwork in the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences (the Faculty). I had arranged a meeting to discuss with him the details of shadowing which I was to conduct the following autumn.

We met in Dave's office, which was in J. S. Mill Hall, on the floor above the offices of the other three departments of the Faculty. It was located at the corner of two corridors running perpendicular to each other, which housed most of the offices of the Different Department staff. The office was surrounded by windows on two of its four sides and overlooked a large tree right outside it and one of the streets running through the New University's (NewU) Central Campus. Dave began by apologizing for the state of his office as we sat down at a large table that stood under the window opposite the door, with piles of documents stacked on top. Opposite was his main – standing – workstation, featuring a desk with two computer screens. To the right, under the other window, was another, smaller table, similarly disorganized to the one we were

sitting at. On the opposite side of the office, a tall, closed bookcase stood against the wall.

When we began to talk about my plans to shadow him, I initially felt a certain awkwardness in our conversation; this was not surprising given what Dave's participation in my research would entail. Later, when I reflected on our first encounter, I noted in my field notes that Dave, while definitely pleasant, was also rather quiet and gave the impression of a certain reservation. This was also evident when he told me, without disguise, "I am happy to help, as much as one can be, being followed around." Nevertheless, I felt that our exchange became more relaxed as we went on to discuss the practical aspects of shadowing and the details of my research project. Dave was also already sharing some details about the developments that were taking place in Different Department at the time. In particular, he talked about the unit's staff growth that academic year and the following one, adding that they did not have enough space for these new appointments. This was indeed a foretaste of my fieldwork with Dave; during my stay with him later in the year, the Department's expansion was one of the issues high on his agenda, seemingly bringing as many challenges as benefits.

By the end of our meeting, I thought of Dave as friendly but also quite serious, despite some humorous remarks towards the end of our conversation. He came across as perceptive and thoughtful, as well as very frank and seemed to mince no words; the example of Dave's candour I mentioned above was not the only one of its kind in our half-hour or so exchange. Over time, as I sat in numerous meetings and engaged in many conversations with Dave, my impressions of him based on that first dialogue did not drastically change. However, they were complemented by Dave's approachability and proneness to witty banter in many of the interactions between him and his colleagues that I observed. Moreover, by the end of my time in Different Department, Dave left me with the impression of a Head of Department (HoD) who was very deeply embedded in his organizational unit's fabric – which often manifested itself in his acute

worrying about unfolding developments concerning the Department and its members – and, as will be shown through examples presented in parts of this chapter, was a dedicated advocate for his department in the face of any arising challenges.

In the continuation of this chapter, I begin with an introduction to some general features of Different Department, followed by an outline of the unit in terms of some of the dominant discourses that characterized it, as conveyed by research participants other than the unit's HoD. I proceed to introduce Dave Garner as HoD of Different Department and examine the ways in which he navigated his discursive environment, while shedding light on some pressing issues he faced as HoD at the time of my fieldwork. I then explore in more detail a number of research management-related concerns that arose during my time with Dave, looking closely at his responses to a range of challenges through the lens of discursive identity work, focusing on his managerial identities formation and his experiences of identity tensions:

- the Different Department's high level of and its difference in research activity compared to the rest of the Faculty and NewU, which sometimes led to challenging dynamics between the Department and its wider organizational environment;
- the Department's research rise, its success in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 and the resulting benefits, in the context of uncertainty around expectations for the unit to sustain its research performance;
- the Different Department's continued hiring and support of research-active academics in a setting that simultaneously placed great importance on teaching and administration;

- the possible NewU-wide introduction of academic staff categories that would distinguish between academics who were primarily dedicated to research and those who were primarily involved in teaching (section 5.2.2), which was seen as a threat to the unit's research culture; and
- the proposal to relocate Different Department from the NewU's Central Campus to its River Campus (section 5.3.1), partly in the context of the initiative to increase the Department's research collaboration with the River Campus Faculty, which was seen as a challenge to various aspects of the unit's operations and culture.

The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

8.1 Introducing Different Department and Its Head

At the time of my fieldwork, Different Department homed about 80 academic staff, including more than a dozen research assistants; a few technical support staff; about 50 postgraduate research students; and a total of about 1300 undergraduate and taught postgraduate students. Most of the Different Department staff were seated in offices on the floor of J. S. Mill Hall above the rest of the Faculty academics, with a small minority recently relocating to an additional floor as the Department needed extra space due to its continuous expansion. Since the first representatives of the Department's academic discipline had been recruited by the Faculty's organizational antecedent some four decades earlier – at that time they could be counted on the fingers of one hand, and an independent course representing the discipline had not yet been established – Different Department had grown to become by far the largest of the Faculty's four academic departments. By the time of my fieldwork, its staff and student numbers accounted for more than 40 per cent of the total academic staff and student populations of the Faculty, which also illustrates the Department's importance for the Faculty in terms of its financial contribution.

According to the Department's website, the large staff group was organized into five research groups – some of which consisted of additional research subunits – spanning a variety of specialisms within the academic discipline represented by the Department. The Different Department's REF 2014 submission documentation revealed that in previous years the Department expanded its disciplinary diversity by appointing academics working in areas not previously developed in the unit, while strengthening its existing expertise. Moreover, the Department acquired additional research space, purchased new research equipment, and established a team of technicians responsible for supporting staff and students in the use of technical equipment for research and educational purposes. As mentioned in chapter 5 (section 5.3.2), in the REF 2014, the Different Department's primary Unit of Assessment (UOA), the Faculty UOA 2, achieved an overall average assessment of less than three stars, placing it in the second third of the national ranking in the relevant discipline (HEFCW et al., 2014; Times Higher Education, 2014a). By the time of my fieldwork, the Department already seemed to be making considerable efforts to ensure a successful REF 2020 submission. The – increased – research funds allocated to Different Department by the university in light of the unit's REF 2014 success (section 5.3.2) were being distributed and a publication audit was underway.

At the time of my field research, Different Department ran several undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes, with additional courses in development. Notably – and as indicated above – the Department had over the previous several years experienced significant growth in student numbers and with it came the unit's staff growth; since the Different Department's undergraduate courses were accredited by a professional body that mandated a relatively low student-staff ratio, this meant that the number of staff also increased substantially, in proportion to the growth of the student cohort. In terms of student satisfaction as measured in the National Student Survey (NSS), the Department's undergraduate courses were regularly rated well over 90 out of 100 per cent in the years prior to my fieldwork.

Dave, the Different Department HoD, was assisted in the leadership and management of the Department by two main groups he chaired, the so-called Management Team and Department Executive Group. The first group, Management Team, consisted of a mix of Principal Lecturers, Readers and Professors and focused mainly on the Department's operations, teaching and student-related issues and postgraduate research students. The Department Executive Group's priority was strategic planning, and its meetings often focused on preparations for the REF, with the group consisting largely of Professors and only a couple selected Readers. The Department's activities were also discussed and directed by additional committees such as Research Committee and Teaching and Learning Committee, as well as by a recently established Steering Board dealing exclusively with REF-related issues. In addition, at the time of my fieldwork, Dave often met individually or in smaller groups with members of the two main departmental leadership groups to discuss current and more specific aspects for which these individuals were responsible. He also nurtured close informal relationships with some of the Department senior academics. A telling example of this was Dave's regular evening walk home with a department member, where, as Dave explained to me, he would "unload" his concerns on the colleague.

Having presented some facts and figures of Different Department, the next subsection outlines selected dominant departmental discourses as observed by my research participants other than Dave.

8.1.1 Bigger, Better, Stronger

The Different Department's features presented above were reflected in the way the Department was perceived and talked about, both by those outside and inside the unit. One of the dominant departmental discourses pointed to its growth over the years and its large size at the time of my fieldwork. Indeed, all of my interviewees in the Department spoke of its expansion, with some describing how the student and staff

numbers in the unit had increased many times over since their arrival, and others also commenting on the unit's continued growth at the time. Different Department was described as "extremely big" (Stevie), "gigantic" (Jo) and "massive" (Kendall). Ray exclaimed, "I don't know how many [staff] there are now. [*laughs*] I don't, I don't even know! [*laughs*]" As a few of my research participants inside and outside the unit indicated, this expansion was partly due to the inability of other programmes at the university to recruit sufficient numbers of students to meet the institution's financial targets. Thus, a senior NewU manager explained, "some of that [growth] wasn't necessarily ... their choice." Whatever the reasons for the increase in student numbers, this growth was accompanied by an expansion in staff numbers, with several interviewees both inside and outside the Department suggesting that the latter was further influenced by the requirement for a relatively low student-staff ratio imposed by the accrediting professional body to which Different Department was accountable. Thus, a few colleagues outside the unit argued that, compared to the other departments in the Faculty, the Department was "very top-heavy, they seem to have huge amount of staff" (a Reinvigorated Department member) and had "less issues with student-staff ratio" (a Visionary Department academic). Indeed, in this regard, Tyler acknowledged that Different Department might be seen as "quite spoilt" in the eyes of their colleagues from other parts of the Faculty.

The last few quotes in the paragraph above already indicate the Different Department's distinct standing within the Faculty, but this was made even clearer by some of my other interviewees outside the unit, who pointed out the structural issues arising from the Department's size. For example, an academic in Small Department described Different Department as "massive, a faculty in its own right, really," which made the Faculty "not very well balanced." A Faculty Management Team (the Faculty Management) member spoke of this imbalance as a "challenge,"

there is a big challenge with the issues around Different Department and the extent to which it's sustainable longer term to keep it as part of the Faculty ... it's such a big entity ... it has a distorting effect, because of its size, on the rest of the Faculty.

Related to the above, although Terry, the Dean, was not keen on the idea of Different Department leaving the Faculty (more on this in section 8.6.1), they acknowledged the need for different leadership arrangements in the Department, explaining that because of the unit's size there had been a need for “the right leadership ... more leadership, if you like.” They went on to assess that they had “been really successful in putting in place more people ... to provide appropriate leadership.” However, later in the interview, Terry noted – and this is particularly relevant to the Different Department HoD's position – that there was “an argument for a Deputy [HoD]” in Different (and Visionary) Department(s), indicating that a possible change in the NewU's organizational structure addressing these concerns, which was being discussed at the time (section 5.2.1, footnote 17), would be welcome. Indeed, at the time of my field research, I observed the Dean advocating on a few occasions for the appointment of a Deputy HoD in Different Department, an effort that was for an extended period of time proving difficult to accomplish (more details follow in section 8.1.3.1). For example, at a meeting with a Human Resources (HR) representative, when Terry and Dave showed the Department's – rather long – list of recently appointed staff, the Dean said, “you only need to look at that and you see that one single person cannot manage all these people.”

The discourses of the Different Department's distinct position within the Faculty and the fact that the unit did not fit into the existing organizational structures were also found among my interviewees in the Department. This led to challenges both in terms of the Different Department's position within the Faculty and NewU as well as internally, with respect to the departmental management structure. Furthermore, the challenges regarding the unit's fit within the existing organizational and management

structures were compounded by the Different Department's estate issues at the time of my fieldwork – that is insufficient space for the Department given its growth – which I discuss in detail in the final section of this chapter (section 8.6). Returning to the Department's fraught position within the Faculty, Jaime, while acknowledging the benefits of being part of the Faculty, remarked,

the needs of smaller departments aren't quite the same as the needs of some of ours, so ... there's tensions sometimes with ... the Faculty wanting to have oversight of certain things and tell us when we should be having our deadlines, how we should be doing things ... and we say, but we can't do it, when you're dealing with stuff at this scale, you can't do it like that ...

When I asked Kendall what they foresaw for the Department's future, they reflected, "we can happily be a department ... in this Faculty," but they also noted, "I think we should have more seats at the top table." Challenges of this kind prompted several of my interviewees to reflect on the possibility of Different Department becoming a faculty, albeit usually quite cautiously, as this arrangement would require further growth. Cody, for example, described how Different Department "kind of stick[s] out a little bit in terms of the institutional organizational model" because of "the relative size compared to other members of the Faculty, as well as a few other things." In their view, Different Department "need[ed]" to become

either a kind of faculty of its own or some other type of administrative strategy where it has a bit more autonomy in terms of how it's run. Because it's just too big and too difficult to manage within the model that exists for the Faculty.

These structural issues were also related to the Department's struggles with respect to its internal management organization. One interviewee described how, despite Different Department "doubl[ing]" in size over the past decade, "we haven't changed the management structure." In addition, the unit used to have a Deputy HoD

who supported the HoD, but this position was abolished at some point. As a result, although additional Principal Lecturers had been appointed, the Department had a rather “flat management structure” (Pat), “where you have essentially one ... decision-maker and then everybody else trying to guess how to get things through that decision portal” (Kendall). Kendall echoed the feelings of a number of other interviewees when they said, “it’s too much stuff going through the [HoD] role ... how can one person have line responsibility for 70 others? [*silence*] One ... line manager, that makes no sense.” Many interviewees also shared Cody’s view that Dave’s role was “far, far oversubscribed by a huge amount.” As a result, several of my interlocutors welcomed the introduction of the Deputy HoD role in the Department towards the end of my time in the unit (more details follow in section 8.1.3.1), which, according to a couple of them, would allow Dave not only to “[administer] the department,” “[field] stuff” (Jo) and “[firefight]” (Tyler), but also “a bit more space for strategic ... proactive thinking about stuff” (Jo) and to “be a bit more strategic or creative in his thinking” (Tyler).

In addition to the fact that Different Department stood out with respect to its size – and indeed closely linked to it, as growth was partly the result of this – a senior NewU manager spoke of the Department performing “on almost every score ... outstandingly good” and as “very highly regarded” in its field. The Dean described the unit as “probably seen as the most successful department [in the Faculty]. ... and it is a very successful department.” Relatedly, a Reinvigorated Department member described Different Department as “a whole other ball game, really,” and a Visionary Department academic assessed that the Department had “been doing things in a much more organized way for a lot longer, their systems are very well embedded.” This was reflected, for example, in Terry’s call – in a Faculty Management meeting – for “other, smaller areas” to learn from what Different Department had “achieved in a large programme” where they “needed to manage things really well given the big [student] numbers” in relation to aspects of the Department’s teaching provision. In another case – in a faculty-wide meeting – Terry encouraged other departments to follow the

Different Department's suit in developing a staff guidebook for a student-related activity. However, these discourses of the Department's success and exemplary practices were in a couple of instances complemented with another discourse that pointed to the Department's separation from the rest of the Faculty. For example, although they personally had good experiences working with the Different Department members, a Reinvigorated Department academic perceived that "the broader view" of the unit within the Faculty was that they were "a bit smug. And not great at playing ball with the rest of the ... Faculty." While the Dean spoke of some recent successes that made Different Department "feel much more part of the Faculty," Terry also acknowledged that the Department "had been seen ... as very separate to the Faculty. It did not help that it's actually upstairs. It doesn't help at all."

Different Department was likewise characterized as performing "very well" (Cody) or "really well" (Jamie, Jo) in both teaching and research by a number of its members interviewed, with a few pointing out that they managed to "maintain quality" teaching and research (Cody) despite the unit's significant growth. Moreover, some of my interviewees constructed the Department as a role model for other organizational units. Jaime, for example, recounted,

Different Department has always done things very well, so that when the Faculty normally takes up on a new process, quite often they'll look to what happens in Different Department and adopt ... the processes that are already in place in Different Department because we do it well ...

However, this was perceived by some as one of the factors that led to a tension in how the rest of the Faculty viewed Different Department. The Department's exemplary efforts, Pat said, could be seen as "quite threatening, and that can be quite [silence] problematic when other departments are working in close proximity. 'Cause you're kind of seen as the goody two shoes all the time." Indeed, Elliott, for example, felt that the Department's strong position within the Faculty is "also our greatest weakness. Because

it becomes a kind of us-versus-them mentality ... within the Faculty.” Although a number of interviewees were positive about the fact that Different Department had recently become more engaged with the rest of the Faculty and the university as a whole, some nonetheless perceived that “the rest of the Faculty don’t like us very much [laughs]” (Pat). In addition, it was also acknowledged that there was a persisting difference due to the unit’s location. For example, Pat suggested that “the fact that we’re at the floor above ... plays into you as being a bit threatening.” Kendall went even further, sharing,

I think it’s unfortunate ... that the Faculty is in two halves. It’s [the] floor [above] and the ... floor [below]. And there’s a little bit kind of, you know, friction between the two. ... and we don’t do very many things that mix. We live separate lives.

However, the discourses about Different Department outlined above – which often pointed to the Department’s misalignment with the Faculty’s and NewU’s structures and ways of operating – were complemented, among all the Department members interviewed, by discourses that pointed to the unit’s collegiate, friendly and supportive nature. Different Department and/or its members were described, among other related adjectives, as “very collegial” (Cody), “(very/immensely) collegiate” (Elliott, Max and Kendall respectively) and “(very) friendly” (Tyler, Jamie, Stevie, Elliott, Pat and Ray). Cody spoke of a “culture of ... being nice to your colleagues,” and Kendall described that “the priority as a group of people is to get on.” Max recounted that when they joined the Department “the collegiate nature was just almost unbelievable, that so many people actually got on with so many people.” Elliott described the Department as “the friendliest place I’ve ever been at in terms of a university,” and Jo similarly commented, “I doubt if there’s another one [department] that is quite as [silence] pleasant a place to work.” Moreover, Different Department and its members were perceived as “helpful” (Jamie) and “supportive” (Stevie), with a number of my interviewees pointing to the importance of “teamwork” (Ray) and a

“collaborative approach” to work (Jamie). Furthermore, Pat stressed the importance of “looking after each other,” and Jamie agreed that “looking after ... ourselves, our staff” was “one of the key things.” Pat also emphasized that “we ... accept people for who they are and whatever they are,” and Jo similarly spoke of Different Department being “welcoming and tolerant of ... different ways of being.”

In addition, several interviewees pointed to the integrated nature of Different Department. For example, Pat reflected, “we have maintained that we are one big friendly department, and that’s really important.” Elliott opined, “we present on a united front,” and Cody similarly shared, “whenever there are issues ... at the institutional level, you feel as a group that you’re trying to kind of achieve something.” At the same time, a number of my interviewees acknowledged the danger that the unit’s growth and expansion in terms of disciplinary subfields posed to such a departmental culture. Indeed, a few of my interviewees admitted that they did not “really know” everybody in the Department (Kendall). Elliott, for example, said, “there must be at least ten people in this department I’ve never said more than ‘hi’ to.” Moreover, Pat, for instance, mentioned “smaller [disciplinary subfields-based] teams ... starting to emerge.” Elliott similarly expected that as Different Department grew and expanded to multiple floors, “it will start getting very cliquey.” Nonetheless, as indicated earlier, at the time of my fieldwork, several of my research participants spoke of the Department having been able to until then maintain its friendly, collegial, supportive culture and sense of an integrated entity, with a couple of interviewees specifically mentioning that people got along with each other despite their subfield-specific disciplinary differences, or whether they were recently appointed or senior members of the Department. Furthermore, a few interviewees argued that it was precisely this friendly, collaborative nature that was the basis for the success of Different Department.

Importantly, a number of my interviewees explicitly pointed out that Dave’s approach to his HoD role was one of the factors in sustaining the collegial, supportive

nature of the unit. Cody, for example, described the importance of Dave's "conciliatory mood. Even when ... difficult things have to be implemented," and Max pointed out Dave's emphasis on "ensuring that everyone gets on as well as they possibly can do." In addition, even those research participants who did not explicitly associate departmental culture with Dave's approach to his HoD role spoke of him as "fair and considerate" (Pat), and several described him as an HoD who sought and considered the input of his colleagues while "cushion[ing]" (Tyler) or "shield[ing]" the rest of the Department from any issues that arose (Pat). Jamie spoke of Dave paying attention to "keeping the people happy" and Tyler opined that "he would look after people" and was "concerned about how people will feel" about the various challenges facing the Department.

To summarize, Different Department was discursively characterized as a unit that experienced considerable growth over the years, as reflected in the Department's large student and staff numbers at the time of my research. Importantly, the Department's large size fed into the discourses of the Different Department's difference from the rest of the Faculty, including in terms of the lower student-staff ratio required and the different departmental operations and needs. Moreover, the Different Department's size also raised questions about the unit's suitability in the context of existing faculty and university organizational structures, including the Department's representation and autonomy within the broader organization, and the role of the HoD, which was seen as inadequate in the absence of a Deputy HoD (more on this in section 8.1.3.1). Additionally, Different Department was described as a successful, well-performing unit and a source of exemplary practice within the Faculty. At the same time, however, despite some observations about the Department's recent better integration with the rest of the Faculty, it was discursively constructed as largely separate from the Faculty's other departments, partly because of the Different Department's location on a different floor. This discourse of separation was complemented by one that described the Department as not well-liked by the rest of

the Faculty. However, despite these sometimes challenging departmental discourses, the unit's members also pointed to the prevailing strong discourses of collegiality, friendliness, support, collaboration, the importance of "looking after" the Different Department members, and the unit's integrated nature in spite of its considerable expansion; features also embodied by Dave as the Department HoD.

The above discourses about Different Department featured prominently in Dave's reflections on his role as the unit's HoD. In the continuation, after an introduction to Dave's background and some of his general perceptions of the HoD role, I go on to discuss the discursive resources that contributed particularly visibly to Dave's experiences of identity tensions and informed Dave's construction of managerial identities at the time of my fieldwork.

8.1.2 Dave Garner on His Career and the Head of Department Role

When I met Dave, he had been the Different Department HoD for over five years. At that point he had spent more than 30 years in the Department – and its organizational antecedents – making him one of the longest serving members of Different Department and the Faculty, and the most senior HoD in the Faculty. When I asked Dave at the beginning of the first interview how he got to where he was at the time in terms of his career, he replied, "OK. So I got here by accident," as we both laughed. According to Dave's curriculum vitae, after having held part-time and full-time lecturing positions at various higher education institutions while pursuing his PhD, he was appointed as a lecturer at NewU. In the years following his arrival at the then polytechnic, Dave was involved in various teaching and research aspects in the unit while completing his PhD. In our first interview, Dave explained how he "just followed interests," developing research – mostly applied – in a variety of areas, eventually becoming leader of "a multidisciplinary research unit," while suggesting that his interests were sometimes better aligned with the disciplines homed by the antecedent of Visionary Department

than with those represented by Different Department. Over time, Dave rose to the position of Principal Lecturer and later also took on a management role in teaching. Dave then spent a few years on secondment in a research and consultancy company. On his return, “there was the possibility of” moving to the predecessor of Visionary Department, but due to challenging personal circumstances, “I couldn’t think of what to do at the time, so I just came back in Different Department ‘cause it was simple.” Soon after, Dave was asked if he wanted to take on the Deputy HoD role – a post that no longer existed at the beginning of my time with him (details on this follow in the next subsection) – after the colleague who had held this role until then had left, to which he agreed. He explained how he went on to “[develop] a role where I took on more and more leadership, I suppose, and found, ah, I quite like this, it’s alright, I’m not bad at it.” This prompted Dave to apply for the HoD post, having served as the Department’s Acting HoD for a while after the previous HoD had left the institution. Dave was also promoted to a Professor post a few years before he became the Different Department HoD.

At the time of my fieldwork, Dave not only headed Different Department, but also held three faculty-wide roles. He chaired the boards for marketing and internationalization – the latter temporarily, substituting for a colleague – and represented the Faculty to the professional service in charge of information technologies. Furthermore, Dave explained to me in our second interview that at the time he was considering becoming a member of a “working party” dedicated to obtaining accreditation that would recognize the university’s commitment to gender equality, something he described as “one of the things I’ve been pushing for for quite a long time.” Overall, however, Dave described the faculty-wide roles he held as “in my head, all secondary to the day job,” that is his HoD role. During our first interview, Dave described himself as “totally, totally embedded within the Department,” adding, “I think about it all the time.” Moreover, when I asked him about his working hours earlier in the interview, he found it hard to quantify and said, “[i]t feels like it doesn’t

stop much.” Dave linked the demanding nature of his managerial job to the fact that he had to do it alone – without the help of a Deputy HoD – despite the large staff and student numbers and the high level of activity related to this. He expressed that he was only able to cope with the workload associated with the HoD role in Different Department because “I’ve been around a long time and I know a lot of stuff that enables this job to be doable,” pointing out that his HoD responsibilities were not in line with the existing NewU model for the role (details of Dave’s concerns about the NewU’s conception of the HoD role follow in the next subsection).

Furthermore, the busy nature of heading Different Department made Dave question “whether I would still consider myself to be an academic.” As we began talking about this aspect, Dave said, “[s]ee, this is where I get depressed,” and continued, “I just don’t do enough of any of these [academic activities]. You know, I really don’t have enough time to do the job that I’ve got.” In the continuation of our interview, he described being involved in some doctoral supervision and examinations, but explained that he did not have time for teaching, although he said, “I really like teaching.” Similarly, Dave shared that he was “[n]ot really” doing any research, apart from “nominal[ly]” engaging in research with a group of colleagues in the Department. When I asked him how he felt about this, Dave offered the following reflection,

I’ve got very mixed feelings, in one sense I suppose I’ve chosen that, you know ... it’s my own stupid fault. [Dave and I laugh] In part I really miss it [silence] and in part it makes me feel a bit of a fraud ...

This reality was partly to do with what Dave told me earlier in the interview,

what I’ve done in the last few years is focused on the good of Different Department ... rather than on whatever I wanted to do. And to the point where now, if I stopped being Head, which I will at some point soon, I’m not quite sure what I’d

do because I've gotten so out of [academic activities], I haven't maintained these connections...

Indeed, Dave stated that his goal at the time was “to leave the Department in the best place it can be.” This was related to the fact that at the time of shadowing, as mentioned earlier, Dave was in his mid-sixties and was actively considering whether, or rather how soon, to retire. As Dave explained to me in both our interviews, this was a decision involving a consideration of various personal factors as well as issues raised by Dave regarding his own position and the position of Different Department in the NewU’s structure, some of which I address in the following subsection.

In conclusion, Dave’s career narrative suggested that some of the discursive resources that fed into his identities along the way included his interests, his research, teaching and management roles in Different Department related to these two areas, the academic disciplines in which he worked, his experiences being seconded to a research and consultancy company, and his personal circumstances. Dave appeared to construct himself as an ‘accidental’ HoD, stating that he realized he “quite like[d]” being the Department’s Deputy HoD and was “not bad at” it after being encouraged to step into the role. This indicates that taking on the post positively fed into Dave’s sense of self and led to his pursuit of the HoD role in Different Department. At the time of my research, Dave held multiple faculty-wide roles in addition to his HoD post and was considering membership in a university-wide working group dedicated to a gender equality initiative, a cause Dave drew on as a discursive identity resource. Nevertheless, Dave made it clear that it was his HoD role rather than the other posts he held that primarily fed into his sense of managerial self and, in fact, constructed this role as ever-present in his mind. He also indicated that the HoD role was very demanding, especially in the context of having to perform it without the support of a Deputy HoD in a unit with very large student and staff numbers. This suggests that these departmental circumstances – which were also mentioned by other research participants (section

8.1.1) – importantly informed his managerial identities as an HoD. Moreover, as explored in more detail in the following subsection, holding the HoD role in such a context led to Dave’s experience of an identity tension. That is, he perceived that there was a discrepancy between the NewU discourse regarding the HoD post, according to which Dave’s current mode of operation was acceptable, and Dave’s – as well as the perceptions of several of his colleagues, including the Dean (section 8.1.1) – about how the role should be defined given the atypical departmental circumstances. Dave lived with this identity tension for most of the time I spent with him, here suggesting that he was able to do so because of his long tenure and deep knowledge of the organization, thus constructing the two as crucial discursive identity resources. In addition, due to his busy managerial role, Dave pointed to the presence of an identity tension commonly recognized in the academic middle management literature (section 2.2.1), associated with the perception of a loss of his academic identity. Even though Dave acknowledged that he had chosen this path – suggesting that it was to be expected that his engagement in academic activities would weaken given his “[focus] on the good of Different Department” as the unit’s HoD – he expressed feelings of “depress[ion],” “miss[ing]” and being “a bit of a fraud” due to not engaging in academic activities to any significant degree. The tension seemed to exist both at the level of Dave as an individual wanting to claim an identity as academic, and in relation to Dave’s insinuations that he thought he should. However, Dave seemed to suggest that he was unlikely to resolve this identity tension even if – and when – he stopped being an HoD. Another discursive resource that informed Dave’s managerial identities during the time I spent with him was his approaching retirement and the associated decision to step out of the role that was so central to his sense of self at the time. Bearing in mind the importance of protecting Dave’s privacy, I do not elaborate on this aspect of Dave’s discursive identity work. However, I would like to note that this consideration caused an identity tension for Dave – unresolved at the time – that was fuelled by various factors pulling him in different directions.

8.1.3 Challenges in Heading Different Department

The next three subsections highlight some notable discourses that fed into Dave's managerial identities, which, in line with the reflections of the Different Department members interviewed (section 8.1.1), related to heading a department that was ill-fitted in many ways to the NewU's and the Faculty's structures, and the challenges of maintaining the unit's collegial and integrated culture.

8.1.3.1 *A Misfit in NewU*

When Dave talked about some of the most difficult aspects of his job during our first interview, he explained that the issue “probably uppermost in my mind at the moment” was “thinking strategically about Different Department, because Different Department is kind of buried down in this layering of management and hierarchy.” He continued, “we're really big and ... we've outgrown the estate, we'd actually outgrown, I think, the structure that NewU has.” Although Dave said at another point in the interview that he did “very much identify with the place [NewU],” he also explained that in the past he “used to say that, you know, if you cut me open, I'd have New University [*Dave and I laugh*] running through ... [*silence*] perhaps it's less so now, actually, in some ways.” He suggested that this might have been related to the Different Department's size – because of which his work in the Department “takes up most of, well ... more attention than I can devote to other things” – but Dave also mentioned the “difficulties for us at the moment because of our success ... and because of what will happen in the future.”

In our first interview, Dave further elaborated on the above issues. He explained that Different Department had recently been noticed by the university because it had performed well on most metrics. However, he also noted that the Department's success and growth – which, as some of my other interviewees also noted (section 8.1.1), was not led by the unit itself – seemed to pose challenges for NewU, and “it feels like being successful [*silence*] is causing problems to the university.” For one

thing, as mentioned in chapter 5 (section 5.3.1) and explained in more detail later in this chapter (section 8.6), this led to estate issues for Different Department. The NewU management had multiple ideas to address this situation, including a potential partial or complete relocation of the Department to another campus; proposals which, as explained later (section 8.6.2), were not in line with Dave's ideas for various reasons. Moreover, the Department's growth raised not only estate- and location-related challenges, but also questions about the unit's place within the NewU's organizational structure. In this regard, Dave argued,

see, in my head, Different Department should be a sub-faculty or something like a sub-faculty, because it's too big to be a department, it's too active to just be a department, and it needs to have more control over its own destiny than it currently has within the faculty/academic unit structure.

This led to Dave getting

really fed up in the last few weeks. ... 'Cause I think the university has got something really good in Different Department, doesn't know what to do with it, but is in danger of causing quite a lot of damage in trying to work that out, and I don't feel like I've got enough say over what happens.

The above quote also points to the challenges Dave faced as the Different Department HoD on an individual level, as a result of the perceived misfit of the unit within the NewU's organizational structure. In our first interview, he explained that the NewU's organizational model originally envisaged that departments would consist of around 20 staff. This clearly differed from the Different Department's reality of around 80 academic staff and thus had a significant impact on the HoD role in the context of the Department. In an attempt to resolve the issue, Dave had approached the NewU's HR office at one point, but to no avail,

I actually wrote to [an HR manager] about this. So I had ... a series of dimensions ... So you have ... an extremely large group versus very small group; you have a very large group that teaches across a range of courses at undergraduate and postgraduate [level], you have a small group that just teaches undergraduates; you have a large group with a lot of PhD students, you have a small group that doesn't have any PhD students; you have a large group that enters staff into more than one Unit of Assessment in [the] REF, you've a small group that doesn't do any research. And so on, I went on like this. Are these the same? Is the HoD role the same? And the answer was yes. ... In some strange HR world, it's the same. It just isn't. So, you know, there's a model that we, I don't think, fit, but they're desperate to stick to it.

Although, as already mentioned (section 5.2.1, footnote 17, and section 8.1.1) and also noted by Dave in our second interview, the university was likely to embark on a revision of its organizational structure, including the nature of departments and the HoD role, Dave shared with me during our first interview that NewU had a limited number of “points on the salary scale” for HoDs, which led him to conclude that “it doesn't really matter what you're managing, it's just the same from the university's perspective.” Moreover, Dave's frustration with the way NewU defined the HoD role was compounded by the fact that Dave was getting “tired” of certain aspects of his job. In our first interview, he told me that he wanted to refocus his responsibilities,

there's a limit to how interested I am in thinking through whether someone's doing their job or not, you know. Having to micromanage them in order to make them do it. I'm just tired of all that. But I am still, you know, bigger picture things, I'm much more interested in.

One of the barriers for Dave to increase his attention to “bigger ... more strategic issues,” as he put it in our second interview – closely linked to Dave's perception of the NewU's failure to acknowledge the differences between departments

and their HoDs – was the absence of a Deputy HoD post in Different Department. Although, as Dave explained to me in our first interview, the Department had increased the number of Principal Lecturers in previous years to assist him in managing various aspects of the unit’s activities, Dave was convinced that the Different Department’s large size and high level of activity should have granted the Department a Deputy HoD. As a result, Dave expressed frustration on several occasions with the ongoing – unsuccessful – conversations he and the Dean were having with the HR to appoint a Deputy HoD. To demonstrate, during our first interview, which took place just before a meeting with the HR about the Deputy HoD post, Dave laughingly remarked that he might retire “tomorrow” if the upcoming meeting did not go well. The problem was that while the Vice-Chancellor (VC) had previously approved of the Faculty funding this post, the process was stalled because there was no such position in the NewU’s organizational structure. Dave felt, as he shared in our first interview, that the university was “preserving the model,” and in a meeting with an HR manager he described the HR as “completely out of touch if they think that running this department is the same as running smaller ones.” Despite a prolonged period of uncertainty about the Deputy HoD post, and Dave’s continued pessimism about the possibility of resolving this issue, towards the end of my time with him, the position of Deputy HoD of Different Department was created, and shortly afterwards, a department colleague was appointed to the role.

To sum up, the continued expansion and successful performance of Different Department – which led to estate issues and concerns about the Department’s fit into the institution’s organizational structure – began to cause a rift between Dave and NewU. Although he claimed to identify strongly with the university, Dave also noted that the size of his unit, as well as the NewU’s recent attitude towards it, resulted in a lesser place of the institution in Dave’s construction of his sense of self as HoD. Specifically, Dave experienced an identity tension due to a discrepancy between his vision for Different Department, which envisaged more autonomy for the unit – in line

with broader departmental discourses (section 8.1.1) – and the NewU plans for the Department, which Dave saw as potentially damaging. This suggests that Dave rejected the NewU’s proposals as a source of his managerial identities. Moreover, this was linked to another set of identity tensions directly related to Dave’s HoD role. Dave perceived a mismatch between the NewU discourses regarding the post – which included Dave having little involvement in planning the future of his unit, and the role being seen as “the same” regardless of departmental circumstances – and his sense of managerial self as the Different Department HoD, which was also consistent with the views of several of his colleagues and supported by the Faculty’s Dean (section 8.1.1). Dave thus sought the NewU’s recognition of the Department’s specific circumstances – which served as central discursive resources in Dave’s construction of his managerial identities as an HoD – including the large number of staff and doctoral students, the extensive teaching provision and the unit’s prolific research. To address this tension, Dave had had conversations with the NewU’s HR in the past, and again during my time with him, to point to his rejection of the NewU discourse about the HoD role as an identity source, and to seek the university’s adjustment of the relevant discourse, including recognition of the Different Department’s – and Dave’s – need for a Deputy. While friction persisted throughout most of my time with Dave – due to the HR’s refusal to adjust the organizational structure – by the end of my fieldwork Deputy HoD post was created and a Different Department member was appointed to the role. This signalled a resolution of Dave’s identity tension as a result of an alignment between Dave’s sense of managerial self and the reformed identity that NewU ascribed to him. In addition, the resolution of this identity tension probably also signified at least a partial positive outcome for another friction of Dave’s, namely his wish to engage in “bigger picture,” “more strategic issues,” as opposed to the “micromanage[ment]” that Dave appeared to construct as a more dominant activity at the time of our first interview.

8.1.3.2 A Fraught Position in the Faculty

In addition to Dave's sense of his own and the Different Department's misfit with respect to NewU as a whole, Dave also pointed out – in line with the comments of the Department members interviewed (section 8.1.1) – a number of features in which the unit he headed differed from other departments within the Faculty. This sometimes created a disconnect between the two entities and problematized Dave's position within the Faculty. For one thing, Dave, like his colleagues, emphasized on multiple occasions that Different Department was much larger – and located on a different floor – than other departments in the Faculty. This size, in Dave's view, made it “hard enough for people to get to know people in the Department, let alone know who these people downstairs are.” Another point of division between Different Department and the rest of the Faculty was related to the fact that some of the Department's work had “very little connection with” the broader disciplinary orientation of the Faculty. Moreover, not unlike some of my interviewees in the unit, Dave noted that there had been “some resentment of Different Department over the years” from the rest of the Faculty.

Despite all this, Dave acknowledged some – albeit limited – collaborative work between Different Department and the rest of the Faculty, and was positive about the potential for greater engagement in the future, particularly with regard to the recently established “research, policy and practice centre” mentioned earlier (sections 5.3.2, 6.5.2.3). At the same time, Dave expressed on several occasions his deep concern about Different Department being resented by the rest of the Faculty, telling me in our first interview, “I used to say we have to be careful because we'll just be viewed as the Chelsea of the Faculty, you know, the rich ... ones.” Furthermore, although he acknowledged that there were some “conflicts” for him as a member of both the Department and the Faculty because “we [Different Department] don't always do things the way the rest of the Faculty do ... and there's always been a pressure to try and do things the Faculty way,” Dave argued, “I personally don't think there is a conflict

because my argument is that if it's good for Different Department, it's good for the Faculty. If Different Department's doing well, then the Faculty's doing well."

However, despite Dave's statements above – which suggest that he was trying to overcome some of the tensions between Different Department and the rest of the Faculty – Dave raised the issue of the Department's representation in the Faculty, pointing out that because of its relative size, he felt the Department should have had more weight in decision-making compared to other units within the Faculty. This also related to Dave's role as a Faculty Management member and thus his potential for deeper engagement in the "bigger picture things" mentioned earlier (section 8.1.3.1), which in his opinion was

not straightforward, because, you know, sometimes I'll think we should be doing things one way, and it'll be decided at faculty level that we should do it another, and I tend to think, you know, we've got 40 per cent of the students, 40 per cent of the staff or whatever it is, you know, just being one little vote, you know, anyway, don't go there.

By the end of my fieldwork, however, there were some signs that this dynamic might change. As Dave explained in our second interview, following the appointment of a Deputy HoD in Different Department, the Dean seemed open to this additional representative of the Department becoming a member of the Faculty Management.

To conclude, in line with prevailing departmental discourses (section 8.1.1), Dave constructed Different Department as dissimilar from the rest of the Faculty in terms of its size, location, to some extent its academic discipline, and its mode of operation. Moreover, he felt that the Department had faced "some resentment" from other parts of the Faculty. Despite these differences and the intra-faculty separation they caused, Dave's "liminal position" (Ellis & Ybema, 2010, p. 300) as an HoD who identified with both his department and the Faculty in which it was based did not always

lead to identity tensions. Indeed, Dave pointed to examples of harmonious co-existence of his managerial identities as the Different Department HoD and as a member of the Faculty. For example, he acknowledged existing collaborations with the rest of the Faculty and was positive about some future collaborations, as well as held the view that what was “good for Different Department [was] good for the Faculty.” However, Dave also indicated the presence of some identity tensions with respect to this relationship, additional examples of which are detailed in other parts of this chapter (see e.g. sections 8.2.2.1, 8.3.2). For one thing, Dave seemed at times to be very concerned about the rest of the Faculty resenting Different Department, signalling an ongoing friction due to the discomfort caused by the Department being viewed negatively by others. Additionally, an identity tension was indicated in his remark regarding the “pressure to try and do things the Faculty way” as opposed to the Different Department’s way, as well as his occasional disagreement with decisions made in the Faculty Management. The latter friction was fed by Dave’s view of himself as HoD of a disproportionately large department not being given sufficient voice in the Faculty. This problematized Dave’s dual identity as the Different Department HoD and member of the Faculty Management. While Dave signalled a rejection of the status accorded to the Department and to him as HoD in the Faculty’s decision-making structure, his comment above suggests that he was unable to resolve the tension, at least for the time being. However, the Dean’s openness to making the Different Department’s newly appointed Deputy HoD a member of the Faculty Management would lead to a better alignment between Dave’s sense of managerial self as the Department HoD and the identity assigned to him by the Faculty.

8.1.3.3 Maintaining the Different Department’s Collegiality and Unity

In addition to Dave’s experience of identity tensions with regard to the relationship between Different Department and the wider organization of which it was a part, what struck me when I first interviewed Dave was the concern he expressed about and

commitment to resolving any internal personnel issues – such as disputes between staff – and his investment in maintaining a positive atmosphere within Different Department. Early in our first interview, Dave spent almost 20 minutes describing some issues of this nature from the past and spoke of dealing with these kinds of matters as one of “the hardest” parts of his job. Later in the interview – although he said he was “tired” of focusing on managing staff performance (section 8.1.3.1) – Dave also explicitly emphasized the importance of people management and paying attention to staff wellbeing, stating that “the [people] management stuff” was “really important,”

I do wander around and try and speak to people, just to have conversations ... and there are people who more regularly than most need pats on the back and encouragement, because they are prone to becoming down about things, and it doesn't take a great deal sometimes to bring them right back up again, but, you know, they need that.

In our second interview, when I asked Dave to reflect on the values of Different Department, the importance of collaboration and support came up again and strongly reflected the views of other department members I interviewed (section 8.1.1). Apart from mentioning doing “the best job that we can do, whatever it is, for our students and in terms of our research,” and “to be some good, [*laughs*] if you like, you know, to make a difference,” Dave also mentioned the importance of paying attention to “equality, diversity and those kinds of things,” and then focused largely on the perhaps less tangible aspects of the Department’s operations,

we don't want silos within the department, we don't want people using any kind of academic differences as a pretext for ... the delivery of personal differences or arguments ... we expect people ... to treat each other with respect and to work well together, to be a collaborative unit [silence] ... I think as a whole we are a very collegiate group ... with relatively few freeloaders. So that's another part of it, I suppose, that we expect everyone to support each other ... one of the ways in which

we've managed in ... some aspects of this to be relatively successful is by building in that kind of expectations through the department. ... So, you know, those people who do try and take advantage will be going against the broader expectations of the department, not just my expectations ...

However, in line with the reflections of my other interviewees in the Department (section 8.1.1), maintaining the Different Department's culture as a collaborative, supportive and single, integrated unit was not something that Dave took for granted. This was evident, for example, in a meeting with some relatively new staff who expressed that they were pleasantly surprised at how collegial the unit was, especially given its size. In response, Dave explained that he thought that was "a fragile treasure" that they were "trying to keep." In our second interview, Dave shared that he was "really struggling with" creating "different teams within a large group" and that he "actually fear[s]" that if you divide the unit into various teams, "you then end up with discrete little groups that don't have a clue what's going on anywhere else." Furthermore, at the time of my fieldwork, at least two potential developments were being considered which Dave felt posed a threat to the Different Department's values and culture described above, namely the possible introduction of academic staff categories (sections 5.2.2, 8.5) and the proposed relocation of a part of the Department (sections 5.3.1, 8.6). As will be explained in more detail in the continuation of the chapter, Dave resisted these proposals with great determination, which once again illustrates his commitment to maintaining the Different Department's collegial, integrated nature.

To recap, in line with my other Different Department interviewees' reflections on departmental culture and Dave as the unit's HoD (section 8.1.1), Dave, in constructing a managerial identity as HoD – specifically in relation to managing people – placed great importance on maintaining a positive atmosphere in the unit and paying attention to staff wellbeing. Like his colleagues, he discursively constructed the

Department as collaborative, collegial and supportive and, in line with their remarks, explained how the expectation to uphold these values was embodied not only in him as the unit's HoD but in Different Department as a whole. Nevertheless, Dave was cautious about possible disruptions to the Department's collegial culture and unity. This indicated an identity tension arising from the potential negative impact of the Department's expansion on its culture and pointed to a friction between Dave's sense of managerial self informed by the unit's large size and the need to manage it, and the importance of departmental discourses of collaboration, collegiality, support and unity to his managerial identities as the Different Department HoD. Dave's remarks above suggest that he was unsure how to address the unit's growth without damaging its culture, and that unease therefore persisted; I discuss Dave's responses to related identity tensions in detail later in the chapter (sections 8.5, 8.6).

Having introduced a selection of discourses that characterized Dave's discursive environment and Dave's experience of identity tensions arising from it, I present examples of Dave's discursive identity work in relation to the Different Department's research activities and the management thereof specifically in the remaining part of the chapter.

8.2 Representing an Outstanding Research Department

As demonstrated in the previous section, Different Department was perceived as different from the rest of the Faculty for a number of reasons. In this section, I focus on one particular aspect in which the Department clearly differed from other departments in the Faculty – and indeed from much of NewU – namely the unit's research performance. As indicated in chapter 5 (section 5.3.2), Different Department significantly outperformed the Faculty's other departments in terms of its primary UOA's results in the REF 2014, as well as the total number of academics who were

entered and the research funding reported in the exercise. The unit's REF 2014 performance not only made Different Department the top-performing research unit in the Faculty and the Academic Unit, but also placed the Faculty UOA 2 among the best UOAs submitted by NewU (HEFCW et al., 2014; Times Higher Education, 2014a). The Department also differed significantly from the rest of the Faculty in terms of the absolute number of doctorate-holding staff and the number of postgraduate research students affiliated with it.

In the continuation of this section, I first introduce the perspectives of research participants other than Dave regarding the Different Department's prominent position research-wise in the context of the broader organizational environment. I then turn to Dave's approaches to managing the Department's research status and activity in light of the Faculty's particular research composition, paying attention to any indications of identity tensions and Dave's responses to them.

8.2.1 “One of the Highest Performing Research Departments in the University”

The Different Department's outlier position in terms of its research performance and status was reflected on by several of my research participants outside and inside the unit. To begin with reflections by those outside the Department, in an interview, a senior NewU manager referred to Different Department as “one of the highest performing research departments in the university.” In relation to research efforts in different parts of the Faculty, a Visionary Department member described Different Department as “a faculty within a faculty,” adding that the Department “has always been much more strategic.” As indicated in chapter 7 (section 7.2.2.1), the view of Karen Fowler – the Faculty Head of Research – on her arrival at the Faculty was that “Different Department was seen as the place where all the research happened in the Faculty and ... very little else happened.” At the time of my fieldwork, Karen still

recognized the persistent difference between the research strategies of Different Department and those “on the ... floor [below].” While she described the Visionary and Reinvigorated Departments staff as either not involved in research activities or not involved in high quality research, she spoke of Different Department as producing “the real high-hitting sort of ... quality research ... that they’ve built ... up over time. So you’ve got a big staff group, diverse area within a discipline, and quite a lot of resource ... to draw on.” Ryan Quinn, HoD of Visionary Department, also pointed out a difference between his department members and the Different Department academics. As indicated earlier (section 6.4.1.2), when I asked Ryan if the Visionary Department staff were anxious about the REF, he stated,

there’s two kinds of anxiety at bay. One are the people who are producing and are wondering about how they’ll perform in [the] REF. Now for Different Department ... [t]hat will be the dominant culture up there. Down here it’s a different kind of anxiety. It is one about, I’ll be made to do something towards this. Or, it’s got nothing to do with me, why should I care about it.

I observed the perceived differences between the Faculty’s departments’ research endeavours and status on other occasions as well. For example, an interviewee from Reinvigorated Department referred to being told that a Different Department’s proposal for a doctoral scholarship was accepted into the next round of selection over theirs “because their research methods training is always bigger and better and dadada.” In another instance, Karen Fowler advised a Reinvigorated Department member who was considering applying for promotion to continue to build their publication track record before doing so because “we’re measured together with staff from Different Department who have loads of publications.” On another occasion, when Ryan Quinn organized the first meeting of an Academic Unit-wide “research, policy and practice centre” (section 6.5.2.3), the Department members made up about a half of the 25 or so participants. In another instance, during a faculty-wide meeting in which the Dean

reported on recent developments in the Faculty, I observed that Different Department was the only department whose developments were presented on separate presentation slides – two in number – and much of them revolved around the unit’s growth and the need for more research space and equipment.

The gap between Different Department and the rest of the Faculty in terms of research seemed to grow further with the arrival of the new VC and the announcement of the REF 2014 results. While I write in more detail about the Department’s path to the REF 2014 and its performance in and upshot of the exercise in the next section, I would like to note here that the unit’s REF performance and the VC’s decision to direct research funding largely to those parts of NewU that already performed at a high enough level (section 5.2.2) led to, as a senior NewU manager put it, “Different Department suddenly becom[ing] the golden child and ... the one [unit in the Faculty] ... getting all the money.” Moreover, although the Dean praised recent developments in terms of better integration of Different Department into the Faculty – for example, through the aforementioned Academic Unit-wide “research, policy and practice centre” and joint doctorate supervisions across the different departments of the Faculty – Karen Fowler’s observations on cross-disciplinary work in the Faculty pointed out that this was negatively affected by the way NewU had decided to fund research,

the reason that we’re not good enough at that [cross-disciplinary work] is because there’s very little in the way of incentives to do it. And I would say there’s even less now in that ... obviously Different Department have, in terms of the way that ... the QR funds have been divvied up ... the budget’s gone to Different Department instead of it being held at [the] Faculty level, and so it gives Different Department a bit more ... room for just doing what they wanna do.

A couple of Different Department members echoed the reflections on the unit’s research by those outside of it. Elliott described Different Department as “the dominant research force of the [Faculty],” adding, “we are one of the best ... research

units in the university.” Another academic described the Department as producing “quite a lot of good research” and added that “just about everybody in this department is research-active” (for more information on the Different Department’s pervasive research culture, see section 8.5). They found this “remarkable” and said, “I don’t think the rest of the university’s like that. Certainly not in the Faculty, it’s not like that.” The interviewee also shared the numbers of the Different Department staff who were submitted to the REF 2014, explaining that the majority of the Department academics were entered in the exercise. This, they explained, “just [isn’t] the case in the rest of the Faculty. Not even close.” Moreover, they pointed out that the Different Department academics made up a large majority of the staff who were entered in the REF by the Faculty, noting that in the context of the Academic Unit to which the Faculty belonged, Different Department entered in the REF 2014 more staff than some of the other entire faculties in the Academic Unit.

Despite the Different Department’s strong research position – and in contrast to some of my interviewees outside the Department who emphasized the unit’s privileged status compared to the rest of the Faculty – one department member problematized the Department’s place within the Faculty, specifically with regard to the unit’s role in faculty-wide platforms such as the Faculty Research Board. When I asked what developments they expected in the future, the interviewee at one point shared their view that the Different Department representatives were going to the Faculty Research Board meetings at the time “on a damage-limitation process” and instead called for “somehow engaging more with the whole process for us. And getting more control of it. Not to rule other people, but to [have] control of our own destiny.”

To summarize, the reflections by both those outside and inside Different Department discursively constructed the Department as much more active in research than the rest of the Faculty and as standing out even in the context of the Academic Unit to which it belonged and NewU as a whole. This was evident, for example, in the

characteristics of the Different Department's Faculty UOA 2 REF 2014 submission and the results achieved. The Department's REF 2014 success – accompanied by the NewU's decision to focus on funding high-performing units, mirroring national research funding patterns (section 5.1.3) – seemed to be constructed by a couple of my interviewees outside Different Department as potentially detrimental to the rest of the Faculty, and could indeed be seen as contributing to the Department's further differentiation from the rest of the Faculty. On the other hand, however, one voice from within the unit – in line with the more general discourse about the Department's need for more control and autonomy over its operations (sections 8.1.1, 8.1.3.1, 8.1.3.2) – pointed out that Different Department did not have enough control over its “destiny” in the context of the Faculty when it came to managing its research activities.

8.2.2 Managing the Different Department's Research Might

The discourses introduced above regarding the Different Department's research-related differences with respect to the broader organizational context also materialized in my interviews with and observations of Dave, particularly with regard to the Department's position in and attitude towards the rest of the Faculty. In what follows, I highlight a couple of instances of such dynamics in more detail, namely the process of faculty-wide nominations for the NewU Research Excellence Awards and Dave's reflections on faculty-wide research leadership arrangements.

8.2.2.1 The Home of the Faculty's Best Researchers

As mentioned in chapter 5 (section 5.2.2), at the time of my fieldwork, NewU introduced the Research Excellence Awards for outstanding researchers. Towards the end of my time at NewU, I attended a Faculty Management meeting where the departments' candidates for the award were presented and the Faculty Management decided on the Faculty nominees. The nomination process was particularly interesting in relation to the difference between Different Department and the rest of the Faculty,

as it explicitly pointed to an imbalance between the unit's departments in terms of candidates suitable for the award nomination.

When Drew, a senior member of the Faculty Management, turned the discussion to the Research Excellence Awards nominations, they said they would now move on to a “toughie.” They explained that the award would be given to one experienced researcher and one early career researcher. The nomination would be made by the Faculty as a whole, which meant that only one person per category could be nominated from the entire Faculty. At the meeting, it emerged that Reinvigorated and Small Departments had not nominated any of their respective academics. Ryan Quinn, HoD of Visionary Department, proposed one nominee for the early career award, highlighting their high level of research activity achieved in a short period of time. However, Dave raised concerns about the nominee; according to the nomination criteria, candidates had to have worked at the university for a certain number of years at the time of nomination, and Ryan's candidate was a too recent appointment in terms of this requirement. After confirming online that this was indeed the case, Ryan suggested that perhaps the time the candidate had spent at NewU at an earlier stage could count towards the required length of employment and it was agreed that this would be double-checked with the award committee. Representing Different Department, Dave shared that he had four potential early career nominees, describing in turn their research achievements and mentioning, among other things – where relevant and presumably in line with the award's nomination criteria – the quality of their publications as assessed in the REF 2014 or internally in Different Department, the number of citations, research grants, their research impact as measured in the REF 2014, (international) research collaborations and invited research talks. Dave concluded by saying he thought they were “all really strong.” As the conversation progressed, it also became clear that there was only one nomination for senior researcher in the entire faculty, and that was also coming from Different Department. I recorded virtually no discussion of the nominee; I only noted that Drew raised the issue of the candidate

nominating themselves, to which Dave replied that he would have nominated them anyway.

The discussion then turned to narrowing down early career researcher nominations. Dave shared which candidate he would choose as his first choice from Different Department, with which Ryan expressly agreed. Drew then raised the question of what would happen if they found out that the Visionary Department candidate was eligible. Ryan responded that the Different Department's top nominee was stronger, but again emphasized the Visionary Department candidate's "push" and significant accomplishments in a short period of time. Drew then asked if it would be fine if the nominees for both categories came from Different Department, adding, "maybe it doesn't seem fair." To this, Dave replied that the early career researcher had been returned in the REF 2014 to one of the Different Department's non-primary UOAs, and the Faculty Management members seemed to agree that this was a relevant point. The conversation was drawing to a close when Drew asked Dave to prepare nominations and agreed on the Different Department's top early career candidate as the Faculty nominee. However, if the candidate did not agree with the nomination, the second choice would be the Visionary Department nominee. If they were not eligible, Dave would choose from the three remaining candidates from Different Department. After agreeing on this, Dave expressed some concerns about the nomination process, saying it was "difficult [to select nominees] in a faculty like this where you have different disciplines where things are measured differently." He also remarked that it was "strange" that the number of faculty members nominated should be the same regardless of the faculty size.

In conclusion, the decision-making process regarding nominees for the NewU's Research Excellence Awards, in line with the discourses presented in the previous subsection, pointed to the frictions arising from the Different Department's dominant research position within the Faculty; Reinvigorated and Small Departments

did not put forward any nominees and the Visionary Department's sole early career candidate was potentially ineligible for nomination. These circumstances put Different Department in a superior position compared to the rest of the Faculty; Dave presented four "really strong" early career researchers and a senior researcher nominee, the only one from the entire faculty. Drew, who evidently represented the Faculty as a whole, was the one who raised the question of fairness if both Faculty nominees were from Different Department. This seemed to lead to an identity tension for Dave – an example of the uncomfortable co-existence of Dave's dual identity as an occupant of a "liminal" (Ellis & Ybema, 2010) site, both as the Different Department HoD and representative of the Faculty as a whole (see also e.g. sections 8.1.3.2, 8.2.2.2) – who pointed out to Drew that the early career nominee had been returned in the REF 2014 to a UOA not primary to Different Department. The use of this UOA as a discursive identity resource – while Dave continued to stand for the Department nominee and thus represent his department – suggested that this candidate selection represented broader, faculty interests and thus simultaneously highlighted both the potential nominee's and Dave's identities as members of the Faculty. Moreover, Dave's later remarks indicated his scepticism of the NewU's nomination criteria, suggesting that he rejected them as a source of his sense of managerial self, even though Different Department arguably benefited from these guidelines. In doing so, Dave again seemed to foreground his identity as member of the Faculty and not just Different Department, by implying that the Faculty as a whole was limited and potentially disadvantaged by the university's award regulations.

8.2.2.2 Who Can Manage the Different Department's Research?

In our first interview, when Dave discussed the challenges to sustaining high levels of research performance in Different Department after the REF 2014 – something I describe in more detail in section 8.3.2 – he brought up a related friction concerning the Faculty's research leadership arrangements, mirroring in part his colleague's

perception of the Department's limited "control" over their research in the context of the Faculty (section 8.2.1).

As explained in chapters 5 and 7 (sections 5.2.2, 7.2.2.3), during my fieldwork NewU was in the process of developing a new research management structure for the entire university, the final form of which had not been decided at that time. Nevertheless, in our first interview, Dave seemed critical of a potential future arrangement that was under discussion,

[a]pparently, there's going to be a Dean for Research within each faculty, [and] I don't think anyone outside Different Department can really do that role in relation to Different Department. In this faculty. So it's a fundamental problem there. [silence] ... I don't know how that will work out, but, yeah, we are different in that respect ... and it's another one of those things that causes resentment, but [silence] ... I don't know what I can do about that, you know, I'm just going to be responsible for what we're doing. (Dave's emphasis)

When I asked Dave in our second interview to elaborate on the issue raised above, that is his view that a non-member of Different Department could not take on "that role in relation to Different Department," he described some of the reasons why he thought this was the case, "I think it's partly a question of size, it's partly a question of location. ... And it's partly a question of discipline, I think. Or mismatch in activity." Dave then gave an example of a recent NewU-wide call for bids for QR investment funding with a relatively short timeframe for proposal development and the Christmas break in-between. He described that by the time the call reached departments, "it'd been filtered in so many different ways it was all a bit unclear ... it's very unclear what we should do." He went on to explain that Different Department "didn't really do a great deal," suggesting that he did not understand what the call was about until

the Faculty Management [meeting] just before Christmas ... Now, I wasn't the only one this was sent to, it was sent to everyone, but I don't think others had understood what was being asked for either. So I think we really missed ... quite a big trick there.

Dave went on to explain why he thought such a misunderstanding had occurred,

I think this is a communication issue within the Faculty. ... it's a question of people not relying on e-mails, but talking to each other. And it's just easier to talk to some people than others and get clear answers depending on where you are and, you know, whether you see them or not. [silence] So ... I think ... if a member of Different Department had been more directly involved in that earlier, we would've been in a much better place than we are now.

To sum up, Dave's remarks presented above point to his use of the more broadly present discourse of the Different Department's difference from the rest of the Faculty in relation to the unit's research activity (section 8.2.1) as an important discursive resource in Dave's managerial identities construction as the Department HoD. In line with the broader calls for more autonomy for the unit (sections 8.1.1, 8.1.3.1), the Different Department's difference in Dave's eyes justified his perspective that at the level of the Faculty only a Different Department member could direct the Department's research efforts. However, given the then and potential future faculty-wide research management arrangements – with the Faculty Head of Research coming from outside Different Department – this posed a “fundamental problem.” It thus pointed to an ongoing identity tension for Dave that problematized his identity as member of the Faculty. This was evident, for example, in the case of the Department “miss[ing] ... quite a big trick” when it came to a research funding opportunity, which Dave attributed to the unit's lack of engagement in research leadership beyond the departmental level. In addition, Dave was not only critical of the Faculty's research management arrangements, but also reflected on the Department's difference with

respect to research activity as one of the causes of “resentment” towards Different Department by the rest of the Faculty; a perception also found among some of the Department members (section 8.1.1). In this context, Dave expressed discomfort with the situation at several points during the time I spent with him, indicating an identity tension arising from a clearly uncomfortable co-existence of Dave’s dual identity as member of Different Department and the Faculty (section 8.1.3.2). In this case, however, Dave suggested that he did not know how to address the issue while responding to the tension by explicitly emphasizing his primary affiliation and responsibility to the Department rather than the Faculty. This points to the presence of “antagonistic discursive resources” (Clarke et al., 2009) in Dave’s construction of his managerial identities in relation to the Faculty, as at other times he sought to adopt (see e.g. section 8.2.2.1) – or even quite keenly embraced (section 8.6.2.1) – identities that emphasized his and the Different Department’s membership in the Faculty.

8.3 Steering the Different Department’s Research Rise

Having provided an overview of the discourses regarding the Different Department’s research status at the time of my fieldwork – as a unit with a strong research base that was overperforming research-wise compared to the rest of the Faculty and much of NewU – in this section I explore in more detail the Department’s path to its research successes and the outcomes thereof. In particular, I look at the period leading up to the REF 2014 and the phase that followed, presenting the unit’s ups and downs on this path. I begin with a subsection conveying the views of my research participants other than Dave, and then turn to the perspectives of the Different Department HoD himself, exploring the identity tensions that arose for Dave along the way, and his responses to them.

8.3.1 Slow and Steady Wins the Race?

In my interviews with the Different Department members, a narrative about the Department emerged that was related to the unit's gradually increasing focus on research over the past few decades, and particularly in the five to ten years preceding my fieldwork. For example, one interviewee recalled the time when "research was very much a kind of hobby" and there "wasn't even really any research happening, to be fair." Another also spoke of the time when "there was no research, there was nothing here." According to one research participant, "even ten years ago" research "was not really central to what we do," which was consistent with another colleague's view that while research had been taken "seriously" in the Department at the time, "it was all very much to do with the students and to do with the teaching." By the time of my fieldwork, however, Kendall said, "that's changed ... it's [research] just steadily gone up. ... so the culture of the place has been able to change from always just talking about teaching to being able to focus on research as well." Indeed, Ray saw the "much more serious focus on ... research" as "the main change" they observed in the past several years, and one Different Department member shared their disbelief at the unit's research progress over time, "we're now internationally known for our research here ... I can't believe where we are now compared to what we were." Max's assessment of research in Different Department in the run-up to the REF 2014 also echoed the views of colleagues, as they noted that research was "thriving" at the time.

A number of my interviewees pointed out that the Department's research progress was at least partly related to the increase in staff numbers already mentioned (section 8.1.1) and the fact that most of these appointments were academics with promising research profiles. For example, one Different Department academic reflected, "we've recruited people ... on the basis of their research outputs. ... ten years ago, that wouldn't be the case. Maybe even five." Elliott similarly shared, "everyone

now that's coming in is highly research-active." According to Jamie, this growth in – research-active – staff

afforded us a few luxuries in terms of being able to get some really coherent research groupings going now ... so that whereas before we might have had one or two people doing different things, we've now got sort of bodies of people which are able to push the areas forward in terms of research.

These developments in the Department also fed into the unit's Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and REF submissions. In this respect, however, Different Department faced some obstacles. A look at the Department's primary UOA's RAE 2001 and 2008 results shows a slight fall, with the average output rating between one and two star in the 2008 exercise (Department for Employment and Learning et al., 2001; HEFCW et al., 2008; Times Higher Education, 2008). Indeed, Stevie felt that "the Department didn't do quite as well as it had hoped" in the RAE 2008. As Elliott indicated, one of the reasons for the Different Department's weaker performance in the RAE 2008 was that a few of the Department's core members – along with their publications, research funding and postgraduate research student numbers – were returned to the Faculty UOA 1 (section 6.2.1), which "ruined the Faculty UOA 2."

However, as mentioned earlier (section 5.3.2 and the beginning of section 8.2), the Department's performance surged in the REF 2014. I first became aware of this early in my fieldwork when I was shadowing Ryan Quinn, HoD of Visionary Department, who mentioned in a strategic meeting with his unit's senior members that Different Department was "in the weeds" after the RAE 2008, but "outstanding" in the REF 2014. Not only did the Department significantly improve its rating and position in the national ranking with respect to its primary UOA (HEFCW et al., 2014; Times Higher Education, 2014a), but, as noted earlier (section 5.3.2), the Different Department members also contributed to the submissions of two other UOAs, which – according to the introduction to the Department research strategy – brought the

overall percentage of the unit's academics who were returned to the REF 2014 to 75 per cent. Moreover, reflecting the unit's hiring strategy mentioned above, most of them were (Senior) Lecturers who, as Kendall explained, had "no extra research time to do it." As indicated in chapter 7 (section 7.3.2.2), this was also recognized as a success by Dave's fellow HoD Karen Fowler at the Reinvigorated Department's away-day, when she argued for her department's (Senior) Lecturers' greater engagement in research endeavours, telling her staff, "[t]he sobering fact is that the majority of [the] Different Department staff who [were] returned to [the] REF 2014 were Lecturers or Senior Lecturers, not Readers and Professors."

The Different Department's research success was acknowledged by a number of my research participants. Terry, the Dean, described the unit as having "had a great REF [2014] result." A couple of my interviewees from the Department suggested that the unit's research strength was what contributed to NewU "now taking a lot more notice of Different Department" (Jamie). Several research participants mentioned the significant amount of research funding that NewU had awarded to Different Department after the REF 2014, which signalled the university's recognition of the Department's research successes. A senior NewU manager explained, "in the new strategic plan, there's a very strong focus on research excellence. And funding research excellence" (section 5.2.2). As mentioned earlier (section 5.3.2, 8.2.1), this made Different Department one of the NewU's units that benefited greatly from this approach. This was also acknowledged by Karen Fowler, who told her staff during the Reinvigorated Department's away-day, "Different Department has loads of money because they did well in [the] REF 2014 and the VC supports such centres of excellence." Within the Department, a few of my interviewees also acknowledged the new VC's focus on research – while a couple explicitly commented on the improving research support and structures as a result (section 5.2.2) – and spoke of the benefits that NewU had afforded Different Department following the successful REF 2014 performance. Max, for example, noted,

we've got much more money now ... I think the university has been immensely generous in the way it has put resources into Different Department ... to reflect the success that we've had in the REF [2014] results ... I think that's a great ... benefit.

Stevie similarly shared, “[o]ne of the really positive things ... is the renewed amount of resource that we now have following the 2014 REF.” They went on to explain that this allowed the Department to hire several “research assistants, and that’s something we haven’t had before.” Indeed, a couple of other interviewees in Different Department also commented on the positive impact they expected these appointments to have on the unit’s research. Furthermore, at the time of my fieldwork in the Department, additional research funds were being distributed among the unit’s academics to “kick-start” various research projects.

Given these developments, it was not surprising that a number of my interviewees were optimistic about the Different Department’s future research performance. Nevertheless, the Department’s path to research success and its maintenance also brought challenges. First, although I also address this elsewhere in this chapter (section 8.4.1), I would like to note here that some of my interviewees expressed concerns about what such a strong focus on research meant for the Department’s teaching efforts. For example, one Different Department academic commented,

when we were really pushing forward research-wise, [silence] we made a lot of appointments who looked very good research-wise on paper, for the REF and things like that, very impressive, but teaching- and contributing-wise [in terms of administration] to the Department, I think were the wrong appointments.

Looking to the future, Stevie raised a concern that the “pressure on ... keeping [research] high and active and meeting or exceeding ... the level of [the REF 2014]”

meant having to “[temper] the expectation that we should pull resource away from the teaching aspect. ... and I think that’s going to become even more difficult to do.” Similarly, although positive about the Department’s continued “commitment to teaching and learning,” Pat acknowledged that whereas “it always used to be that it [teaching and research] was equal priorities in everybody’s workload” that had changed “because there are specific things that we need to accommodate for for the REF 2020.”

At the same time, a couple of my interviewees expressed concern about the Department’s ability to sustain the level of research quality it had achieved in the REF 2014. Stevie said, “there’s ... I think a positivity that we can still meet that going forward, but the fear we could fall, you know, could drop down.” A few of my interviewees talked about the limited research resources Different Department had compared to their competitors. Jo, for example, put a positive spin on it, “our research resources are relatively low compared to ... red-brick,²⁸ Russell Group universities, and yet the achievement in the REF [2014] was not far off that level.” Max, while acknowledging that Different Department could expect less success in winning competitive research grants awarded by the UK’s national research funding bodies and had “less” research equipment “than at Russell Group universities,” was nevertheless optimistic about other research funding opportunities and positive about having been “improving this [research equipment] considerably.” Kendall, on the other hand, was more concerned about this issue, sharing,

I think our research is not as good as people think ... it’s good, but other places have the resources to move on, and [silence] I think unless we sort something out

²⁸ In the UK, the term “red-brick university” has been used to describe universities established “in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,” where “red-brick” refers to the material from which they were built (Kok et al., 2010, p. 101). Several of my research participants used this term as shorthand for research-intensive universities.

here ... we're gonna start slipping back a bit. And you've always got to go onwards, you always got to improve. [silence]

In conclusion, the interviews with the Different Department members revealed a departmental discourse of the unit's transformation from one that viewed research as tangential to its focus on teaching and students to one that was very research-active. This was particularly visible in the five to ten years preceding my fieldwork, as evidenced by the relatively recent practice of appointing teaching staff with promising research profiles. This discourse of departmental research evolution was accompanied by a discursive contrast between the unit's unsatisfactory performance in the RAE 2008 – which was at least partly due to the 'artificial' nature of the Faculty UOA 1 (see also section 6.2.1, 7.2.2.1), which disadvantaged the Faculty UOA 2 – and the Different Department's primary UOA's success in the REF 2014, which was largely due to the research done by the Department academics with significant teaching responsibilities. The recognition of the unit's REF 2014 success was accompanied by a discourse of the benefits this afforded Different Department – in light of the NewU's reformed approach to funding research (section 5.2.2) – demonstrated through further strengthening of research efforts in the Department, including the appointment of research assistants and support to “kick-start” several research projects. However, these positive research developments also raised some concerns. In line with national discourses pointing to the tensions between research and teaching (section 5.1.3.2), a departmental discourse emerged emphasizing the (possible) negative effects of the unit's recent research intensification on teaching. For example, interviewees described some research appointments as “wrong” in terms of their contribution to the Department's teaching and administration, and suggested that teaching was no longer always given equal weight in the Different Department academics' workloads compared to research (more on the tension between research and teaching in the unit in section 8.4). Moreover, the REF 2014 success led to the pressure to maintain it, and in line with the broader national picture (section 5.1.4.3) – although only one interviewee suggested

that this was a serious challenge – Different Department was discursively constructed as being in a worse position than its competitors at research-intensive universities.

8.3.2 Emerging Cautiously Victorious After the REF 2014, “Against the Odds”

During my time with Dave, the issue of the state of research and the management of the Different Department’s submissions to the national research assessment scheme already came up in my initial interview with him. While he briefly mentioned the REF and the Department’s performance in the REF 2014 earlier in the interview, he elaborated on the matter when I explicitly asked him about the challenges related to departmental research. However, in answering this question, Dave signalled that this was one of the central concerns when he took on the HoD role, recalling, “that, yeah, you asked what the priorities were [when Dave was appointed HoD], *this*, I’ve almost forgotten this” (Dave’s emphasis).

Dave focused his narrative on the period since the RAE 2008 and highlighted the Department’s submission and the outcomes of this exercise as a critical point, explaining,

previously, [the] Different Department’s research had been, you know, pretty decent, actually, but in the 2008 RAE, some of our key staff ... had been appointed to the Faculty UOA 1. So we lost income, we lost research students and so forth [of the Different Department members who were returned to the Faculty UOA 1].

This may explain why Dave, when he first spoke about the state of research in the unit, remarked, “Different Department’s got where it’s got to in terms of research almost against the odds.” He continued, describing his reaction to the RAE 2008 result, “I was so pained by the result in the Faculty UOA 2, really pained, and I was totally determined that we were gonna do better this time round [in the REF 2014].” He explicitly

mentioned a few factors that he believed played a crucial role in the Department's turnaround after the RAE 2008 described in the subsection above,

the way we've been able to achieve it has largely been because of our growth, because we've been able to, and deliberately so, appoint good research people as lecturers. Now, that's not the only reason, but it's one of the things that's maintained that, and we've been doing that now for a few years.

He later added, "we did put a lot of effort into supporting research and appointing people in areas where we've hadn't had people ... And we've got the [research] equipment that they need and so on. So that was a big emphasis." Moreover, Dave said, "we managed to win the battle not to lose staff to the Faculty UOA 1 this time, so that made a big difference."

Following the REF 2014, Dave noted in the same interview that the Different Department's achievements in the exercise were one of the main factors that got them "noticed within the university," in addition to the Department's good performance on a number of other metrics. He stated,

[the] REF was a big thing for us ... And we did well, you know, by our standards. So ... that gave us a lot of confidence, and with the new VC coming in and a greater emphasis on research than previously, that was really important.

Nevertheless, as some of Dave's department colleagues also noted (section 8.3.1), the road to and the aftermath of the Different Department's successful REF 2014 performance was not without challenges and risks. For one, Dave noted some tensions among the Department members due to his staunch determination to improve the unit's REF results. He shared,

people would be accusing me of, you only care about research and so on, it's not true by the way, I care a lot about teaching, but it was the focus ... 'cause these results, because there's such a gap between the [national research assessment] exercises, you just have them forever, what seems like forever, so I was determined to do something about that.

Moreover, after the REF 2014 success, Dave seemed wary of taking its continuation for granted,

the problem that I think we now face [silence] ... it's not a given that that will continue. It's quite fragile, I think. Because we do it, relatively speaking, on a shoestring. It doesn't seem like that ... within the Faculty, I think, but it's true when you compare it with institutions we are competing against. [long silence] So I think, you know, we've got to be more and more ambitious, in line with the university approach.

At the same time, I would like to note here that “the university approach” to research was not without challenges, as it also stood for a potential introduction of academic staff categories (section 5.2.2), which Dave opposed; I elaborate on this later in this chapter (section 8.5.2).

To summarize, at a general level, the above provides evidence of the centrality of research management, and in particular the Different Department's performance in the REF, as discursive resources in Dave's construction of a sense of managerial self as the Department HoD. Indeed, in response to my question about research-related challenges – in which I did not explicitly mention the RAE or REF – Dave talked about the RAE 2008 and the period before the REF 2014, discursively placing an equation mark between research and the national research assessment schemes. The importance of the Different Department's satisfactory performance in the RAE and REF for Dave's managerial identities was also evident in Dave being “really pained” about the

Faculty UOA 2's RAE 2008 outcome, which he explained – as did one of his colleagues (section 8.3.1) – at least in part by the fact that some of the Department academics were submitted to the Faculty UOA 1. This clearly caused an identity tension for Dave. In response, he expressed his determination to change this in the REF 2014 as he sought an alignment between his vision for the unit and its realities at the time. The emphasis on research in the Department after the RAE 2008 was evident in, for example, the appointment of “good research people as lecturers,” recruitment of staff in new disciplinary subfields and investment in research equipment. However, the process of ensuring a successful Faculty UOA 2 REF 2014 submission was not without tensions. Dave pointed to the emergence of an identity tension related to the sometimes challenging co-existence of his dual identity as representative of the Department and member of the Faculty (see also e.g. section 8.2.2), in this case related to the intention for selected Different Department academics to be once again entered in the Faculty UOA 1. Dave suggested that he fought this idea and successfully claimed a managerial identity to which the interests of Different Department and the Faculty UOA 2 – rather than those of the Faculty UOA 1 and, presumably, the Faculty – were primary (see also section 8.2.2.2), by “win[ning] the battle not to lose staff to the Faculty UOA 1.” Notably, this instance of Dave's rejection of the Faculty UOA 1 as a relevant discursive identity resource was at odds with Dave's use of the UOA as a discursive element in constructing a managerial identity as the Department HoD in other circumstances (section 8.2.2.1). Moreover, Dave pointed to an identity tension arising from the fact that some of his colleagues felt that he “only care[d] about research” – at the expense of teaching – and Dave's perception of this assessment as untrue. That is, in response to the identity tension, Dave claimed a managerial identity as an HoD committed to overseeing both teaching and research, although he justified his strong focus on research by the lasting presence of the REF results. In this way, he once again constructed the REF discourses as central discursive resources in the formation of a sense of managerial self, which seems to indicate that he continued to position himself,

at least in part, in opposition to departmental discourses that emphasized the importance of teaching (further discussion of this follows in section 8.4.1).

Despite this friction in the run-up to the REF 2014, however, Dave pointed to the Different Department's REF 2014 success and thus the likely resolution of an identity tension that had been present since the unsatisfactory RAE 2008 results, as well as the Department's alignment with the recent NewU discourse that constructed research as a more valued endeavour than it was under the previous leadership. The fact that Dave attached importance to the latter suggests that the NewU research discourses found a place in the formation of his managerial identities, a point Dave made again when he committed to be "more and more ambitious, in line with the university approach" post-REF 2014. This last statement, however, can be seen as a response to another set of (potential) identity tensions, as the Different Department's continued research success was, according to Dave, "not a given." First, Dave hinted at a possible future identity tension if the Department did not maintain its high level of research performance, a goal that, as suggested at the beginning of this subsection, was central to Dave's sense of managerial self as the unit's HoD and was now also expected by the university. Second, Dave signalled a discrepancy between the perception within the Faculty that Different Department was well-resourced (section 8.2.1) and the disadvantageous position – observed by some of his department colleagues (section 8.3.1) – of the Department compared to its competitors, in the face of which Dave was nevertheless expected to lead the unit to sustained research success.

8.4 Growing and Supporting the Research Base

As indicated in Dave's reflections in the previous section, he remained committed to maintaining and enhancing the Different Department's research performance during my time there. However, as briefly alluded to earlier in this chapter (section 8.3), this meant that he had to deal with some persisting challenges. In the following subsections,

two sets of such frictions are explored from the perspective of the Different Department academics interviewed and Dave: the perceived potential negative consequences of a continued focus on research – including through the hiring of researchers with limited teaching experience or interest in students and teaching – on the Department’s teaching, on the one hand, and the constraints that the teaching and administrative loads of the Department staff placed on their research time, on the other. Attention is given to the process of Dave’s discursive identity work in light of these ongoing challenges, in particular Dave’s experiences of identity tensions and how he addressed them.

8.4.1 Focusing on Research – to the Detriment of Teaching?

As mentioned earlier, both the Different Department members interviewed and Dave himself acknowledged some difficulties arising from the Department’s increased focus on research in the several years preceding my fieldwork (section 8.3). In what follows, I elaborate on the Department members’ views of what this growing attention to research meant for the unit’s teaching and administrative aspects. I then examine examples of Dave’s responses to situations that illustrate this tension between attention to research and attention to the teaching quality and students.

8.4.1.1 What Comes First?

While all my interviewees in Different Department acknowledged in various ways the unit’s good performance in both research and teaching – which is not surprising given the Department’s REF 2014 outcome and its regular assessment of over 90 per cent in the NSS in the years preceding my fieldwork – the unit’s increased focus on research, as explained earlier, brought with it some challenges (section 8.3), particularly with regard to the Department’s other important areas of work, teaching and administration. I discuss these in more detail below.

To begin with, Stevie expressed concern that the focus on research could be at the expense of teaching, but also acknowledged that it was difficult to balance the two, “if we put all our energies into research, then ... the other side [teaching] is ... going to be something that then causes problems. So I think it’s a very fine tightrope walk and it’s a very difficult one.” Although they raised the issue in the context of the Different Department members’ limited research time due to heavy teaching workloads – which I discuss in more detail below (section 8.4.2) – Max also reflected on the importance of teaching to the Department and emphasized the financial aspect of the matter,

[w]e have extremely good teaching rates, we have extremely good NSS scores and we need to maintain those and ... that does come back to ... the financial issue that the majority of our money is made through teaching, in fact most of university’s money is made through teaching, it’s not made through the huge research grants that are brought in ... by individuals. So we need to make sure that that is ... it’s got to be high on our agenda.

Another Different Department member, who was also aware of the financial importance of teaching for the Department, pointed out the resulting risk of continued recruitment of research-focused academics,

you’d have to have a pretty good research [silence] CV to even get an interview. [silence] Which I think is ... a bit of a shame, it means you’re ... just recruiting the same type of people all the time. And actually ... the core business is teaching. That’s [the large majority] of our income. So to keep appointing people whose core interest is [a very small part] of our business [silence] ... is dangerous, I think.

Another interviewee expressed a similar concern,

I think that's always a challenge of striking that balance between getting people in who can really strengthen our research but also getting people who are gonna fit on the teaching and admin side of things. 'Cause you've gotta do both here.

They went on to point out that the hiring of some research-focused academics was a cause for concern, mentioning the issue of “a few” staff “who don’t do what they need to do teaching-wise and admin-wise ... but they’re alright ‘cause they’re getting on with their research.” Similarly, although noting that this was more of a problem in the past than at the time of my fieldwork, another research participant reflected on instances where some of the Department academics tried to avoid their teaching-related duties (see also section 8.3.1), sharing, “I think sometimes there’s a bit of a misunderstanding ... from some members of staff that we might be a research institute, if the students went away we wouldn’t exist.”

To sum up, while the previous section illustrated Dave’s commitment to ensuring the Different Department’s high standards of research performance – including due to the REF-related pressures and the NewU’s recent increased research expectations (section 5.2.2) – the above reflections by the Department members indicate that Dave operated in a discursive environment that was also characterized by a discourse that constructed teaching and administration as central to the unit’s operations (see also section 8.3 and the remainder of this section), not least because of the financial importance of teaching. Echoing the national discussion on the tension between research and teaching (section 5.1.3.2), this signalled the presence of conflicting discourses, as evidenced by the scepticism of some Different Department members towards the continued hiring of research-oriented academics because of the possible negative impact on teaching and administration.

8.4.1.2 Managing the Researchers' Teaching Performance

Given the friction between the importance placed on research and the importance placed on teaching, during my time with Dave I had the opportunity to observe him being directly confronted with and responding to a challenge he contextualized in reference to “some of the ... staff with research background find[ing] [certain aspects of teaching] difficult.” In the instances described below, Dave demonstrated that he “care[d] a lot about teaching,” as he mentioned in our first interview, even if his responses to this issue could be described as mitigating the consequences of appointing strong researchers with “less teaching experience” in the first place.

Early on during shadowing, I observed a performance review meeting with Robin, a staff member with significant teaching responsibilities. The meeting largely consisted of Dave and Robin going over the performance review form, discussing Robin's performance and setting objectives for the future. Dave started the meeting by asking Robin an open-ended question about how things had been. When Robin mentioned “some difficult weeks in the beginning of the semester,” Dave asked what the difficulty had been. Robin mentioned that they had found “it difficult to engage ... students” in certain teaching activities. Although Robin seemed to suggest that they had already made some efforts to solve the issue and that things had improved since then, mentioning that they had “some very enthusiastic [students] now,” as the meeting went on, Dave – although sympathetic to Robin's situation in my opinion – seemed firm in his view that they should continue to work on the identified problem.

After this first brief conversation on the subject, Dave came back to it several times during the meeting, either to find out more about it or to give advice and instructions on how Robin should approach the issue. For example, early in the meeting, after Robin had told him which classes they were teaching, Dave enquired further about the classes that had been difficult. He then noted that the student groups

differed and suggested that the reason students were not coming to class might have to do with the fact that they did not like the group dynamic and that they might need to be “chased up.” Dave then directed Robin to begin using one of the NewU’s online platforms that provided insights into students’ online engagement and to list this as one of their performance objectives. Dave added that studies had shown a link between online platform use and dropout, and that student engagement improved after “an intervention” – that is talking to students about it – implying that Robin should do just that. Later, after the conversation had already moved in a different direction, Dave raised the issue again and asked Robin if they had talked to other people in the Department about it. Towards the end of the meeting, when Robin again mentioned the problem with student engagement, Dave expressed his view that “it is a bit of a slippery slope when people start to disengage” and reiterated that Robin should include following up with students and using the NewU’s online platform in their list of performance objectives.

A couple of weeks after the meeting with Robin, Dave raised the issue in a conversation with some senior department members. He explained, “some of the ... staff with research background find [certain aspects of teaching] difficult, and I think we should try and do something about it.” Dave then shared his ideas on how to help these staff address some of their teaching-related issues, including the possibility of approaching the NewU’s professional development unit, doing “something about it ourselves,” such as “sharing good practices, ideas” within the Department, “voice coaching” and “theatrical training.” After a brief conversation about possible ways forward – in which Val, one of the meeting attendees, mentioned, “maybe we can also learn something from history,” giving an example of a lecturer who they thought used to need support but did not anymore – Dave concluded, “with the new staff coming, and some of them having less teaching experience, we need to think about these things.”

In conclusion, the above examples provide an insight into Dave's responses to an identity tension arising from the friction between Dave's sense of managerial self as an HoD for whom ensuring a high standard of departmental research was central – as evidenced in the practice of hiring research-active teaching staff (see also section 8.3, 8.4.2.3) – and the simultaneous importance to Dave's managerial identity of ensuring high-quality teaching, as evidenced in situations where the latter appeared to be threatened by the focus on research. Dave's response to the student (dis)engagement experienced by Robin pointed to his attention to teaching- and student-related aspects of the Different Department staff's performance, with Dave asserting a managerial identity informed by these discursive resources, in line with previously introduced departmental discourses that emphasized the importance of teaching (section 8.4.1.1). This was evident in Dave's repeated enquiries and comments on the issue, as well as in his advice to Robin on how to address it. In addition, Robin's objectives for following up with students and using the NewU's online platform were formally recorded, and Robin's performance would be measured against these goals in the future as part of the NewU's performance review system. In this way, Dave again gave weight to the Department staff's teaching performance, not only as something he personally "care[d] a lot about," but also as a sign of a managerial identity informed by the NewU discourse of performance management, as he drew on the possible solutions identified by NewU and a formal format developed by the university for managing individual staff performance. Furthermore, in the related meeting with senior department members, Dave suggested that it was the Department's responsibility to provide teaching support to staff with "research background" and "less teaching experience," going beyond the kind of individual guidance Dave provided to Robin. In this way, Dave reiterated the importance he placed on the Department academics' teaching performance, while acknowledging the frictions that arose from hiring lecturing staff with limited teaching experience. Despite this realization, however, Dave did not bring up the possibility of no longer hiring candidates who had a strong research profile but a weaker teaching profile, maintaining his commitment to improving the Department's research

performance. At the same time, he did not give up the idea of introducing teaching support for these appointments, even when a colleague suggested that this might not be necessary. This seems to be indicative of an ongoing identity tension that Dave experienced as he constructed a sense of managerial self characterized by a balance between his commitment to maintaining the Department's high-quality teaching and research performance.

8.4.2 Paying Attention to Academics' Research Time

While, as described above, Different Department and its HoD faced challenges in terms of teaching and the administrative aspects of its operations arising from the increased focus on research, at the same time the Department also faced issues when it came to ensuring the unit's academics sufficient time for research. In the following subsections, I present the Department members' views on this matter and continue with Dave's perspectives on balancing Different Department staff's research time with their teaching and administrative workloads.

8.4.2.1 Never Enough Research Time?

The Department research strategy, signalling the friction between the Different Department academics' research and teaching activities, described "the challenge of balancing research time and teaching workload," while noting that the relationship between the two was "of key importance" to research productivity. In my interviews with the unit's members, two tensions in particular emerged in this context: first, some felt that academics' research time was (too) low, and second, the NewU's features and structures imposed limitations on how the workloads were devised.

To begin with the Different Department academics' perceptions of insufficient research time, Stevie, for example, shared,

my understanding is that staff are well resourced in terms of [research] hours, but I think the subjective feeling ... [is] very different sometimes ... to the numbers that turn up on the workloading spreadsheet. So I think there's a tension there.

Max agreed, while making a comparison between NewU – as a post-1992 university – and research-intensive universities,

[i]t's completely understandable why they're [staff] concerned over workloads, they do do more teaching here than at [a research-intensive university]. Yet they also have time. ... they have at least one day a week ... to research, and in many cases more than that. ... My take on this is that people have a lot more time than they think they have.

Moreover, Max was optimistic – as were a couple of other interviewees – about the recently appointed research assistants who would partially mitigate the academics' lower research time. Furthermore, as indicated earlier (sections 8.3.1, 8.4.1.1), a few interviewees reflected critically on instances where the Different Department members wanted to avoid or reduce their teaching-related responsibilities in order to prioritize their research efforts. Pat, for example, commented,

if it's part of your job, do it. ... if you've got marking to do, then we expect you to do it. You give up your time, we give you a salary, you have expertise in that area, do your marking.

While the above reflections suggest that the perception of low research time allocation might sometimes be just that – a perception – and that it was inappropriate to prioritize research over teaching responsibilities, other comments from my interviewees suggest that research time was indeed too low, or at least that it would be welcome if it were higher. Cody, for example, noted, “the level of teaching ... and occupation ... that's required to pull off this size of teaching provision can make it very

difficult to organize research. In terms of people's free time, time to meet and things like that." They went on to share their view that the Different Department academics can be sent

very interesting and exciting email[s] about making research groups ... and plugging into this funding or that funding and so forth ... But [they] can land in people's inboxes at a time when they've got [various teaching- and student-related tasks to do].

A few other interviewees expressed similar views on academics' teaching and research workloads. Ray shared,

people have ... reasonably high teaching loads here. That doesn't mean that they can't get on with doing their research work, [silence] but it ... does present a challenge. ... my idea would be that people would have a little bit more time to spend on research.

Tyler voiced a similar opinion, "it would be lovely if we had more research time ... just because people love doing research."

These academics also linked the issues with research time allocation to the broader university set-up. One linked them to the NewU's traditionally teaching-heavy focus and "this whole research emphasis and the level of research emphasis [being] quite new." Moreover, they spoke of the increase in staff numbers being linked to growth in student recruitment, so "more staff doesn't mean we have more staff time available." Additionally, they criticized the existing timetabling system which, according to this interviewee, did not include designating time for research activities, and disapproved of some academics' heavy "administrative loads that seriously under-employ them." Similarly, another research participant problematized the lack of flexibility in timetabling and linked this to estate availability limitations given the

Different Department's "big student numbers." Finally, one staff member pointed to the restrictions set on workloads by the university, although they also stressed that the Different Department academics should not "just [rant] about this" – "too much teaching" and "want[ing] to do more research" – but "need to argue for changes ... show what we can do and therefore encourage these changes."

To sum up, while an earlier subsection pointed to the presence of a departmental discourse that constructed teaching as crucial to the Different Department's operations (section 8.4.1.1), the above department members' remarks point to the simultaneous existence of a departmental discourse that emphasized the importance of research to the unit's academics. Specifically, although some of the interviewees expressed some scepticism about the legitimacy of this discourse, this subsection demonstrated the presence of a discourse that constituted research time granted to the Different Department academics as insufficient given the importance and size of teaching provision, which was also reflected in the Department research strategy. A couple of interviewees linked these perceptions to the NewU's traditional focus on teaching (sections 5.1.4.1, 5.2.1), while others discursively constructed the university's selected structural issues – including timetabling and workload systems, estate-related constraints and heavy administrative responsibilities (see also sections 5.2.1, 7.3) – as barriers to more research time.

8.4.2.2 Creating Research Time

Similar to the above reflections of a number of the Different Department members, Dave recognized the issues associated with staff perceptions of low research time and the problems related to the NewU's workload system. In our first interview, Dave explained to me that because research was "a visible sign of one's own success," more so than teaching, and "it's what most people came in to do and how they measure

themselves,” it “create[s] ... quite a lot of feeling [among the Different Department members].” He explained,

so you get defensive responses from people, and then you get the standard response from others, which is that they don't have time, and that it's all about how they get time. So, and then of course other people resent the fact that these people are claiming that they're somehow special and different and need more time, whereas they don't 'cause they're not ... And the way this university does workloads in itself can create tensions between people 'cause they think it's not fair. (Dave's emphasis)

The following examples of exchanges between Dave and his staff members show that Dave recognized the important role of research in the Department academics' work and that he was generally careful to devise fair staff workloads.

The performance review meeting between Dave and Robin, part of which I summarized earlier (section 8.4.1.2), not only pointed to the challenges of appointing staff with less teaching experience, but it also showed that Dave paid attention to Robin's research activity and a workload that enabled its progress. Dave not only enquired about and commented on a range of research-related topics – including Robin's research projects, postgraduate research student supervision and research collaborations – but also raised several points relating to Robin's workload. He asked how they were “balancing teaching and research” and posed a more general question about time management, to which Robin replied, “it would be great if I had more time for paper-writing,” adding that they “had to give up some things” but that they would resume some of the research activities next semester when they would be free of teaching one day a week. In the continuation, Dave instructed Robin, “you should be thinking about next year, there might be more staff coming in, so you should think about what pattern of teaching you would like,” implying that Robin might have more flexibility in structuring their teaching workload and thus their research time in the

future. At the same time, towards the end of the meeting, Dave also acknowledged the persisting workload-related tensions, asking Robin, “[i]s there anything you would want apart from the magical need for time?”

A similar effort to create and preserve staff’s research time could be observed in Dave’s conversation with Jules, who had recently taken on an administration-heavy role. When Dave enquired about Jules’ perception of their new role and the workload it entailed, he also explicitly noted, “I’m not keen on taking the research from you.” Jules replied, “the extra hours you have given me are helpful,” adding that it should be fine as long as they had some time next semester. Jules’ response indicated that Dave had previously already taken steps to adjust Jules’ research time in light of their new responsibilities.

More generally, during my time with him, Dave showed on several occasions his concern for fairness in the Different Department staff’s workloads. For example, during a meeting with a senior department member, Dave wondered why a particular staff member had a “light teaching load” and commented, “if you were somebody else looking at that, having 100 hours of teaching more than [them] ... how would that be?” This resonated with Dave’s thoughts during our first interview mentioned above, in which he recognized the Department members’ awareness of other people’s workloads and the friction this might cause. In relation to Dave’s operations in the NewU’s context specifically, there were several instances where he raised concerns about how certain teaching responsibilities were – unrealistically – accounted for in the university’s workload system, leading to imbalances in people’s workloads and a mismatch between their official and actual workloads. For example, in a conversation with another senior department member, Dave expressed the view that they needed a “system for equity and fairness [in workloads] which surpasses the university one because that one’s unfair.” Thus, despite being constrained by the NewU’s “unfair” workload system, Dave seemed to be striving to develop as fair a departmental workload system as possible.

To summarize, the above indicates that Dave, in line with some of his colleagues' remarks (section 8.4.2.1), acknowledged the presence of a departmental discourse that constructed research and research time as very important to the Different Department academics – presumably all the more so given the recent increase in the hiring of research-oriented teaching staff (sections 8.3, 8.4.1, 8.4.2.3) – as well as a discourse that characterized the university workload system as “unfair,” the latter having the potential to cause “tensions between people.” Dave’s exchanges with Robin and Jules demonstrate that Dave experienced an identity tension arising from the pressures placed on him to ensure that the Department staff fulfil their teaching and administrative duties – and, as is particularly visible in Robin’s case, to a high standard (section 8.4.1.2) – while at the same time creating or preserving their research time, in line with the unit’s commitment, outlined in the Department research strategy, to “balance[e] research time and teaching workload” (section 8.4.2.1). In response to this tension, in both cases Dave acknowledged the challenge but expressed commitment to ensuring that Robin and Jules had sufficient research time, thus forming a managerial identity that was importantly informed by the departmental discourse that emphasized the importance of research to the Different Department members. Moreover, both Robin and Jules indicated that attention had been paid to the issue before. Furthermore, Dave’s remarks in the previous paragraph point to the presence of a set of identity tensions arising from the discrepancy between the departmental realities and the NewU’s workload system as well as the Department staff’s and Dave’s perceptions of the workloads as at times “unfair.” In response to these tensions, Dave signified a sense of managerial self informed by a discourse of “unfair” workloads – in line with the importance he as HoD placed on preventing or resolving personnel issues, such as disputes between staff (section 8.1.3.3) – while rejecting at least parts of the NewU’s workload system as a discursive identity resource. In this way, Dave seemed to reject a managerial identity that the university strove to impose on him in relation to his responsibility for overseeing people’s workloads, and instead seek an identity as a fair(er) HoD.

8.4.2.3 *Attracting Research Talent*

While the above examples demonstrate how Dave dealt with the Different Department academics' challenges in balancing research time with teaching and administrative duties, the next example illustrates Dave's perspectives on this issue with regard to the Department's potential hires, as played out during the deliberation process following job interviews for a position involving significant teaching responsibilities.

When the hiring committee – consisting of Dave and three senior department members – began its deliberations, Dave first brought up “one outstanding candidate.” Everyone agreed that this candidate would be the first choice, but Dave immediately began listing some potential problems, starting with the fact that the applicant might not accept the offer. As the discussion continued, and a hiring committee member mentioned the applicant's enthusiasm and awareness of teaching and administrative tasks, Dave noted that they were “also the strongest in research,” adding that they “ticked all the boxes.” “But,” Dave continued, “the only thing I'm concerned about is that students here don't have as much confidence as students at [the candidate's research-intensive university].” Later, Dave explained that – despite his very positive opinion of the candidate – he expected “a transition issue” because the applicant was “research-strong,” and continued, “even if [they] do a bit of teaching at the moment, the teaching here will be different.” Dave said, “if we call [them], we'll for sure have a discussion about how much teaching [they] would have to do, and that's never easy because [they'd] have to do a lot more teaching,” adding later that negotiations could take a long time. As the hiring committee members' deliberations drew to a close – after discussing all the candidates they had interviewed and confirming their initial choice, paying most attention to the candidates' teaching and research qualifications – Dave's worry about what to do if the top candidate said no persisted, as he reflected later in the conversation, “people at [their] stage often pull out when they face the reality of

[having a position with significant teaching responsibilities], coming from ... positions where they were predominantly doing research.”

In conclusion, while the previous subsection described Dave’s efforts to create and preserve the Different Department academics’ research time, this deliberation meeting pointed to the issue of attracting appointments with strong research profiles in the first place, in this case from a research-intensive university. Dave’s remarks during the deliberation meeting pointed to the presence of a couple of related identity tensions. First, in line with Dave’s reflections presented earlier in the chapter (section 8.4.1.2), Dave acknowledged the likelihood of an adjustment phase if the candidate were appointed, due to the transition from their then predominantly research-oriented position to a teaching-heavy post where they would additionally be teaching students with different profiles to those they were used to teaching at their research-intensive institution. In doing so, Dave seemed to implicitly adopt a managerial identity as HoD informed by the Different Department’s location at a post-1992 university as opposed to a research-intensive university. By continuing to regard this applicant as the first choice for the post, Dave was simultaneously claiming a sense of managerial self to which the discourse of raising the Department’s research profile was central, even in the face of potential future identity tension due to “research-strong” hires possibly challenging Dave’s responsibility for the unit’s high-quality teaching provision (see also sections 8.3, 8.4.1). However, before this could become an issue, Dave was concerned at the time of deliberation that the candidate would decline the offer. This signalled an identity tension arising from the discrepancy between Dave’s previously mentioned commitment to hiring research-active teaching staff (sections 8.3.2, 8.4.1) and his sense of managerial self arguably at the same time discursively informed by the characteristics of teaching-heavy posts in the Department that involved limited research time compared to the applicant’s position at the time. Dave’s rather severe concern that the applicant would “pull out” of the hiring process given these circumstances conveyed the impression that the actions Dave could take to ensure that the candidate accepted

the offer were limited, suggesting – at least for the time being – an unresolved identity tension.

8.5 A Threat to the Different Department’s Research Culture?

While shadowing Dave, another research management-related issue was high on his agenda, and that was the NewU’s consideration of a potential division of academic staff into categories (section 5.2.2). As explained earlier, if introduced, the NewU academic staff would be divided into multiple groupings based on the nature of their predominant responsibilities. Dave opposed this division on the grounds that it challenged the Different Department’s existing research culture and research management approach. In the remainder of this section, I present how Dave responded to this friction through the lens of Dave’s discursive identity work, but I begin by outlining the Department’s characteristics that were relevant to the emergence of the tensions, as described by the members of the unit interviewed.

8.5.1 The Different Department’s “Bottom-Up,” Inclusive Research Culture

Although a number of challenges related to the balance between research and teaching activities in Different Department were introduced in the previous sections, including in relation to departmental staffing policies (see e.g. sections 8.3, 8.4.1) – Stevie explicitly mentioned the “rare” instances of “staff who are bought out [of teaching],” and Jamie expressed concern that the recruitment of more academics who “see themselves as the researchers” could lead to a “split” between them and the rest of the staff – the prevailing departmental discourses nevertheless seemed to focus on the Department’s successes in both research and teaching, as well as acknowledged the majority of the unit’s academics’ commitment to high performance in both areas. Indeed, several of my

interviewees explicitly stated that the Department strove to and performed well on both fronts, as evidenced by external measures such as the REF and the NSS (see the beginning of section 8.1). Moreover, in Jo's view, this was "very unusual" and "remarkable," especially "given the size of the [teaching] provision." Pat also described this as "unusual," as in their view departments usually focused on either research or teaching, but not both. These comments related to Stevie's observation about the nature of the Department staff's responsibilities,

we ... have quite a large number of lecturers, and they tend to do both [research and teaching]. ... and what that means is that staff generally are engaged in both [research and teaching] and are expected to do so ... to a high level of quality.

Indeed, Tyler agreed that "there's lots of people [in Different Department] who do everything."

Furthermore, my interviewees not only constructed their organizational unit as a department of research-active teachers, but also spoke of Different Department as a very collegial and collaborative workplace, as mentioned earlier (section 8.1.1). Connecting these two features, in Ray's view, the Department's "friendly nature" and "teamwork" might have been due in part to the fact that everyone in the unit was involved in both teaching and research, "everyone is aware of that ... teaching commitment that we've got, [silence] and most people also want to get on with doing research work as well." Thus, Ray said, "if everyone helps each other [with teaching], then everyone will have more time to spend on research." Moreover, some of my interviewees spoke explicitly about how collegiality and collaborative approaches manifested in the Department's research culture. One academic used a "political metaphor" when recalling some of their first impressions of Different Department,

it was very much more, let's say, socialist approach. ... if you're buying [research] equipment through the university, the [research] equipment belongs to the university

and it's shared. You can't [treat] that as your own, the [research] lab ... belongs to everyone.

Another interviewee spoke of “the collaborative nature of the research in the Department” as “something that a lot of people value.” They continued with an example,

if I need to [use a particular research technique], I can either put an email out to staff, does anyone know how to do this, can you come and help, I know that some people will come in and help me. Or I know that someone will put on a session and some training. ... So it's a nice environment to do research in. You know you get help if you need somebody, there's not that competitiveness here between the staff. Sort of like, well, we better not help them in case they go up, you know.
(interviewee's emphasis)

This research participant also commented on a possible link between the Different Department's collegial culture and the focus on teaching that had been dominant in the past, describing how “all the staff were doing the teaching” and “helping each other doing the teaching,” which was related to the absence of “competitiveness” in research. They thought that this was likely “very different” at other institutions, “especially the older universities where it's all REF- and research-based.” Tyler's reflections resonated with this, linking the “culture” of “working together” to less pressure to do research at NewU compared to some “other universities,”

we don't get the same pressures, some of it in other universities I think is a real pressure on people, to... you haven't done three papers where you're single author and you're this and you're that and, so if people felt that, then maybe there would be a bit more competition, but ... we haven't got that culture and it's about working together ...

However, a couple of my interviewees pointed out that the introduction of academic staff groupings mentioned earlier (section 5.2.2) would represent a departure from these core departmental features. One academic described Different Department as very research-active across the board, with the majority of the Department academics entered in the REF 2014. Moreover, they indicated that most of these researchers were staff who also had significant teaching responsibilities, which made the research “process” in the Department “bottom-up.” Despite their appreciation of such an approach to research, however, they argued – without explicitly mentioning academic staff categories – that if Different Department wanted to continue to be successful in research,

[i]t seems inevitable to me that we're gonna have to be more selective ... We've always, even up 'till now say, everyone's research-active, everybody's in. [silence] And I don't think that's sustainable for more than ... a year or two now. People will have to be identified who are research stars and then they will be given more responsibility and expectation to deliver at a certain level.

Other staff, on the other hand, would not be considered for the REF in the first place and would have to find other ways to sustain their research efforts. Although this academic felt a move in this direction was necessary, they also pointed out that it would “change the research culture” and acknowledged that they had a “concern” about what “making us selective in research, classifying people as ... alfas, betas, omegas” would “do to the general culture of the place.” Another interviewee agreed with this view about the disruption such a selective approach to research would cause in Different Department, but unlike their colleague, they strongly opposed the division between staff predominantly engaged in research and those engaged in teaching. They reflected,

that will ruin Different Department ... that will be very divisive in this department. Because it will basically mean, if you're not considered research-active, you'll be considered a teacher. And if you're only considered a teacher, people will move. ...

it will take every success we've had, 'cause that's not the model that we've ever had, [the model we have] is that we all work together as a unit, everything is done strategically, but we don't say to people, you're in, you're out. It's that we bring everything to the table and then we strategically position people ...

In sum, although a few of the above comments and some of the remarks of the Different Department members presented earlier (sections 8.3.1, 8.4.1.1) pointed to the potential for divisions to emerge between the more research-oriented staff and those who continued to see themselves (also) as teachers, this subsection showed that this was not seen as a dominant departmental feature at the time of my fieldwork. Rather, the Department was discursively constructed as a unit that was – “unusual[ly]” – committed to both high-quality teaching and research, with most members engaged in both. Moreover, in line with the interviewees’ comments on the unit’s collegial, collaborative and supportive culture introduced earlier (section 8.1.1), several Different Department members spoke of a departmental research culture characterized by the same qualities and a lack of “competitiveness.” A couple of them linked this culture to the Department’s traditional teaching focus and lower research pressure compared to “other” – presumably research-intensive – institutions (section 5.1.4.1). However, two of my research participants – while taking an opposing stance to this potential development – foresaw that these departmental discourses of research as an all-present and inclusive effort would be challenged if academic staff categories were introduced; a view also held by Dave and examined in detail in the following subsection.

8.5.2 Challenging the Idea of Academic Staff Categories

Similar to his department colleagues interviewed, Dave perceived that the Different Department academics overall strove to be research-active and that the Department’s research culture was one in which people tended to collaborate rather than compete. As mentioned earlier (section 8.4.2.2), in our first interview, Dave shared his impression

that “most people came in [to Different Department] to do” research. Furthermore, when I explicitly asked Dave if there was a sense of competition between the Different Department staff, specifically in relation to the Department research funding distribution that was underway at the time of my fieldwork (section 8.3.1), Dave echoed his colleagues’ views, “I don’t think so, because a lot of people are applying for funding together, so apart from a few people ... that are kind of hostile, we don’t seem to have problems with it.” Indeed, in a Department Executive Group meeting where the topic was discussed, Dave described the application process for the funding to be distributed for the so-called “kick-starter” research projects in positive terms, as it led to “people ... talking to each other within the Department.” Moreover, in our conversation about this, Dave noted that this lack of competitive spirit might not be as common in the rest of the Faculty, where research was only done by small groups of people, which he felt may have led to more competition. Dave pointed out that the lack of competition in Different Department could have been related to the fact that most of the unit’s staff, rather than a minority of them, were engaged in research, suggesting an overlap between the high level of staff research activity and research collaboration as a prominent feature of the Department.

However, Dave believed that the Different Department’s above characteristics would be compromised in the event of the introduction of academic staff categories that would create a distinction between predominantly research-active and predominantly teaching staff. Dave first mentioned the possibility of NewU dividing academics in different streams at the very beginning of my time with him, during our first interview. When I asked him about the research-related challenges in the Department, he stated at one point – as described earlier (section 8.3.2) – that although Different Department performed well in the REF 2014, it would need to “be more and more ambitious, in line with the university approach” if it was to continue to be successful. Although this statement seemed to indicate Dave’s willingness to align the

Department with NewU's "greater emphasis on research," he suggested that this would not be without challenges,

the university is currently looking at a model of having different contracts for different people ... In my head, that's fine as long as the Category NewIII contract [section 5.2.2] is the norm and not the exception. And I fear that they're moving towards it as the exception rather than the norm by saying that the Category NewIII contract only goes to those people who are probable to be entered in [the] REF 2020.

On this and a few other occasions, Dave cited a number of reasons why he felt equating designated research-active faculty with faculty likely to be submitted to the REF 2020 was problematic, including the research activity of most of the Department members and the collaborative research culture in the unit mentioned earlier, as well as the REF rules, which to some extent dictated the strategy in deciding who should – or should not – be entered in the REF. In our first interview, Dave went on to say,

I don't think it's as simple as, you've got your probables and the rest of them ... because we encourage cross-working and because of the rules of [the] REF someone maybe had very active research, had all the publications they need to be entered, but because they published with another member of staff, for strategic reasons you might choose to put that other person in.²⁹ That doesn't mean the person you're not putting in is not researching and not doing strong research.

²⁹ With this statement, Dave was likely referring to the REF guidelines, which state that, as a rule, only one author of a co-authored research output may be entered in a single UOA (HEFCE et al., 2012).

In addition, Dave pointed out in a Faculty Management meeting that people who might not be submitted to the REF may still have an effect on the impact case studies selected to be entered in the exercise.

Therefore, in Dave's opinion, only including in the Category NewIII people who were likely to be submitted to the REF would "harm the Department because others do research as well," as he told me in another conversation. For this reason, he explained in our second interview, "if we say to some people ... you're not researching, you just do teaching, that's gonna be really damaging. Now, some people ... would be quite happy with it in the Department, but not very many." Indeed, Dave foresaw that such a division would have largely unwelcome consequences for Different Department and its research performance, as he recounted in our first interview,

I'm really bothered by that notion that you have this elite set, because all that does is ... it causes a number of problems. One is your elite set may be so elite that they get supported in all kinds of different ways to do their research, and then they bugger off somewhere else. Meanwhile, you've got a set of people who resent the fact that these people are in that position and refuse as a consequence to be very supportive of them. And may in some cases just give up doing research, or may not wish to supervise PhD students, or ... [to perform] all those ... other aspects of research that are really important.

All this combined with Dave's critical view – expressed on several occasions – of the NewU's threshold for REF-worthy outputs, which was set at three star and which Dave thought was too high.

During my time in the Faculty, the issue of the potential introduction of academic staff groupings continued to evolve. Different Department representatives – Dave, accompanied by a few senior department members – were invited to a meeting with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC), who was overseeing the matter, as a result of the

Department proposing a relatively high number of staff to be categorized as Category NewIII compared to the number of people probable to be submitted to the next REF. Although Dave was pessimistic in the run-up to the meeting, he subsequently reported to the Faculty Management that the conversation had been “very positive” and “very constructive,” with the PVC stating that nothing would be “imposed” and that they could “locally” decide on how to proceed. During our second interview, Dave elaborated further on the meeting. He pointed out the difference between Different Department and the rest of NewU, sharing one of the PVC’s points,

in the other parts of the university, it would be very welcome, that different model. Where there was a minority of people who were researchers and most people were teachers, that would be welcome. And it would ... remove pressure from some people, definitely, if they could just say, well, I don't have to do research.

Importantly, Dave also told me that “[the PVC] got the point and I think was then thinking that maybe ... different models rather than one-size-fits-all model, that different models for different groups would be better.”

To recap, in line with prevailing departmental discourses about the Different Department’s research culture and management (section 8.5.1), Dave spoke of research as an activity in which most of the unit’s academics were engaged, and largely in a collaborative manner. This was evident, for example, in the process of applying for the Department research funding. Moreover, Dave attributed the lack of competitiveness in the Department to the fact that the majority of staff were research-active, constructing this as distinct from the rest of the Faculty, once again adopting a managerial identity fed by a discourse of the Different Department’s difference from other units in the Faculty (see also e.g. sections 8.1.3.2, 8.2.2.2).

However, as mentioned earlier (section 8.5.1), at the time of my fieldwork, these departmental discourses were being challenged by the NewU’s potential

introduction of academic staff categories. The latter were characterized by a discourse of division between research- and teaching-dedicated staff, and by the notion that only REF-suitable academics would be considered in the research-active, Category NewIII grouping, with the REF submission average threshold set at three star. Although at a general level Dave seemed to welcome the NewU's recently established research ambitions (see also section 8.3.2), his remarks on this development signalled an identity tension. That is, he perceived the departmental research discourses described above as at odds with the REF-informed NewU discourses on research management that he was expected to adopt and embed in his unit. In response to this tension, Dave rejected the idea of academic staff categories as a discursive identity resource, which he expected would lead to the emergence of a research "elite" in Different Department and to the dissatisfaction of the majority of other staff, who had also been research-active up to that point. Dave maintained a sense of managerial self crucially informed by discursive identity resources such as the Department's pervasive and collaborative research culture and the recognition of the important research contributions of those academics who might not be entered in the REF. Dave thus established himself as an HoD not unlike Gjerde and Alvesson's (2020) "umbrella carriers" or "protectors," protecting the Different Department staff from a university scheme that he saw as damaging to the unit's culture. It is noteworthy, however, that although Dave rejected the NewU's REF-based research expectations and the university's approach to achieving them, he simultaneously formed a managerial identity that was importantly informed by the REF discourses and driven by a commitment to maximizing the Faculty UOA 2's performance (see also section 8.3.2), seemingly without experiencing any associated identity tensions. As shown above, Dave drew on the REF rules to explain how the Department would decide who to include – and who to exclude – from the REF submission. Moreover, although critical of the NewU's three star REF submission average threshold, Dave arguably continued to pay attention to aspects of research relevant to the REF-based research assessment, such as research impact and postgraduate research student supervision. In doing so, Dave constructed the

university's staff groupings – rather than the REF as such – as divisive and detrimental to the Different Department's research culture and performance if implemented. This was despite the fact that some of the Department academics could end up excluded from the REF either way, due to the unit's strategizing informed by the REF rules, which could be seen as contradicting the unit's general approach to research in the first place. This thus potentially signalled Dave's use of "antagonistic discursive resources" (Clarke et al., 2009) in the construction of his managerial identities.

Returning to Dave's experience of the identity tension arising from the discrepancy between the departmental discourses regarding research and the discourses that characterized the NewU's academic staff categories, it should be said that at the time of my fieldwork, Dave sought to address this friction head-on and appeared to succeed, at least for the time being. Namely, Dave first challenged the NewU's definition of the Category NewIII by proposing to include in it the Different Department members who might not end up being entered in the next REF. Later, at a meeting with the PVC in charge of the matter as a result of this challenge, Dave presented the Department's case, and suggested that the PVC recognized the difference between Different Department and much of NewU in terms of their research culture and management, and assured them that they could decide "locally" on how to proceed. This signalled a better alignment between the NewU's and Dave's discursive constructions of Different Department, and consequently his sense of managerial self as the unit's HoD. Furthermore, Dave perceived that the PVC was moving from a "one-size-fits-all model" to "different models for different groups." He seemed to suggest that the latter might have occurred due to the PVC's conversation with the Different Department's representatives, possibly signalling not only a resolution of his identity tension but also a change in the implementation of academic staff categories at NewU as a whole.

8.6 Negotiating the Different Department's Place at NewU

As briefly noted in chapter 5 (section 5.3.1) and mentioned earlier in this chapter (section 8.1.3.1), the Different Department's considerable growth over the years not only raised questions about the appropriateness of the unit's place in the NewU's organizational structure and the suitability of its internal management arrangements, but also brought with it short- and longer-term estate issues for the Department. In response to these concerns, during my time at NewU, the university senior management's proposal to relocate Different Department to the university's River Campus outside the city was under consideration. This idea was intended not only to address the Department's estate challenges on Central Campus, but also to allow for closer research collaboration between Different Department and the River Campus Faculty – a faculty homed by another academic unit and located on River Campus – as well as the sharing of some research facilities. At different points in time, different possibilities were on the table, including moving the entire department – with the options of it joining the River Campus Faculty, remaining part of the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, or becoming a faculty in its own right – or moving only selected parts of Different Department, specifically parts of the research that aligned with some of the research efforts of the River Campus Faculty.

By the end of my fieldwork, the decision was taken not to go ahead with the move and the Department was to remain on Central Campus, but this brought with it another set of uncertainties regarding the resolution of the unit's estate issues on the said campus, with some of my interviewees anticipating that these challenges had not been resolved forever. Moreover, Different Department and the River Campus Faculty were encouraged to explore collaboration opportunities. In the remainder of this section, I present the discussions around the Different Department's proposed

relocation and closer collaboration with the River Campus Faculty. I begin with the perspectives of my research participants other than Dave, and then turn to Dave's reactions to these developments, examining the identity tensions he experienced in the process.

8.6.1 Should We Stay or Should We Go?

Interviews with the Different Department members – after the decision against the relocation had been made by NewU – revealed a mixed picture regarding the idea of the Different Department's full or partial relocation to River Campus. Some of the reasons against a partial or full move were:

- staff's personal preference for a central location as opposed to a site outside the city – expressed here by Tyler – was raised by several interviewees, “lots of staff would hate that [the move];”
- the Different Department's city location was mentioned by some as an important factor in attracting students, which suggested that the relocation could pose challenges for student recruitment and/or satisfaction, with Stevie, for example, saying, “there are student benefits to being in the city centre;”
- the Department's location in the city centre, as opposed to a site outside the city, was better suited to research that connected “with the community,” according to Cody;
- for some of my interviewees, the relocation discussions raised broader questions of the Different Department's disciplinary fit with the River Campus Faculty and/or other NewU's organizational units, with one academic assessing, for example, that a partial move and/or integration of the relocated parts into the River Campus Faculty would compromise the Department's

disciplinary “breadth,” and according to another interviewee, it “would be a great shame if that [split] happened;”

- a partial move would also be a threat to the Department’s friendliness and collegiality, along with the challenge of sustaining the unit as a single group working together rather than in two separate groups, which Pat described as “the one thing that actually we’re really proud [of] always;”
- some felt that the move would be “a nightmare in terms of the upheaval” (Jaime) to the Different Department’s operations; and
- the Faculty politics, in that according to Cody, the Faculty “does not necessarily want Different Department messed with because that’s the strongest bit of it.”

The latter also seemed to be at least partially acknowledged by the Dean, who expressed that they were “unhappy thinking somebody was taking Different Department away from me, very, very unhappy.” However, the Dean was equally not fond of the idea of the Faculty being based at two locations, and reflected,

could you keep Different Department as a part of the Faculty but put it on River Campus? No, you perhaps would just say, fine, let them just go. ... It either became its own faculty or it merged with the River Campus Faculty or somebody else.

At the same time, the Dean acknowledged that such a move would run counter to efforts over the past several years to “[try] to bring us tighter together as a faculty.” In addition, in Terry’s view, the move would potentially interfere with “student ... [and] staff recruitment” and in relation to “planning for [the] REF 2020.”

Despite these numerous arguments against relocation, most of my interviewees in Different Department who spoke on the issue also acknowledged some reasons that could have justified (partial) move. Ray acknowledged that “there’s a lot more space there,” and Elliott similarly pointed out the benefits of the Department “get[ting] the

whole building” on River Campus. One academic spoke of River Campus’ “extremely good” facilities and “new refurbishment,” which they described as “very impressive,” as well as the fact that staying on Central Campus would mean ongoing estate “challenges.” Another Different Department member expressed a similar view, “[w]e’ve outgrown where we are, and at the moment all of the solutions we’re coming up with ... are sticking plasters to a much larger problem.” One interviewee was unsure how to feel about Different Department remaining on Central Campus, as it was unclear at the time of the interview “what ... the space allocation that is being made [is] ... And whether it will really support the expansion plans that we have” (see also section 8.6.2.5), suggesting that it was “financially ... not optimal” for NewU to provide appropriate space in the city centre. Moreover, Jamie shared their “mixed feelings,” saying, “if you’re thinking short-term, this is gonna be horrible ... but then longer term, you could see it as being a real bonus for Different Department.” Finally, a few interviewees suggested that there was a relevant disciplinary connection between parts of the Department and the work of the River Campus Faculty.

To summarize, the above reflections of my research participants on the proposal of the Different Department’s (partial) relocation and the eventual decision against it point to the presence of contradictory discourses regarding the issue, drawn on in several cases by the same people. On the one hand, the discussed (partial) move was discursively constructed as a (potential) challenge to the Department members’ location preferences, student and staff recruitment, community-embedded research and the REF 2020 submission, the Different Department’s disciplinary “breadth,” its collegial culture and unity, departmental operations, and the unit’s place in and integration with the rest of the Faculty. On the other hand, some of the discourses regarding the relocation were more positive in nature. The move to River Campus would have given Different Department more space, while remaining on Central Campus was challenging because of the likelihood that estate issues would continue. In

addition, the move was also spoken of as potentially beneficial in the “longer term” and in terms of disciplinary synergies with the River Campus Faculty.

8.6.2 Opposing Relocation While Cautiously Facilitating Collaboration

As can be seen from the reflections of my research participants above, the idea of the Different Department’s potential full or partial relocation to River Campus, along with possible accompanying structural changes, was a complex matter that touched on numerous aspects central to the Department’s operations and culture. In light of this, it is not surprising that during my first interview with Dave, he included this issue among the “three things that have bothered me recently.” When he spoke about it in more detail in a conversation with me the next day, Dave shared, “this has taken a lot of sleep from me.”

In the continuation of this subsection, I examine several challenging aspects of the proposed relocation and closer collaboration with the River Campus Faculty from Dave’s perspective. I begin by describing the developments on this that had taken place prior to my time with Dave. I then address some of the real-time discussions that illustrate how Dave navigated the possible (partial) move and closer collaboration with the River Campus Faculty, as well as the uncertainties that arose from the decision for Different Department to remain on Central Campus.

8.6.2.1 Considering the Opportunities and Challenges of the Relocation Proposal

When Dave first spoke to me about the Department’s potential relocation during our first interview, he began by describing a visit to the Faculty by the VC a few months earlier and the VC’s focus at the time “on the future of Different Department, as in where should it be based.” Dave described, “we’ve outgrown the estate, we need [research] labs, Central Campus is not big enough, and [the VC] seemed quite keen at the time on moving us to River Campus.” Before sharing further details of the events

that followed, Dave offered a personal reflection on the issue, different versions of which I heard on other occasions, “I have to be careful here because I’d just hate to be on River Campus. [*Dave and I laugh*] Who wants to be in a place [several] miles from the [city] centre, you know. I don’t, anyway.”

Dave then summarized some of the developments on the issue. This included a description of an informal conversation at a social event between Dave, the Faculty’s Dean and the VC. During this conversation, the VC urged Dave to “give this [relocation] serious consideration” as there was a building available on River Campus that was suitable to the Different Department’s needs. When Dave responded to the VC to the effect of, “if this is just about buildings, I don’t think it’s particularly an interesting proposition, but if it’s something more strategic, then, you know, it could be,” the VC raised the possibility of Different Department “becoming a faculty.” Dave continued, “[n]ow that would be interesting, you see,” but acknowledged that the Dean expressed doubts about the idea after this conversation because “single-subject faculties” were not “resilient enough.” Dave, however, said, “I can present us as single-subject or multidisciplinary, depends on what works at the time.” In addition, Dave opined, “I think we’ve got potential to be a faculty. We’re not big enough at the moment, we’re not diverse enough yet, but we’re on the way and we don’t fit the existing model.” Indeed, despite the then difference of opinions between Dave and the Dean, Dave shared just a day after our interview that at a meeting with Terry that day, they told him that maybe he should “go for it” – that is Different Department becoming a faculty – but the question for Dave remained, “how to do that.”

Returning to our first interview, Dave went on to report on another meeting about the Different Department’s future and location, attended by the VC, some other members of the NewU Senior Management Team, the Head of the Academic Unit, the Dean and Dave himself. At this meeting, Dave recounted, the Dean and the Head of the Academic Unit “presented a very strong case that Different Department was deeply

embedded in the Faculty and therefore it would be inappropriate to move us.” One of the particularly “problematic” points was the Department’s joint degrees run with other units based on Central Campus, which would mean, Dave explained, that “we’d have to teach on two sites, it would be very complicated, I’d even mapped where everyone lived ... and most people would have an extra hour a day travel time, you know, there and back.” At that meeting, Dave told me, he raised another issue with the VC, asking them “what short-term [*silence*] damage you’re prepared to put up with. ‘Cause there will be short-term damage if you move us. It might be good in longer term, but, and [they] didn’t answer the question.” In a conversation Dave and I had the day after our first interview, he elaborated on this. While Dave and most of his staff did not want to move to River Campus, he acknowledged that building on Central Campus would be expensive, and “thinking strategically, the positive sides would be the building and collaboration with the River Campus Faculty.” However, the “disadvantages” would be in the short-term because, as he mentioned earlier, the Department ran joint courses with other units. Also, in Dave’s view, students would not be attracted to River Campus, an opinion Dave expressed on other occasions. Another argument Dave made against the move was the Different Department’s deep embeddedness in the Faculty administration and the fact that River Campus worked “differently” in this respect.

In addition to Dave’s concern about the challenges the Different Department’s relocation would pose, Dave suggested that the proposal and its evolution also caused tensions in relation to his role as the Department HoD. Apart from losing sleep over the matter, as I mentioned earlier, Dave also shared with me in the same conversation, “I’m not always involved in what’s going on, I just get involved from time to time, and I don’t have control.” He related this state of affairs to being a “middle manager,” but also suggested that those above him in the hierarchy might feel the same. After detailing some of the pros and cons of a possible move, Dave, alluding to his upcoming retirement, said, “I could just say that I don’t care because I’m not going to be here when all of this is happening anyway;” a scenario I thought unlikely. Finally, he said,

“Different Department can work with anyone,” and “in a way it would be better if they just told us what to do and we would make it work.” There would be a downside to this, though, Dave thought; if the change were to happen, he would be the one who would have to deal with the consequences – he expected that the Department would not initially meet the targets set by NewU – rather than the university management.

In conclusion, Dave’s reflections, in line with the views of my other interviewees regarding the idea of the Different Department relocation (section 8.6.1), suggest that this was a very contentious issue for him as the Department HoD. Indeed, the NewU top management’s pressure for the unit to move – sometimes communicated directly to Dave by the VC – led Dave to experience a set of identity tensions related to the complexity of the multiple factors playing into the decision. For one thing, Dave at various points rejected River Campus as a potential source of his managerial identities, pointing to the importance of the Different Department’s central location to his sense of managerial self as the unit’s HoD. Apart from this, Dave believed that solving the Department’s estate issues was an insufficient motivation for the relocation, which he also expressed to the VC. The VC then raised the possibility of Different Department “becoming a faculty,” which – according to the earlier descriptions of some of Dave’s identity tensions (sections 8.1.3.1, 8.1.3.2) – would have resolved the friction arising from Dave’s perception that the unit and his own role did not fit into the existing organizational structure. However, the Dean’s displeasure with this idea (see also section 8.6.1) led – at least temporarily – to a different identity tension related to Dave’s previously outlined struggles due to his dual identity as both a representative of the Different Department’s interests and member of the Faculty (see also e.g. sections 8.1.3.2, 8.2.2), with Dave arguably again claiming a managerial identity predominantly informed by the former. Of note, contrary to Dave in this and other instances assigning a lower priority to or rejecting the Faculty as a discursive identity resource (see also e.g. section 8.2.2.2), Dave drew on the “antagonistic” (Clarke et al., 2009) discourse of the Department’s embeddedness in the Faculty with respect to teaching and administration

as a crucial discursive identity resource when disputing the university management's relocation idea. In this way, he embraced his and the Different Department's membership within the larger unit, a sense of managerial self in an example above supported by the Dean and the Head of the Academic Unit. Moreover, although the long-term benefits – in terms of estate and collaboration – found a place as discursive identity resources in Dave's construction of a managerial identity as the Department's HoD, they contrasted with his attention to “short-term damage,” staff preferences and student attraction. This suggests that the experiences of the Different Department academics and students importantly fed into Dave's sense of managerial self, with the latter signalling Dave's emphasis on students and teaching as crucial to his unit's operations (see also section 8.4.1.2). In response to this identity tension – which persisted throughout much of my time with Dave – the above suggests that Dave formed a managerial identity that prioritized short-term and staff and student considerations over the potential long-term benefits of the move, and sought to have NewU accept his sense of managerial self and his definition of the Different Department's primary concerns.

In addition, the discussions about the Department's relocation also raised a set of identity tensions in relation to Dave's role in decision-making as the unit's HoD (see also section 8.1.3.1). First, he pointed to a friction caused by his middle management position, due to which, Dave suggested, he lacked “control,” implying that he wanted more of it. Dave seemed to attempt to resolve this identity tension by accepting this state of affairs, acknowledging that managers above him might have the same feelings. As the conversation progressed, Dave found another way to resolve this tension by accepting that “it would be better if they just told us what to do,” thus seeming to take on, at least for the moment, the managerial identity – lacking in authority on the issue – ascribed to him by NewU. However, Dave believed that this would result in a different identity tension. Indeed, he expected that he would be held responsible if Different Department failed to meet the university's performance targets after the relocation – a

scenario Dave believed was inevitable – which was at odds with his sense of managerial self, according to which he would not be the one to blame in such a case. Given that the – at the time potential – (partial) move caused the intense identity tensions described above, Dave indicated that he could have resolved the frictions by not “car[ing]” about it, as he would not be the one to deal with most of the consequences, pointing to his upcoming retirement as a potential identity resource. However, during the time I spent with him, Dave’s concern for Different Department seemed to continue to prevail in the formation of his managerial identities.

8.6.2.2 Research Collaboration Does Not Require Relocation

Returning to the meeting with the NewU Senior Management Team and my first interview with Dave, after Dave explained that he had not received a response from the VC about the likely “short-term damage” in the event of relocation, the idea then surfaced, Dave continued, that River Campus would host some of the research “kit,” so Different Department

can work with the River Campus Faculty to put in large grant applications, and we need some [Different Department members] based out at River Campus, some of the time, in order for this to happen. . . . so there’s still that issue that they want to put labs out there.

This brought Dave to another concern about the potential move and the growth plan that the Department had been asked to prepare at short notice in Dave’s absence. A document outlining the Different Department plans regarding future student and staff numbers, and corresponding estate requirements, had been submitted to NewU,

but unfortunately it distinguished between teaching space and research space in ways that I wouldn’t do, and thus the response was, well, all that’s research-based can go out to River Campus. Now, we don’t do it like that. Our teaching and research

are deeply embedded. And we want students to be using our research facilities, not just staff, so I've rewritten that, and I don't know what the outcome will be.

Not only was Dave opposed to the idea of separating the Department's research and teaching aspects, but he also felt that dividing the unit into two was at odds with the Different Department's collaborative and integrated nature,

the notion that they want to put all our labs at River Campus and break up Different Department ... people don't actually know what they're talking about, but they say, we'll take [part of Different Department] out and we'll put [it] at River Campus. Makes no sense. One of our great strengths is the fact that although we're very diverse, we are one department, and we work across boundaries within [the discipline].

This suggests that Dave felt that the NewU management did not understand how Different Department functioned, which he also shared at a Faculty Management meeting by saying, "there's a fundamental misunderstanding about how we operate." This led, as he described it during our first interview, to what Dave considered "the worst possible [*laughs*] position"

[i]n that what we really need is more space here; actually moving lock, stock and barrel to River Campus would be better than having this half-way house thing, potentially, anyway. So, you know, we're keen to work with the River Campus Faculty, but I don't think that means we have to have people sitting over there.

That is, although Dave was open to collaboration with the River Campus Faculty, he maintained his opposition to the Different Department's partial relocation and thus to division as a possible outcome of such collaboration.

To sum up, resembling the nationally recognized trend of universities forming inter- and multidisciplinary research units to enhance their research efforts (section 5.1.3.2), the above indicates that the NewU senior management's reasons for at least partially relocating Different Department to River Campus included closer research collaboration between parts of the Department and the River Campus Faculty. In Dave's view, this idea was at odds with the Different Department's approach to combining teaching and research – which seemed to contradict the national trend of drawing clearer distinction between the two activities (section 5.1.3.2) – as well as with the departmental discourses of collaboration and unity across the Department's diverse set of subdisciplines, which were homed by the overarching academic field (sections 8.1.1, 8.6.1). In response to this identity tension, which resulted from a discrepancy between the NewU's vision and Dave's view of the Different Department's nature of operations and culture, Dave strongly rejected the university's partial relocation plans as a potential discursive identity resource and instead claimed a managerial identity as the unit's HoD strongly informed by the departmental discourses mentioned above. Dave assessed that a move that would lead to a division of the Department was “the worst possible” scenario – even a full relocation to River Campus was a better option for Dave, demonstrating just how important the Different Department's unity was to his sense of managerial self – while at the same time emphasizing that research collaboration with the River Campus Faculty, which Dave was generally positive about (more on this in the next two subsections), did not require the unit's relocation.

8.6.2.3 Seeking Agreement Within Different Department

I had the opportunity to observe Dave's cautious approach to a possible closer collaboration with the River Campus Faculty on a few other occasions. The day after our first interview, Dave met with Vic, a Different Department member, who had been invited to discuss a possible research collaboration with a senior NewU manager who belonged to the academic unit that was home to the River Campus Faculty. When Vic

briefed Dave about their conversation with said manager – who suggested that there was “benefit” to being on River Campus – Dave raised some of his previously expressed concerns, such as the need to consider what a full or partial move would mean for student recruitment. At one point in the conversation, however, Dave mentioned that he was thinking about visiting River Campus to look at the building offered to them. Vic initially responded that maybe Dave should not go and that he might dislike the building, but then expressed the view that Dave might change his mind if he visited River Campus, noting that they could do things there “on a different scale.” Dave responded that he would like to see them purchase a building in the city centre, but also remarked, “I would rather see we all go to River Campus than being dispersed.” However, Dave also challenged his colleague, pointing out that they previously “were one of the most vehement speakers against going to River Campus.” When Vic replied, “I still am,” Dave retorted, “[y]ou don’t sound like it.” Later in the conversation, Vic reflected that not relocating would mean avoiding the associated disruption, but that they could still work together with River Campus colleagues on the “big projects” without losing their identity. From then on, the conversation focused mainly on the idea of securing a building for Different Department in the city centre and various related considerations.

Following the meeting, Dave and I got into quite a long conversation about the potential relocation of Different Department, which began with Dave describing the background to his meeting with Vic, which had just taken place. In short, the meeting between Vic and a senior NewU manager made Dave “afraid that [the manager] might use this opportunity for another purpose, that is to move Different Department or a part of it to River Campus.” Therefore, Dave wanted to be briefed about the meeting and thought that his colleague was “torn between wanting to do this kind of research and not wanting to go to River Campus,” which is why Dave “pressed [them] during the meeting.”

To summarize, Dave's conversation with Vic highlighted the complexity of the Different Department's potential (partial) relocation and, in line with the mixed discursive picture regarding the move presented earlier (section 8.6.1), pointed to some of the Department academics' ambivalent attitude towards this development. Dave's perception of Vic's evolving – more positive – stance towards a possible relocation presented a further challenge to Dave's largely negative view of the possibility, only this time it came from a department colleague rather than the university's top management (sections 8.6.2.1, 8.6.2.2). This signalled an identity tension for Dave, to which he responded by – despite being open to visiting River Campus and preferring the Different Department's relocation to River Campus to it being divided (see also sections 8.6.2.2, 8.6.2.4) – repeating some of the arguments against the (partial) relocation, such as student recruitment (see also section 8.6.2.1), and “pressing” Vic for acknowledging some of the possible benefits of the move. In doing so, Dave asserted a managerial identity as the unit's HoD to which staying in a central location and avoiding the move was very important, despite the likewise vital place of the discourse of the Department's unity for Dave's sense of managerial self in the event of a relocation. Moreover, given Vic's response to Dave's challenge – that is their statement that the advantages and research collaboration with River Campus academics were possible even if Different Department remained on Central Campus – Dave appeared to have succeeded in having this managerial identity and the discursive resources that informed it accepted by his colleague.

8.6.2.4 Reaching Out to the River Campus Faculty

Later during my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to attend a meeting of Different Department representatives – Dave, accompanied by a couple of senior department members – and four members of the River Campus Faculty, including two HoDs, as well as the Dean of the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences and the Dean of the River Campus Faculty. The meeting on River Campus was a result of the conversation

involving the NewU Senior Management Team described above (sections 8.6.2.1, 8.6.2.2), after which the two units were asked to discuss potential collaboration between them.

Particularly relevant to this analysis were Dave's early remarks in the meeting – following the introductions by the two Deans – especially in the context of the Dean of the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences explaining the decision to keep Different Department on Central Campus, and the Dean of the River Campus Faculty mentioning that it had previously been their recommendation to bring part of Different Department to River Campus. Before the conversation moved to participants learning about each other's research interests and past, existing and potential new research and teaching collaborations between the two organizational units, Dave said, "I want to explain why splitting Different Department would be a bad thing," and continued, "we're unusual in that we're very broad, but we managed to maintain the working group that works within Different Department." Despite "sometimes antagonistic views" they managed to work together and that was "one of our key strengths." Dave explained, "I really don't want Different Department to be divided, whether we're moving somewhere or not." Dave then shared that he was "interested in collaboration" but stressed, "we need to be mindful of the negative consequences." For example, if some of the core senior department members were to spend half a week on River Campus, Different Department would lose some of its research leadership. Despite his cautious approach, Dave explicitly demonstrated his interest in developing collaborations with the River Campus Faculty towards the end of the meeting. When the Deans agreed to a meeting of larger groups of academics from the two units to further explore possible partnerships, Dave proposed that while this meeting was being planned, Different Department could promptly invite the River Campus Faculty academics working in the same disciplinary area to their research seminars.

As we were preparing to leave River Campus, Dave shared with the Faculty's Dean that he liked the meeting they had just attended. Later that day, when Dave ran into the Different Department's research seminar organizer, he informed them that he would pass on a list of River Campus Faculty staff to invite to their research seminars from then on. The following week, Dave also informed his Faculty Management colleagues at their weekly meeting that as a result of the meeting with the River Campus Faculty, selected academics were already being invited to the Different Department's research seminars. Dave's initial positive outlook, however, seemed rather short-lived. When I interviewed him a couple of months later and asked him if anything had happened after the River Campus meeting, he sounded rather negative, saying, "[n]ot that I'm aware. ... We invited ... a range of people from over there to come to our research seminars, I don't think any of them have ever come, so, no, not a thing has happened." However, Dave acknowledged that Vic – who had discussed collaboration with a senior NewU manager (section 8.6.2.3) – would work on that, but explained that it had nothing to do with the River Campus meeting.

To recap, in line with his remarks in our first interview (section 8.6.2.2), during the meeting with the River Campus Faculty representatives, Dave was responding to an identity tension that arose from the university-supported idea of a partial relocation of Different Department to River Campus, which contradicted Dave's view of the Department and thus his sense of managerial self as the unit's HoD. Drawing on the departmental discourses regarding the Different Department's collaborative culture – despite the unit's disciplinary breadth (sections 8.1.1, 8.6.1) – which he saw as “one of our key strengths,” Dave argued against a partial move and expressed preference for a full relocation were the Department required to move (see also sections 8.6.2.2, 8.6.2.3). In this way, Dave once again constructed these departmental discourses as vital to his managerial identities as the Different Department HoD, even in a situation where this meant claiming a managerial identity that was at least partially at odds with his own line manager's and another Dean's (earlier) vision for the Department. Similarly, while Dave

was open to collaboration with the River Campus Faculty, he wanted to avoid any negative impact on Different Department, again signalling that the unit's interests were central to his sense of managerial self. Nevertheless, Dave proposed inviting selected River Campus Faculty academics to the Department's research seminars, which he promptly acted on, thus signifying a managerial identity that was also informed by the possibility of Different Department collaborating with the River Campus Faculty. In fact, he later appeared displeased by the fact that nothing had come out of the River Campus meeting by that point, with his support for collaboration going unanswered.

8.6.2.5 A Non-Epilogue on the Different Department's Estate Concerns

In addition to the uncertainty and stagnation of developments regarding the potential collaboration with the River Campus Faculty, although Different Department was informed that its case for staying on Central Campus had been accepted and its growth plan approved by the university, Dave remained concerned. As he shared in a department Management Team meeting, "I don't know how it will actually play out in practice, we're in a lot of uncertainty." He later added that the additional space would have to be ready before the start of the next academic year to accommodate the high student numbers, adding, "we have good news, but they're clenched with cloudiness." In our interview about a month later, Dave elaborated on the issue, explaining that it had been challenging to work with the responsible university professional service and sharing his feeling that there was no plan on how to accommodate the Different Department's estate needs in the very near future.

In conclusion, despite the positive developments – including the NewU's support for Different Department to remain on Central Campus – that indicated the resolution of an identity tension Dave had experienced due to an earlier discrepancy between the university's vision and his vision for the Department, a new identity tension seemed to have emerged for Dave. That is, while resolving his unit's estate issues was a

high priority for Dave as the Different Department HoD, the university's slow response to the problem – through its responsible professional service – continued to challenge Dave's sense of managerial self.

8.7 Summary

This chapter explored the discursive identity work of Dave Garner, HoD of Different Department. In line with the previous chapters, it focused on Dave's efforts in relation to managing his unit's research efforts and on the processes of Dave's identity formation with respect to these activities. Dave was shown to draw on a multitude of discursive resources to mould his sense of managerial self, with particular attention paid to the identity tensions Dave experienced and how he managed them.

The first section of the chapter early on conveyed an identity tension that Dave experienced due to his managerial post, which kept him from almost all academic pursuits, with Dave not foreseeing ever being able to resolve this tension. The section then focused on Dave's construction of his managerial identities in a discursive environment marked by a contrast between Dave's and his colleagues' discursive characterization of Dave's role as the Department HoD and unit with respect to the wider organizational environment, on the one hand, and some discourses external to Different Department regarding the two on the other. This indicated identity tensions for Dave at multiple levels. In relation to the Department's and Dave's position within the NewU structure, Dave's sense of managerial self was crucially shaped by discourse of the Different Department's and his role's difference from other departments and HoDs, including due to the unit's uncharacteristically large size and high activity levels. This led to Dave's proactive rejection of prevailing university discourses regarding HoD posts, and eventual success – at least partial – in having his role redefined by NewU through the creation of a Deputy HoD post. Similarly, Dave rejected faculty discourses about what he saw as inadequate representation of Different Department – given the

unit's size – in the Faculty Management. This identity tension was possibly to be partially resolved by the above-mentioned appointment of a Deputy HoD. Nonetheless, the Different Department's large size continued to feed into an ongoing identity tension that arose from Dave's need to manage this sizeableness while maintaining the unit's collegial culture and unity, these two aspects representing crucial discursive resources in the formation of his managerial identities as the Department HoD.

The remainder of the chapter focused on Dave's discursive identity work with respect to his research management responsibilities specifically. The first of these sections explored Dave's sometimes contradictory responses to identity tensions related to his dual identity as both HoD representing the Different Department's interests and member of the Faculty, in the context of the Department performing significantly better than the rest of the Faculty in terms of research. The examples show how Dave sometimes sought to form a managerial identity characterized by his simultaneous representation of the Different Department's and the Faculty's interests, for example, by drawing on a UOA not primary to the Department as a discursive identity resource. In some other cases, however, Dave all but rejected the Faculty as a source of his sense of managerial self. Instead, he prioritized his department and its research-related specificities as discursive identity resources, for example, when arguing for the need for a Different Department member to be involved in research leadership at the faculty level.

The next section demonstrated the centrality of the REF discourses and the Different Department's REF performance to Dave's managerial identities. Specifically, it zoomed in on Dave overcoming an identity tension arising from the Faculty UOA 2's unsatisfactory RAE 2008 performance, to which Dave responded with a determination to improve the unit's performance in the REF 2014, including through the recruitment of research-active teaching staff and the expansion of the Department's research areas. Despite achieving the goal, the process was accompanied by additional

identity tensions, some of which were ongoing at the time. First, the improvement of the Faculty UOA 2's REF performance led Dave to once more claim a managerial identity fed by the Different Department's interests rather than broader faculty interests. Second, Dave found himself constantly balancing a sense of managerial self informed by responsibility for the Department's excellent research and the unit's quality teaching, with a focus on the former sometimes seen by Dave's colleagues as detrimental to the latter. Third, despite a better alignment between Dave's and the Different Department's commitment to research and the NewU's recently reformed research discourses, Dave faced an identity tension as the unit's continued research success could not be taken for granted.

The following chapter section explored Dave's experience of identity tensions that arose from two related challenges: first, Dave seeking to raise the Different Department's research profile by recruiting research-active teaching staff while ensuring high quality teaching provision; and second, Dave wanting to ensure that most of the Department academics could devote sufficient time to research in an organizational context characterized by heavy teaching and an "unfair" workload system. These challenges arose in relation to both current and potential new academics in Different Department. In response to the first identity tension, Dave claimed a managerial identity that demonstrated the importance of maintaining the Different Department's teaching quality, for example, by calling for research-active lecturers to be supported in aspects of teaching that they found difficult. At the same time, however, Dave did not indicate that he would back away from his determination to improve the unit's research by appointing research-strong candidates who might struggle with elements of teaching, thus likely sustaining the identity tension. Dave's response to the second identity tension was to form a managerial identity that was crucially shaped by departmental discourse of the importance of research to the Department members, insofar as this was possible given organizational constraints. However, as Dave indicated that he was not always

able to address workload issues in a way that was satisfactory to his (potential) department colleagues, this suggested a likely ongoing or recurring identity tension.

The penultimate section of the chapter focused on Dave's rejection of the NewU's proposal for academic staff categories that was characterized by a discourse of division between research and teaching staff and informed by the REF-led three star average quality threshold. Instead, Dave claimed a managerial identity informed by a set of departmental discourses that challenged the above NewU's notions. These constructed research as an inclusive and collaborative endeavour involving most Different Department academics – not just a research “elite” – whose research contributions mattered, even if not all of them were entered in the REF. Dave seemed, at least for the time being, to successfully resolve the associated identity tension. That is, the NewU senior manager in charge of the matter accepted the Department's arguments against implementing the scheme, with possible implications beyond Different Department. It is noteworthy, however, that despite Dave's strong opposition to the NewU's REF-inspired academic staff categories, the REF discourses – which at times led to arguably exclusionary departmental research management practices – continued to be employed by Dave as discursive identity resources.

The final section examined the NewU senior management's proposal for the Different Department's (partial) relocation from the university's Central Campus to River Campus. On the one hand, Dave entertained the idea of moving if it meant that the Department would become a faculty, as this would arguably help to resolve Dave's identity tension arising from his perception that the unit did not fit into the university's existing organizational structure. Similarly, Dave preferred for the relocation of the entire Different Department to a partial relocation, as the latter posed a threat to the Department's unity and collaborative culture, both of which were central discursive identity resources in Dave's construction of a sense of managerial self. On the whole, however, Dave rejected the idea of relocation, pointing to an identity tension that

stemmed from his disagreement with the university's senior management. Although he welcomed the possibility of closer collaboration with the River Campus Faculty and acknowledged the estate-related benefits in which the move would result, Dave continued to draw on his preference for the Department's central location, emphasized the unit's membership in the Faculty, and warned about the short-term, staff and student-related concerns associated with the potential move. In addition, throughout the process, Dave experienced an ongoing identity tension in relation to his role in decision-making regarding the relocation, indicating that he would have liked more "control" than he had. Dave's identity tensions arising from the potential move appeared to be resolved when NewU agreed to keep Different Department on Central Campus. However, new frictions soon emerged as Dave felt that the university was failing to make the necessary estate arrangements with the urgency they deserved.

The next, concluding chapter summarizes the analyses presented in chapters 5 to 8 and provides and discusses in detail the answers to the research (sub)questions that this dissertation set out to investigate.

9 Discussion and Conclusions

The final chapter of this dissertation provides the answers to the research (sub)questions by integrating the findings presented in chapters 5 to 8 and situating them within the existing academic middle management (AMM) literature presented in chapter 2 and in relation to the study's theoretical premises introduced in chapter 3. The latter part of the chapter outlines the contributions of the present research to the literature, the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research. Before doing so, however, I briefly remind the reader of the overall aims of the study, the theoretical premises, the research (sub)questions and the methodological choices made.

Given the vital and increasingly complex role of AMMs in universities, at the most basic level, the aim of this dissertation has been to explore the lived experiences of individual AMMs, how they go about their jobs amidst often conflicting expectations, and why they carry out their jobs the way they do. More specifically, the study has looked at the issue through the lens of AMMs' identity construction, with the objective of providing in-depth, detailed accounts of the multitude of personal, organizational and broader contextual elements that feed into AMMs' sense of self, as well as the

sometimes knotty interplay between these factors in the process of AMMs' identity formation in the context of managerialism.

To examine this, I have employed the notions of “managerial identity” (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008) and “discursive identity work” (Brown, 2017, p. 302). As defined in this dissertation, the former emphasizes the plurality of managerial identities and the likelihood of tensions arising between them. The latter defines identities as ever-changing and context-dependent discursive constructs and assumes that identity work becomes more visible during times of identity struggle. Based on these premises, the present research has sought to answer the following research question:

1 How do AMMs discursively construct their managerial identities?

Answering this main research question has required the exploration of two interrelated aspects: 1) the AMMs' contexts as sites of discursive identity resources, and 2) the ways in which AMMs employ the available discursive identity resources in the construction of their managerial identities. This gives rise to two research subquestions:

1.1 What discourses characterize AMMs' discursive contexts?

1.2 How do AMMs employ available discursive resources in the process of identity work?

Against the background of the assumption that identity work manifests itself more intensively when individuals experience identity tensions, the latter research subquestion is addressed by examining the following:

1.2.1 What forms of identity tensions do AMMs experience?

1.2.2 How do AMMs respond to identity tensions?

To answer the above research (sub)questions, I conducted a nearly six-month “organizational ethnography” (Neyland, 2008; Ybema, Yanow, et al., 2009a) that focused on three Heads of Department (HoDs) – Ryan Quinn in Visionary Department, Karen Fowler in Reinvigorated Department, and Dave Garner in Different Department – based in the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences (the Faculty) of an English university, New University (NewU). Based on the data generated – in addition to the more general insights into the HoDs’ sense of managerial self – research management-related activities emerged as a site of particularly visible identity work among all three HoDs and were therefore chosen as the thematic focus for the analyses.

9.1 Reflecting on the Research Findings

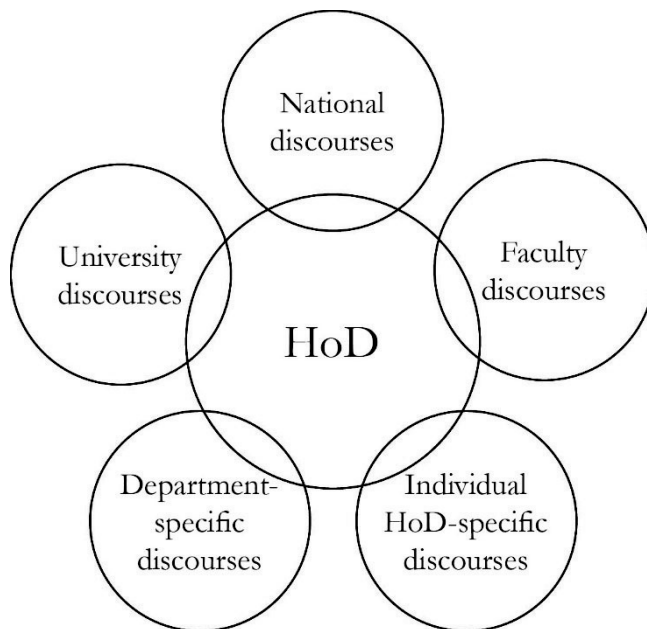
In this section, I summarize the research findings across the analyses presented in chapters 5 to 8 and discuss them in the context of the existing AMM literature and the study’s theoretical assumptions. The remainder of the section is divided into three subsections. The first subsection answers research subquestion 1.1, focusing on the discursive identity resources available to the AMMs studied. The next subsection investigates the AMMs’ use of available discursive resources in the process of their identity construction by providing answers to research subquestion 1.2 through examining the HoDs’ experiences of identity tensions (question 1.2.1) and their responses to them (question 1.2.2). The final subsection offers an answer to the overarching research question about the nature of the AMMs’ discursive construction of their managerial identities.

9.1.1 Understanding Academic Middle Managers’ Discursive Contexts

In this subsection, I provide an answer to research subquestion 1.1 by listing prominent discourses that characterized the studied HoDs’ discursive contexts and that proved

relevant to the discursive identity work of one or more HoDs. I group the discourses into five broad categories: national, university and faculty discourses representing the HoDs' shared discursive contexts, and individual department- and HoD-specific discursive resources, including extra- and intra-organizational discourses (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Five categories of discourses that characterized the HoDs' discursive contexts.



Before listing the prominent discourses that characterized the HoDs' discursive environments, a few points of discussion are in order. The discourses listed below reflect the contextual and personal factors that influence the way AMMs go about their jobs (see sections 2.2.4.1, 2.2.4.2), as well as the common macro, meso and micro identity sources for managers in general and AMMs in particular (see sections 3.2.2.1, 3.2.2.2). At the same time, the reader will note that many of these elements were complemented with details that reflect the particular circumstances of the HoDs studied. Some further comments on the nature of the discourses presented below

should be noted. In line with the theoretical premises, this subsection seeks to distinguish analytically between the different layers of discourses as reflected in the five categories presented in Figure 1. This is done on the basis of examining, as far as possible bottom-up, the discursive identity sources drawn on by the three HoDs. However, certain discourses could be seen as materializing on multiple levels. Indeed, there were sometimes overlaps between a discourse nominally pertaining to a particular analytical level and analogous discourses pertaining to (an) analytically different source(s). I paid attention to such discursive alignments as much as possible throughout the analyses, in the analytical paragraphs that conclude each subsection in chapters 5 to 8, in order to account for the HoDs' simultaneous embeddedness in multiple discursive layers. On the other hand, the findings also show the importance of acknowledging the differences between related discourses attributed to different analytical sources. For example, broadly defined, nationally prominent discourses may leave room for different interpretations in individual universities and in relation to specific organizationally situated practices. This signals that HoDs may position themselves in different ways with respect to related yet distinct discursive identity resources, and alerts us against overly generalized characterizations of discourses that constitute an individual's discursive contexts.

The first three tables on the following pages provide an overview of the discourses that characterized the HoDs' shared discursive environments (see Table 7 for the national discourses, Table 8 for the university discourses and Table 9 for the faculty discourses). The symbol ✓ in these tables indicates which HoD(s) drew on a particular discursive resource in constructing their managerial identities. The next two tables list the discourses specific to each department and HoD (see Table 10 for department-specific discourses and Table 11 for individual HoD-specific discourses). Even though some of these discourses may be seen to fall into multiple umbrella categories presented in the tables, they were assigned to a category based on as far as possible bottom-up analysis.

Table 7: National discourses relevant to the HoDs' discursive identity work.

National Discourses Regarding...	Ryan Quinn	Karen Fowler	Dave Garner
REF as "crude"	✓		
REF as "elitist"	✓		
REF as "a game"	✓		
REF as competition with other universities			✓
REF as an indicator of the importance of research	✓		
REF results as feeding into league tables		✓	
REF "star" scale & associated descriptors as a measure of research quality	✓	✓	✓
research efforts described according to REF categories of research output, impact & environment, along with elements feeding into them	✓	✓	✓
REF rules & guidelines	✓	✓	✓
UOAs as relevant research units	✓	✓	✓
REF results as reflecting a unit's research "health" & societal impact	✓		
REF 2020 submission as a goal of departmental research efforts	✓	✓	✓

External Process
of Research Assessment,
i.e. the REF

National Discourses Regarding... (continued)		Ryan Quinn	Karen Fowler	Dave Garner
Institutional Type	new universities as "teaching-heavy"	✓		
	new universities as administration-heavy	✓		
	new universities as lacking research time	✓		
	new universities as formerly "local authority-controlled"	✓		
	old universities as teaching-light	✓		
	old universities as having significant research time	✓		
	old universities as producing a lot of research	✓		
	research as a central university activity	✓		
Place of Research & Teaching at Universities	universities as prioritizing either research or teaching & learning		✓	
	universities struggling to balance ensuring enough research time with providing quality student experience		✓	

Table 8: University discourses relevant to the HoDs' discursive identity work.

University Discourses Regarding...		Ryan Quinn	Karen Fowler	Dave Garner
Performance Management Systems	"performance management culture" &/or "metrics"	✓	✓	✓
	staff performance review & objective setting mechanism	✓		✓
	management by objectives	✓		
Other Systems & Estate	timetabling system as a constraint on available research time		✓	
	workload system as "unfair"			✓
	university estate as a constraint on available research time		✓	
	lack of appropriate administrative support		✓	
Administrative Support Arrangements & Relationship Between Administrators & Academics	high administrative workloads of academics		✓	
	administrators seeing academics as "incompetent"		✓	
	administration as centrally managed & limited role of academics in administrative support hiring decisions		✓	
	administrators as "afraid" to work on research-related tasks		✓	
	recent positive developments in administration		✓	

University Discourses Regarding... (continued)		Ryan Quinn	Karen Fowler	Dave Garner
HoD Role	focused on financial & human resource management	✓		
	not expected to engage in externally oriented work	✓		
	typically not combined with the Faculty Head of Research role		✓	
	not supported by Deputy HoD, regardless of department size			✓
	supported by Deputy HoD in atypically large departments			✓
	limited control over their departments' future			✓
	former senior management engaging in "punitive" management practices	✓		
	former senior management not prioritizing research &/or not recognizing its importance	✓	✓	✓
Former Senior Management/VC & University Strategy	former senior management emphasizing the importance of & focusing on teaching & students	✓	✓	
	former senior management not strategically committed to externally oriented work	✓		

University Discourses Regarding... (continued)		Ryan Quinn	Karen Fowler	Dave Garner
<p>Current Senior Management/VC & University Strategy & Policy Placing Increased Emphasis on Research</p>	research as a theme in the new strategic plan		✓	
	revision of the research management structure as problematic		✓	✓
	staff categorization proposal, distinguishing between research-focused & teaching-focused staff	✓		✓
	redesigned staff performance review tool that recognizes the importance of research	✓		
	Research Excellence Awards & nomination criteria	✓		✓
	research performance indicators on par with teaching- & student-focused measures		✓	
	3 star threshold for REF 2020 submissions		✓	✓
	selective research support, for researchers likely to produce 3 star & 4 star publications		✓	
	objective to improve research impact in REF 2020	✓		
	new Professor appointments to be 'REF-able'	✓		
	support for externally oriented work	✓		
	support for a university-wide think tank	✓		

University Discourses Regarding... (continued)		Ryan Quinn	Karen Fowler	Dave Garner
Senior Management's/VC's Stance on Different Department	Different Department's relocation to River Campus as a suitable estate solution			✓
	Different Department's (partial) relocation to enable research collaboration with the River Campus Faculty			✓
	possibility of Different Department becoming a faculty			✓

Table 9: Faculty discourses relevant to the HoDs' discursive identity work.

Faculty Discourses Regarding...		Ryan Quinn	Karen Fowler	Dave Garner
Dean as HoDs' Manager	Dean as HoDs' line manager, responsible for their appraisal	✓		
	Dean as supportive of HoDs, their decision-making &/or agendas	✓	✓	✓
	Dean as challenging HoDs' agendas			✓
The Faculty's Research-Related Features & Activities	Dean as supportive of strengthening the Faculty's research profile	✓	✓	
	Karen Fowler as supporting the Faculty's research progress	✓	✓	
	the disciplinary diversity of the Faculty		✓	✓
	different ways of measuring research performance in the various disciplines represented at the Faculty			✓
	Different Department as more research-active than the rest of the Faculty		✓	✓
	the Faculty UOA 1 as "manufactured" in RAE 2008		✓	✓
	lack of research planning & strategy after RAE 2008 at the Faculty		✓	
	decrease in the Faculty UOA 1's research funding		✓	
	the Faculty UOA 1 yet to make a case to be entered in REF 2020		✓	
	plan to introduce full-time Faculty Head of Research post		✓	
	disagreement on the definition of research inclusive of scholarly activity	✓		

Faculty Discourses Regarding... (continued)		Ryan Quinn	Karen Fowler	Dave Garner
The Faculty's Externally Oriented Activities	lack of strategy on & low level of externally oriented work	✓		
	Dean as supportive of enhancing the Faculty's externally oriented work	✓		
	Academic Unit-wide research, policy & practice centre	✓		✓
	the Faculty funding arrangements for externally oriented activities	✓		
The Faculty's Stance on Different Department	the Faculty's administrative support arrangements for the HoD holding the Faculty Head for External Engagement role	✓		
	preference for Different Department remaining on Central Campus & being part of the Faculty			✓

Table 10: Department-specific discourses relevant to the HoDs' discursive identity work.

Department-Specific Discourses Regarding...	Ryan Quinn	Karen Fowler	Dave Garner
Organizational Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reorganization due to the Faculty realignment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reorganizations due to the Faculty realignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unit not fitting into the NewU organizational structure - calls for more control over the unit's operations
Management Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - previously absent management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unit previously temporarily managed by 3 managers - “sporadic” meetings of the senior staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - management arrangements not suitable to the unit's realities, i.e. no Deputy HoD
Operations & Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - issues with aspects of performance upon HoD appointment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - governance structures & operations marked by issues with robustness & quality upon HoD appointment - improved operations & performance after Karen's appointment - issues with Small Programme & subsequent changes in the course & staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - good performance on most metrics

Department-Specific Discourses Regarding... (continued)	Ryan Quinn	Karen Fowler	Dave Garner
Culture &/or Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - discipline-based divisions & “cliques” - improved integration after Ryan’s appointment - staff “downtrodden” & “undervalued” upon HoD appointment - more positive & “open” climate after Ryan’s appointment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “very comfortable” & staff “looking after” each other upon HoD appointment - division between different teams, disciplinary diversity & differences between courses - plans for reintegration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “collegiate,” unified & “collaborative” culture - staff supportive & respectful of each other
Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - expansion & later reduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - significant growth - large student, doctoral student & staff bodies
Workload Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “unequal” workloads 	<p style="text-align: center;">N/A</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">N/A</p>

Department-Specific Discourses Regarding... (continued)	Ryan Quinn	Karen Fowler	Dave Garner
<p>Research-Related Features, Strategy & Activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of a research agenda upon HoD appointment - low level of research activity & productivity - research income target set at zero upon HoD appointment - staff's different levels of research experience & skills - difficulties in putting together REF 2014 submission - unsatisfactory performance of the Faculty UOA 1 in REF 2014 - research strategy promoting research as a central activity after Ryan's appointment - research as inclusive of scholarly activity - research as exclusive of scholarly activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - low level of research activity - improved research culture after Karen's appointment, e.g. through Small Programme staff changes, where staff without research credentials & skills were replaced with research-oriented hires - many staff not research-active & would not be entered in REF 2020 - some staff not buying into the research agenda &/or are anxious about it - some research-active staff engaging in research activities below the level sufficient to meet the NewU's REF 2020 goals - limited research time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Faculty UOA 2's unsatisfactory RAE 2008 performance, with unit's key staff entered in the Faculty UOA 1 - increased research efforts, e.g. through newly hired lecturers with a strong research profile, expansion of interdisciplinary fields & improved research support & equipment - the Faculty UOA 2's good REF 2014 performance - unit's staff entered in additional UOAs in REF 2014 - continued REF success not guaranteed - unit's small research budget compared to competitor institutions

<p>Department-Specific Discourses Regarding... (continued)</p>	<p>Ryan Quinn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - research progress, e.g. increased research funding, growing research production & better research support - slow research progress, e.g. some remaining resistance to & fear of the research strategy, & teaching still seen by some as central - issues with accountability of research-active staff - new hires as research-active, defined by REF-informed criteria - increased research “productivity” following new hires 	<p>Karen Fowler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - limited research staffing resources, sometimes shared with other units in the Faculty - inadequate research leadership, including the absence of a Professor - need for better research support arrangements & structures - research as inclusive of scholarly activity 	<p>Dave Garner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - research & teaching both considered important activities - close links between research & teaching - research central to most staff & most staff engaging in research - “collaborative” research culture, across disciplinary boundaries in the umbrella discipline - limited research time & heavy teaching workloads - the Faculty’s research leadership arrangements unsuitable for managing the unit’s research
<p>Research-Related Features, Strategy & Activities (continued)</p>			

<p>Department-Specific Discourses Regarding... (continued)</p>	<p>Ryan Quinn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - disciplines as “public,” “outward-facing” - disciplines as “theoretical, inward-looking” 	<p>Karen Fowler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - national discourse calling for further professionalization & academization of the profession related to Small Programme - departmental discourse constructing research as tangential to the profession related to Small Programme - discipline-related definitions of research as focused on making a difference to society 	<p>Dave Garner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the unit can be considered as single-discipline or multidisciplinary
<p>Academic/ Professional Disciplines</p>			

<p>Department-Specific Discourses Regarding... (continued)</p> <p>Externally Oriented Activities</p>	<p>Ryan Quinn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - low level of externally oriented work - success in implementing an external engagement agenda after Ryan's appointment, e.g. new partnerships, increased funding generation, curriculum changes & staff largely buying into the agenda 	<p>Karen Fowler</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>Dave Garner</p> <p>N/A</p>
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Department-Specific Discourses Regarding... (continued)	Ryan Quinn	Karen Fowler	Dave Garner
Unit's Position in & Relationship With the Rest of the Faculty	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - different from the rest of the Faculty, e.g. larger than other departments, located on a higher floor, in part dissimilar disciplinary focus & operating differently in many respects - “resentment” towards the unit in other parts of the Faculty - unit’s inadequate representation on the Faculty Management - some collaboration with the rest of the Faculty

<p>Department-Specific Discourses Regarding... (continued)</p>	<p>Ryan Quinn</p>	<p>Karen Fowler</p>	<p>Dave Garner</p>
<p>Estate Issues</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unit “outgrown” the estate on Central Campus - (partial) move to River Campus undesired, e.g. due to the unit’s deep embeddedness in the Faculty teaching & administration, staff preference to remain on Central Campus, decline in student attraction & recruitment, “short-term damage” & performance issues, & threat to unit’s research arrangements - long-term benefits of moving to River Campus, e.g. estate arrangements & collaboration with the River Campus Faculty

Department-Specific Discourses Regarding... (continued)	Ryan Quinn	Karen Fowler	Dave Garner
Estate Issues (continued)	N/A	N/A	- the responsible NewU professional service not addressing the unit's estate issues in a timely manner

Table 11: Individual HoD-specific discourses relevant to their discursive identity work.

Individual HoD-Specific Discourses Regarding...	Ryan Quinn	Karen Fowler	Dave Garner
Age	- late 30s	- early 50s	- mid-60s - approaching retirement
Educational Background	- “non-traditional”	- gained research experience during her studies	N/A
Professional Career/ Experience Outside Academia	- work in community development	- practitioner in the profession related to Small Programme - practitioner also responsible for training others & doing “evaluation research”	- secondment in a research & consultancy company
Academic Career Before Becoming HoD	- research management experience - community engagement project lead	- combination of management & leadership roles	- held management & leadership posts in the unit, including Deputy HoD
Experience at Other Universities	- new university	- research-intensive universities	N/A
Relationship With the Dean Before HoD Appointment	- already existing relationship	N/A	N/A
Time in the HoD Role	- ≈ 3 years	- ≈ 5 years	- ≈ 5 years

Individual HoD-Specific Discourses Regarding... (continued)	Ryan Quinn	Karen Fowler	Dave Garner
Time at NewU & Department	- \approx 3 years	- \approx 5 years	- > 30 years
Disciplinary Background	- predominantly identified with 1 discipline, but worked in multiple disciplines	- based on interest in specific populations & approach to working with them	- had done multidisciplinary work - interests sometimes aligned better with the disciplines homed by Visionary Department
Position in the Academic Hierarchy	- Reader	- Professor	- Professor

<p>Individual HoD-Specific Discourses Regarding... (continued)</p>	<p>Ryan Quinn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trying to maintain research activity - “love[d]” teaching, but cannot commit to it - supervision of 1 doctoral student - academics as engaged in “teaching & learning,” creating “new knowledge,” but also as “practitioners” 	<p>Karen Fowler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maintaining a high level of research activity & aiming to meet the NewU’s REF 2020 submission threshold - research methodology involving research participants’ active engagement - engaged in teaching - supervision of several doctoral students - seeing being a researcher, practitioner & educator as intertwined - holding expertise-related external roles, e.g. as academic journal editor & national roles in the relevant area - importance of engaging in “thinking” 	<p>Dave Garner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not engaged in research - “really like[d]” teaching, but did not have time to engage in it - involved in some doctoral supervision & examinations
<p>Engagement in &/or Attitude Towards Various Academic Activities</p>			

<p>Individual HoD-Specific Discourses Regarding... (continued)</p>	<p>Ryan Quinn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - busy - administration-heavy - working with & delegating to senior staff - “firewall,” “filter” or “barrier” - overseeing the departmental research efforts - overseeing the departmental teaching- & student-related efforts, e.g. curriculum & student experience - engaged in externally oriented work & strategic partnership activities 	<p>Karen Fowler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - busy - administration-heavy - working with & delegating to senior staff - overseeing the departmental research efforts - overseeing the departmental teaching- & student-related efforts, e.g. curriculum, & student experience & satisfaction - temporarily overseeing only 1 of 3 departmental teams 	<p>Dave Garner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - busy - working with & delegating to senior staff - member of the Faculty Management with inadequate say in decision-making - middle manager - overseeing the departmental research efforts - overseeing the departmental teaching- & student-related efforts, e.g. student attraction & satisfaction - responsible for the unit’s short- & long-term planning & performance - responsible for resolving staff disputes & maintaining a positive atmosphere
<p>HoD Role</p>			

<p>Individual HoD-Specific Discourses Regarding... (continued)</p> <p>Additional Management & Leadership Roles</p>		<p>Ryan Quinn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Faculty Head for External Engagement - temporary lead of the Academic Unit-wide research, policy & practice centre - temporary lead of a university-wide think tank 		<p>Karen Fowler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Faculty Head of Research 		<p>Dave Garner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chair of the Faculty Marketing Board - temporary Chair of the Faculty Internationalization Board - the Faculty representative to the information technologies professional service 	
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<p>Individual HoD-Specific Discourses Regarding... (continued)</p>	<p>Ryan Quinn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - management as “non-punitive” - leadership based on building “relationships,” “trust” & “support” - leadership as focused on “strategy” - leadership as focused on inspiring people - management as focused on managing “processes” - “meaningful,” “creative,” “transformational” & “ambitious” organizational change 	<p>Karen Fowler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - leadership as focused on “vision” & “where are we going” - management as focused on “how we’re going to get there” - management as keeping in touch with the staff you manage - distinction between “managing people” & “managing the business” - self-management & “reflection” 	<p>Dave Garner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - distinction between “micromanagement” of staff performance & “bigger picture things,” “more strategic issues” - people management focused on encouraging staff & being attentive to staff wellbeing
<p>External Partner Organizations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interests of external partner organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interests of external partner organizations 	<p>N/A</p>

<p>Individual HoD-Specific Discourses Regarding... (continued)</p>	<p>Ryan Quinn</p> <p>- “a really happy person”</p>	<p>Karen Fowler</p> <p>- “key values” of “humility” & “being as true to yourself as you can possibly be”</p> <p>- personal experiences influencing Karen’s career choices</p>	<p>Dave Garner</p> <p>- personal experiences influencing Dave’s career-related decisions</p>
<p>Personality, Values & Personal Experiences</p>			
<p>Family</p>	<p>- father & husband</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Political Identity & Values</p>	<p>- “political identity” & “values” influencing Ryan’s agenda</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>

9.1.2 Examining Academic Middle Managers’ Experiences of Identity Tensions

In this subsection, I offer a summary of the findings pertaining to research subquestion 1.2, which set out to explore how AMMs employ available discursive resources in the process of identity work. Although the shadowed HoDs at times engaged in discursive identity work that did not involve identity tensions, the present study was guided by the recognition that AMMs tend to experience frictions (section 2.2) and the assumption that identity work becomes more visible when individuals experience identity tensions (section 3.4.1). Therefore, the analyses have focused on the HoDs’ discursive identity work as seen through the lens of the HoDs’ experiences of identity tensions and their responses to them, as reflected in research subquestions 1.2.1 and 1.2.2.

In the continuation of this subsection, I present a comparative account of the HoDs’ experiences of prominent identity tensions and their responses to them. I group the identified forms of identity tensions into eight broad categories:

- HoDs as managers versus HoDs as academics;
- HoDs’ notions of the HoD role versus the NewU and/or faculty discourses regarding the HoD role;
- HoDs’ visions for their departments versus departmental circumstances;
- contradictions between different notions of heading a department;
- contradictions between the HoDs’ multiple roles and within their additional managerial roles;
- HoDs’ research visions versus the national, NewU and faculty research-related discourses;

- HoDs' research visions versus the departmental research-related discourses; and
- HoDs' department-appropriate research visions versus the NewU discourses that placed increased emphasis on research.

Where relevant, I connect the HoDs' experiences of identity tensions and the ways in which they responded to them to the HoDs' managerial identity construction processes more broadly. Each form of identity tension is presented in a dedicated subsection, although the reader should note that delineations between the different types of identity tensions were at times made for clarity rather than being distinctly reflected in the data.

9.1.2.1 Heads of Department as Both Managers and Academics?

All three HoDs experienced an identity tension between a sense of self as manager and an identity as academic, a friction extensively addressed in the existing AMM literature (see e.g. Deem et al., 2007; Degn, 2015; Sotirakou, 2004; and the discussion in section 2.2.1). In line with the extant research, Ryan, Karen and Dave reported that their management responsibilities prevented them from engaging in academic activities to the extent they wished. Thus, they were unable to claim their identity as academics to the extent they would have preferred. Although all three indicated that they accepted this situation, suggesting that the prioritization of their managerial identity over their sense of self as academics was to be expected when holding an HoD role, the details of how each of them dealt with this identity tension differed.

Ryan continued to claim an identity “an academic first,” although he recognized that his identities as a “researcher” and a “Reader” in a specific discipline were “subservient.” For example, he struggled to carve out time for research, signalling a persistent identity tension and an inability to seriously challenge the organizational structures that placed him in such a position (section 6.1.2). However, this was not the

whole story. Ryan acknowledged that “a really critical part of my job” was to make a difference in the outside world – in line with his definition of “academics as practitioners” and his political identity (section 6.5.2.1) – and suggested that he had succeeded in this as the Visionary Department HoD (section 6.5.2.2). In this way, Ryan indicated that his managerial role enabled him to assert at least certain parts of his academic identity, signifying a point of integration between his managerial identity and his academic identity. This dynamic was also reflected in Ryan’s role as the Faculty Head for External Engagement, discussed below (section 9.1.2.5).

Karen, who, like Ryan, saw herself “first and foremost” as a Professor working in a particular field, was arguably more successful in claiming the associated identity; this is at odds with the experiences of many AMMs reported in the literature (see the discussion in section 2.2.1). Although Karen spoke of struggling to find the time to do so, she engaged in many academic activities (section 7.2.2.2). For example, I observed that Karen at times prioritized her research-related tasks over managerial tasks, thus challenging the structures that arguably expected her to do otherwise (section 7.1.3.2). Moreover, similar to Ryan, Karen sought to centre her managerial responsibilities around issues that helped her maintain her “academic credibility while leading and managing,” namely departmental and faculty research management (section 7.1.3.2; more on the latter below, section 9.1.2.5). Like Ryan, then, she found ways to integrate her sense of self as manager and academic. However, Karen did not always seem to strive for integration and coherence between her identities. For example, while she embraced research for societal benefit as a researcher and practitioner, she was largely discouraging of it as an HoD responsible for enhancing departmental research performance (section 7.4.2.3).

Dave’s experience of this identity tension was markedly different from Ryan’s and Karen’s, with Dave feeling unsure “whether I would still consider myself to be an academic.” He did not take this situation lightly, telling me of “get[ting] depressed” and

“miss[ing]” engaging in academic activities, and that he was “feel[ing] a bit of a fraud.” Moreover, Dave did not foresee that he would ever be able to address this friction, even once he retired from his HoD post (section 8.1.2). Not only did this seem to indicate a disconnect between Dave’s realities and his wish to claim an academic identity, but it also signalled Dave’s view that he should do so.

9.1.2.2 Challenging the NewU and/or Faculty Discourses

Regarding the Head of Department Role

Despite the HoDs’ experiences of identity tensions at the intersection of their managerial identity and academic identity, none of the HoDs questioned whether they were managers or not in relation to their position in the organizational structure. However, this and the next two subsections demonstrate that the HoDs experienced identity tensions with respect to the kind of managers they were or sought to be in discursive contexts that sometimes challenged these notions. First, I examine the HoDs’ responses to the NewU and/or faculty discourses related to the HoD role that were incompatible with the HoDs’ (favoured) managerial identities, a set of tensions that emerged particularly in Ryan’s and Dave’s discursive identity work.

For Ryan, the issue lay in the NewU’s approach to the content and expectations of the HoD role. The university’s, in his view, “underambitious” expectations of HoDs “to manage some money and people” ran counter to Ryan’s notion of ambition, “meaningful” change and delivering on “the more interesting and exciting things.” Moreover, although Ryan acknowledged that he had to meet the university requirements, he also rejected the NewU’s sometimes “punitive” management approach as a discursive identity resource. Instead, he claimed a managerial identity as a “firewall,” “filter” or “barrier” that protected his staff from the negative effects of “university precepts” (section 6.1.3.1), similar to Gjerde and Alvesson’s (2020)

“umbrella carriers” or “protectors.” Of note, Ryan suggested that his agency to successfully challenge university structures was enabled by his manager, the Dean.

Dave’s identity tensions arose from the discrepancy between departmental discourses of Different Department as different from other departments – including due to its atypically large size – and the NewU’s management structure and the Faculty’s decision-making arrangements. Dave responded to the first tension by calling for the creation of a Deputy HoD post, a demand that was supported by the Dean. Although this effort took a lot of convincing, Dave and the Dean eventually succeeded in their appeal to the Human Resources (section 8.1.3.1). This signalled that Dave succeeded not only in claiming a favoured sense of managerial self, but also in adjusting the university structures to reflect that (Watson, 2008, 2009). Nevertheless, there was an additional, ongoing identity tension related to Dave’s perception that he did not have adequate control over the NewU’s decision-making with respect to his unit (sections 8.1.3.1, 8.6.2.1). Although the Dean was supportive of Dave in the case above, Dave’s “liminal position” (Ellis & Ybema, 2010, p. 300) as both HoD of Different Department and as a member of the Faculty Management was not without its problems. Dave pointed out that his say in the Faculty’s decision-making should have been considered in proportion with the Different Department’s size relative to the rest of the Faculty (section 8.1.3.2). While Dave indicated at one point that he lacked agency to address this imbalance, the friction – along with a reshaping of the Faculty’s decision-making structures – seemed likely to be at least partially resolved with the appointment of a Deputy HoD who was expected to join the Faculty Management.

9.1.2.3 Responding to Challenging Departmental Circumstances

Identity tensions related to the meaning the HoDs ascribed to their role sometimes materialized due to challenging departmental circumstances linked to their units’ overall cultures, operations and/or performance.

The situation of Ryan and Karen on their appointment as HoDs reflected a similar dynamic. Rather than accepting their departments' dominant discourses as sources of their managerial identities, the two challenged the units' status quo. In Ryan's case, he was determined to change the Visionary Department's gloomy atmosphere and integrate the unit's multiple groups, seeing these as steps towards addressing performance issues (section 6.1.3.2). Both Ryan and his colleagues indicated that he had made progress in doing so, signifying his success in reshaping the unit as a discursive environment (Watson, 2008, 2009). This also signalled a better alignment between Ryan's sense of managerial self and Visionary Department as the source of his managerial identities.

Karen went through a similar process. She challenged her unit's "very comfortable" culture, which was characterized by staff doing "a lot of looking after [each other]" (section 7.1.3.1), by engaging in less of the latter and focusing more on addressing governance and operational issues. This suggested an eventual better fit between Karen's sense of managerial self and her unit as an identity source. The departmental circumstances became complicated once again when the unit was split and managed by three managers during the process of the Small Programme realignment. Karen acknowledged the departmental discourses of the unit's disintegration and had begun working on the issue as the unit reunified under her leadership (section 7.1.3.1). She was optimistic about the Reinvigorated Department's future, suggesting that the unit she was managing at the time positively fed into her sense of managerial self as its HoD.

Unlike Ryan and Karen, Dave's identity tension related to issues with maintaining the Different Department's unity and collegial culture, rather than seeking to change it. The departmental discourses of the unit as integrated, collaborative and supportive – which served as central discursive identity resources for Dave – were threatened by the unit's extensive growth and the potential for the latter to lead to

fragmentation of the Department (section 8.1.3.3). Dave indicated a lack of agency to meaningfully address this concern, signalling an ongoing identity tension.

9.1.2.4 Heads of Department as People Leaders, Business Managers, Carers...

The three HoDs also experienced identity tensions with respect to how the different notions of what it means to head a department informed their managerial identities.

Ryan made a distinction between management and leadership that is also commonly acknowledged in the literature (see e.g. Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). He defined management as related to “manag[ing] processes” and leadership as “driv[ing] strategy, inspir[ing] people to go somewhere.” Additionally, Ryan referred to leadership as “the leadership of people” to which discourses such as “trust” and “support” were central. This notion stemmed from Ryan’s educational, professional and political experiences, and he suggested that this was a crucial tenet of his, not only as an HoD but also as a person. This indicated an integration of what identity studies refer to as personal and social identities (see e.g. Alvesson et al., 2008; Coupland & Brown, 2012; Webb, 2006; and the discussion in section 3.3.1). In response to the implied discrepancy between management and leadership, Ryan seemed to accept a managerial identity as an HoD engaged in management only reluctantly, while he strongly embraced discourses of leadership; even though he acknowledged that this might sometimes have been at odds with his staff’s needs (section 6.1.3.3).

Similar to Ryan, Karen distinguished between leadership, which was “to do with the vision and ... the where are we going,” and management, which was to do with “how we’re going to get there.” Unlike Ryan, however, Karen acknowledged the role of both discourses in her managerial identities construction as an HoD much more equally, and did not indicate an identity tension arising from this differentiation per se (section 7.1.3.2). For Karen as HoD, the distinction that held more potential for identity tensions was that between the discourse of “managing people” – which had to do with

“the personal or the people issues” – and “managing the business.” In the hope that claiming a managerial identity primarily aligned with the latter did not make her seem “cold and unfeeling” – indicating an identity tension arising from how the potentially negative perceptions of others fed into Karen’s sense of managerial self – Karen nevertheless stood by her approach. Indeed, she suggested that she had found a way to prevent or minimize such friction, by maintaining a “boundary between personal and professional.” This suggests that Karen was seeking disintegration between her personal and her social identities (see e.g. Alvesson et al., 2008; Coupland & Brown, 2012; Webb, 2006; and the discussion in section 3.3.1), which is at odds with some common definitions of identity work as directed towards seeking coherence between these sets of identities (see e.g. Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Nevertheless, Karen also acknowledged the importance of “sometimes ... accepting that what you’ve had to do today is pretty crap,” pointing to her acceptance of a negative sense of self (section 7.1.3.3).

For Dave, the identity tension stemmed from his wish to reorient the focus of his job and thus his managerial identity as HoD. He was “tired” of “micromanag[ing]” his staff “to make them do it [their job]” and was “much more interested in” the “bigger picture things” (section 8.1.3.1). Due to the constraining structures, that is the absence of a Deputy HoD and what Dave perceived as an inadequate role in the Faculty’s decision-making, the tension seemed to persist for the time being, although it may have begun to resolve with the appointment of a Deputy HoD. Of note, despite Dave’s weariness with closely monitoring staff, he placed great importance on “the [people] management stuff” – such as paying attention to staff wellbeing and encouraging staff who needed it (section 8.1.3.3) – suggesting that this was a central aspect of his sense of managerial self as an HoD.

9.1.2.5 Occupying Multiple Managerial Roles

I now turn to the identity tensions that arose from the HoDs holding additional management roles. This dynamic came to the fore particularly in Ryan's and Karen's discursive identity work, summarized below. Dave constructed his faculty-wide management roles in marketing, internationalization and information technologies as "all secondary to the day job" (section 8.1.2), clearly prioritizing his sense of managerial self as an HoD over the managerial identities associated with his additional posts.

In addition to his HoD role, Ryan was the Faculty Head for External Engagement. This post emerged in the first place from Ryan's response to an identity tension arising from the discrepancy between the importance he attached to externally oriented work and the departmental, faculty and NewU discourses prevalent at the time of his appointment, which neglected such efforts (see also section 9.1.2.7). However, this dual appointment led to further frictions. For example, due to time constraints, Ryan had only been able to deliver on his faculty-wide responsibilities "a little bit," suggesting that in response to the identity tension, he prioritized his managerial identity as HoD, at least for the time being (section 6.5.2.3). Ryan also spoke of frictions arising from the difference between the meaning he attached to the intersection of his HoD role and the faculty-wide role and the faculty discourses on this, as expressed, for example, in the Faculty's new administrative support arrangements. While Ryan saw the two roles as intertwined and wanted to work with a single administrative assistant – pointing to Ryan's integration of managerial identities associated with each of the two roles – the Faculty had assigned him two administrative assistants, each to support him in one role (section 6.5.2.3). Ryan indicated that he lacked agency to address the identity tension, which suggested that it would persist. In addition to his role as the Faculty Head for External Engagement, Ryan also temporarily held leadership roles in the Academic Unit-wide "research, policy and practice centre" and in the university-wide think tank. In relation to the latter, an identity tension arose due to Ryan's "liminal"

position between NewU and the Association as an external partner in the venture, with the two organizations taking different approaches to the endeavour (Ellis & Ybema, 2010). Ryan suggested that he was “balancing” the visions of the two counterparts, in the process not fully identifying with either NewU or the Association, signalling an ongoing identity tension (section 6.5.2.4).

With regard to Karen, although the distinction between management and leadership had not generally caused friction for Karen as HoD (section 9.1.2.4), she seemed to suggest that management was more closely associated with her role as HoD, whereas her post as the Faculty Head of Research was more of a leadership-heavy role. She thus claimed different managerial identities with respect to each of her two roles (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003), suggesting a disintegration of the two identities. Indeed, the fact that Karen accepted the HoD role only on the condition that she also be appointed the Faculty Head of Research could be seen as Karen anticipating and preventing an identity tension that would arise if she were unable to operate in the way she preferred, that is by claiming an identity as both manager and leader. Although Karen’s dual management role arguably prevented this identity tension, it led to other frictions. For example, Karen indicated that she was not always able to engage in each of the two roles to the extent she wished or was expected to. Nonetheless, Karen continued to attempt to “balance” the two roles and the distinct managerial identities associated with them (section 7.1.3.2), in doing so becoming a “perpetual liminar” (Ybema et al., 2011). Karen’s insistence on this was arguably linked to her aspiration to become the Faculty Head of Research full time. However, the latter was also a source of an identity tension, as Karen’s previously agreed transition into this faculty-wide role full time – an arrangement supported by the Dean – was jeopardized by the revision of the NewU’s research management structure (section 7.2.2.3). This left it unclear if and when Karen would be able to realize her aim and meant that a central aspect of Karen’s managerial identity was threatened, in circumstances where she lacked agency to do anything to resolve the resulting identity tension.

9.1.2.6 Tackling the National, NewU and Faculty Discourses

That Problematized Research Efforts

The three HoDs were demonstrably committed to enhancing their departments' research culture and performance, signalling the centrality of research management in their managerial identities. However, their sense of managerial self in relation to research was challenged by multiple discourses that stemmed from their broader discursive environments, including the national, NewU and faculty contexts.

With respect to the national discursive environment, some of the discourses that caused an identity tension for Ryan related to him operating at a new university. Ryan spoke of the latter as traditionally teaching- and administration-heavy, in contrast to the research-oriented old universities. In response, Ryan expressed his determination to challenge these existing structures (section 6.2.2.1). Moreover, although Dave did not explicitly mention the NewU's post-1992 status, he spoke of low research funding compared to competitor institutions. This led to an identity tension arising from the resulting "fragil[ity]" of the Different Department's research success, leading Dave to commit to a "more and more ambitious" approach to research management (section 8.3.2). Another set of nationally prominent discourses that strongly fed into the HoDs' discursive identity work – although these discourses appeared to cause explicit identity tensions mostly to Ryan – related to the REF. On the one hand, Ryan characterized the REF as "crude" and "elitist," "a game that we have to play" that "favours those who are already strong [old universities]." On the other hand, Ryan saw the REF as a legitimate external mechanism providing a "health check" of a unit's research strength, signalling his ambivalent positioning towards the REF (section 6.2.2.1). This was also reflected in Ryan's fluid managerial identity with respect to the REF. On some occasions, Ryan embraced the REF without experiencing identity tensions, for example, when employing REF-informed criteria for the new (Senior) Lecturer appointments. On other occasions, he was reluctant to draw on the REF as a discursive identity

resource, for example, when a professorial candidate's lack of 'REFability' excluded them from the shortlist (section 6.4.2.1). Similarly, while Ryan at one point distanced himself from the NewU's focus on the REF impact – describing the university-wide think tank as a “self-interested” pursuit aimed at improving the NewU's REF impact score – in other contexts he constructed the REF impact and ‘real’ societal impact as complementary, including when challenged on this by a colleague (section 6.5.2.4). Arguably, this enabled him to integrate his managerial identity as a manager who had to deliver on the NewU's REF impact expectations and his identity as a practitioner and political individual who sought to bring about ‘real’ positive change in the world.

Some university discourses also challenged the HoDs' sense of managerial self. All three HoDs acknowledged the discourse of the lack of or lesser emphasis on research under the previous VC, although Ryan and Karen addressed the issue in more detail than Dave, signalling that it caused an identity tension for them. Ryan and Karen rejected as discursive identity resources the NewU's earlier neglect of research and its dominant focus on teaching and learning. Instead, they asserted a managerial identity that was vitally informed by their commitment to the university's research function, demonstrating their determination to challenge existing structures (sections 6.2.2.2, 7.3.2.1). Karen raised some specific issues that continued to be an obstacle to the NewU's research endeavours and caused continuous identity tensions for her, as they ran counter to Karen's sense of managerial self informed by her experiences at other universities. These included the limitations that the NewU's estate and timetabling placed on “giv[ing] meaning for chunks of time for staff to do research” (section 7.3.2.2), as well as the “lack of admin support” and the relationship between the NewU administrators and academics. In relation to the latter, Karen felt that the academics' needs – in her case informed importantly by her focus on research – should be considered when planning administrative support, which she argued was not the case at NewU. As was evident during the shortlisting process for an administrative assistant, Karen strongly rejected the NewU discourses regarding the nature of administrative

support as an identity source, while at the same time sought to disrupt – unsuccessfully – the university structures that embodied it (section 7.3.2.3). Additionally, Ryan criticized the NewU’s lack of commitment to external engagement under the previous VC – while observing a similar state of affairs at the Faculty upon his appointment – which contradicted Ryan’s experiences at another university. Nevertheless, Ryan was determined to implement an external engagement agenda, an aspect central to his managerial identities (section 6.5.2.1; see also section 9.1.2.7). Importantly, although the above indicates that some frictions persisted, all HoDs agreed that the new VC brought about a shift in the NewU research-related discourses – and, as Ryan acknowledged, in terms of external engagement – by constructing research as a central endeavour. While this led to a different set of identity tensions (section 9.1.2.8), overall this development appeared to result in a better alignment between the importance the HoDs attached to research and the NewU’s attitude towards it.

Faculty discourses also at times posed a threat to the HoDs’ managerial identities. In Ryan’s case – although he acknowledged the Dean’s support for his departmental research agenda (section 6.2.2.4; more on the latter in section 9.1.2.7) – a faculty discourse challenged the notion of research as an effort inclusive of scholarly activity that was central to said agenda (section 6.3.2). In response, Ryan stuck with the inclusive definition of research and succeeded in adjusting existing structures to accommodate the latter (Watson, 2008, 2009), which was evident in the Visionary Department research strategy and the fact that Reinvigorated Department adopted parts of it (section 7.4.1). For Karen, a faculty discourse that challenged her sense of managerial self upon appointment linked to the overall low level of research in the Faculty, with the exception of Different Department (section 7.2.2.1). In response, Karen – in her role as the Faculty Head of Research – began to take action to address this issue, and according to her accounts and the views of several other interviewees, she had begun to succeed in doing so. This not only signalled a better alignment between Karen’s sense of managerial self and the Faculty – and thus at least a partial

resolution of the associated identity tension – but also indicated that Karen was successful in the use of her agency to change the structures in which she operated (Watson, 2008, 2009). In her post as the Reinvigorated Department HoD, identity tensions arose due to Karen’s perception of her unit’s disadvantaged position in terms of research staffing compared to some of the other departments in the Faculty, pointing to the sometimes complex interdepartmental dynamics. For example, when Karen assessed that a research assistant who was largely paid by Reinvigorated Department was being called upon heavily for support by Visionary and Small Departments, she made sure to protect her unit’s interests and challenged existing faculty arrangements (section 7.2.2.1). The faculty research discourses represented a central source of identity tensions for Dave, as evidenced by his perception of these discourses as disadvantageous to his unit. This related to Dave’s “liminal position” (Ellis & Ybema, 2010, p. 300) as both the Different Department HoD and member of the Faculty (see also section 9.1.2.2), and Dave’s two identities being sometimes at odds with each other. In response to such identity tensions, Dave displayed a certain fluidity and contradiction. On the one hand, in some cases he sought convergence between the Different Department’s and the Faculty’s interests, and thus an integration of his two distinct managerial identities. This was the case when Dave employed as a discursive identity resource a faculty UOA that was not primary to Different Department to justify that both faculty nominees for the Research Excellence Awards were coming from his unit (section 8.2.2.1). In other contexts, however, Dave rejected the Faculty’s interests as the source of his managerial identities and firmly sided with the Different Department’s concerns. For example, he ensured that the Faculty UOA 2 would “not ... lose staff to the Faculty UOA 1” in the REF 2014 (section 8.3.2) and criticized the Faculty’s research leadership arrangements (section 8.2.2.2).

9.1.2.7 *Confronting Departmental Discourses*

That Complicated the Heads of Department's Emphasis on Research

The HoDs' departmental discursive contexts also at times posed challenges to their managerial identities. In this subsection, I examine such identity tensions, specifically the HoDs' experiences of them prior to the emergence of the reformed NewU research discourses and in relation to the HoDs' research-related initiatives that they did not directly connect to the university's recent efforts that emphasized the importance of research. I address the latter and the HoDs' associated discursive identity work in the next subsection.

Ryan's determination, described above, to challenge some broader discourses at odds with the importance he ascribed to research was evident in his investment in a departmental research agenda. In doing so, however, Ryan also went against the departmental discourses prevalent at the time of his appointment, which constructed research as tangential to the Visionary Department's operations. This thus signalled an additional identity tension (section 6.2.2.3) and meant that Ryan's introduction of a research agenda would challenge existing departmental structures. At the same time, however, Ryan's approach to research management did take into account the departmental circumstances. It was intended to support everyone, regardless of their research experience, and to be inclusive of scholarly activity, not just 'traditional,' REF-suitable efforts. This indicates that the Visionary Department's characteristics also importantly fed into Ryan's sense of managerial self and points to an alignment with Ryan's general approach to leadership (section 6.1.3). Indeed, Ryan insisted on an inclusive research strategy even though this led to his managerial identity being questioned by some of his department and faculty colleagues (section 6.3.2; see also section 9.1.2.6). According to Ryan and several other interviewees, he had begun to succeed in raising the unit's research profile, suggesting that Ryan had successfully drawn on his agentic potential directed towards changing the departmental research

discourses (Watson, 2008, 2009). Additionally, Ryan engaged in similar discursive identity work with respect to departmental discourses – and the corresponding NewU and faculty discourses (section 6.5.2.1) – regarding external engagement or rather the low level of it. Ryan’s prompt successes were not only evident in the changed departmental circumstances on this issue, but also informed the Faculty’s decision to create a dedicated faculty-wide management post (section 6.5.2.3). Related to Ryan’s external engagement agenda was also his challenge of the Visionary Department’s teaching offer, which he described as “theoretical” and “inward-looking.” He rejected such a notion of the disciplines in question and called for a greater emphasis on these disciplines as “public.” Despite some remaining resistance to this shift, Ryan and some of his colleagues interviewed spoke of an overall success of this endeavour; another example of Ryan’s agency demonstrated in the process of identity work that resulted in transforming the structures that fed into Ryan’s sense of managerial self (section 6.5.2.2). These changes in departmental structures indicated a better alignment between Ryan’s managerial identities and the Visionary Department’s realities, while also likely signalled a better integration of Ryan’s sense of self as academic and HoD (see also section 9.1.2.1). However, despite the successes of Ryan’s research agenda and associated efforts, an identity tension persisted as Ryan assessed that not enough progress had been made. One way in which he sought to address this was to hire several research-active staff, another endeavour that he considered successful. Of note, however, was Ryan’s definition of their research activity using REF-informed criteria (section 6.4.2; see also section 9.1.2.6) and the implied lesser value of other forms of research, even though Ryan had promoted the latter in his inclusive definition of research. This signifies that Ryan employed “antagonistic discursive resources” (Clarke et al., 2009) in his managerial identities construction (see also the next subsection).

Like Ryan, Karen pointed to an identity tension that emerged due to the low level of research in Reinvigorated Department upon her appointment (section 7.2.2.1). However, according to her own statements and those of her colleagues, Karen had

brought about a significant change in terms of the role of research in the Department. This signalled not only a better alignment between Karen's sense of managerial self as HoD and the unit she led, but also Karen's agency, which was evident during her identity work that resulted in reshaped structures (Watson, 2008, 2009). One initiative relevant to these efforts was the realignment of Small Programme, in which several staff were laid off and replaced by more research-oriented hires. This action was also related to an additional identity tension that arose from the fact that Karen's unit was not aligned with changing national discourses regarding the professional discipline represented by Small Programme, which Karen supported and had operated in accordance with throughout her career (section 7.4.2.1). Although some of Karen's staff suggested that the transition was incomplete – the role of research in the professional discipline remained questioned – Karen nevertheless seemed to be another step closer to Reinvigorated Department representing a discursive identity resource that was consistent with her pre-existing sense of self as manager and academic. An additional persisting identity tension arose from the fact that Karen, as HoD, wished to delegate more research leadership responsibilities but was unable to do so due to inadequate and unsuitable research staffing in the unit, which prevented Karen from claiming a favoured notion of her managerial self (section 7.5.2.2).

Dave's experience of an identity tension related to the Different Department's unfavourable research circumstances were linked to the Faculty UOA 2's unsatisfactory performance in the RAE 2008. In response, Dave expressed his "[total] determination" to "do better" in the REF 2014, which he succeeded in doing. This meant an easing of Dave's initial identity tension – while pointing to his success in transforming the structures of which he was part (Watson, 2008, 2009) – as well as the Different Department's alignment with the new VC's "greater emphasis on research." Nonetheless, additional identity tensions arose during this process. One of these related to Dave's institutionalization of sustained hiring of research-active lecturing staff, which led to some colleagues "accusing" Dave of "only car[ing] about research" (section

8.3.2), linked to a departmental discourse that emphasized the importance of teaching. With Dave continuing this hiring practice, the identity friction persisted. In response, Dave engaged in a constant balancing act between a managerial identity focused on ensuring his unit's continued research success and a sense of managerial self committed to maintaining the Different Department's high standards of teaching and learning provision, which placed him in a state of "perpetual liminality" (Ybema et al., 2011). This was evident in Dave's efforts to anticipate and resolve the research-strong lecturers' teaching-related issues (section 8.4.1.2), while he did not change his approach to hiring and continued to aspire to bring in research-active teaching staff (section 8.4.2.3). At the same time, Dave also faced identity tensions arising from the discrepancy between the limited research time he could guarantee the lecturing staff – given the unit's teaching-heavy character – and a departmental discourse that recognized the importance of research to most of the unit's academics (sections 8.4.2.2, 8.4.2.3). While the data provide examples of how Dave resolved this friction in relation to individual staff members, the identity tension appeared to repeatedly rear its head.

9.1.2.8 Responding to the NewU's Increased Focus on Research

By the time of my fieldwork, and particularly visibly during the second part of my visit at the Faculty, the emphasis NewU placed on research performance increased significantly compared to the past. This meant that the HoDs began to operate in different circumstances than before. Overall, it seemed that the arrival of the new VC meant better alignment between NewU and Ryan's, Karen's and Dave's pre-existing commitment to strengthening their departments' research profiles. In Ryan's case, this development also signalled a productive alliance in terms of external engagement-related efforts. However, in Karen's and Dave's cases in particular, the NewU's greater focus on research also caused additional or increased identity tensions.

Ryan's discursive identity work suggested that some of the NewU's recent research-related initiatives presented a way of resolving the identity tension he was experiencing as a result of the Visionary Department's slow research progress. First, Ryan enthusiastically embraced the NewU's reformed objective-setting and performance review mechanism, and even seemed to add to the university requirements regarding staff accountability for their research performance (section 6.4.3.3). Second, Ryan readily adopted the NewU's staff categorization proposal, before it was required by the university management. These university structures, rather than causing identity tensions, appeared to empower Ryan's agency within Visionary Department in terms of his ability to fulfil his research agenda. This points to the important role that the transformed NewU research discourses began to play in Ryan's construction of his managerial identities, as well as Ryan's tendency to form a sense of managerial self not unlike Gjerde and Alvesson's (2020) "performance drivers." Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Ryan drew on arguably "antagonistic discursive resources" (Clarke et al., 2009) in implementing staff categorization. On the one hand, he spoke of the staff groupings in ways that were consistent with his notions of leadership (section 6.1.3), as a tool that emphasized that everyone contributed to the unit's efforts, and implied that staff would not experience negative consequences as a result of the categorization. On the other hand, the mechanism was based on the idea of management by objectives, which at times suggested a rather punitive approach, not unlike the NewU's former senior management's attitude that Ryan had criticized. Moreover, it "reconfirm[ed] ... that being an academic means doing scholarship" and not just teaching, unless you "do a lot of teaching." This challenged and arguably devalued a dominant – at least in parts of the unit – departmental discourse that constructed teaching as central to the staff's jobs. Additionally, although the staff groupings were based on an inclusive definition of research, they also included references to the REF, and Ryan sometimes seemed to construct the latter as the unit's main research objective (section 6.4.3). Although Ryan presented the two sets of discourses as compatible, the sense of managerial self he constructed was arguably at odds with some of the managerial identities he claimed in

other situations, pointing to the fluid and sometimes contradictory nature of his identities.

Karen was also positive about the new VC's increased emphasis on research. However, in addition to Karen arguably feeling empowered by the latter in her pre-existing research ambitions for Reinvigorated Department, she also visibly constructed the VC's requirements as a source of (additional) pressure. At the same time, while Karen employed the VC-imposed directives as discursive identity resources – for example the three star REF 2020 submission threshold and the distribution of research funding only to potentially 'REF-able' academics – Karen's managerial identities were also informed by her unit's less-than-ideal research state of affairs, indicating an identity tension. For example, when Karen sought to increase her staff's research time, while she emphasized that the VC would only support academics who were likely to produce three star and four star publications, she also expressed a commitment to finding ways to “support people who are not on that level of research” (section 7.3.2.2). Similarly, while seeking to increase the unit's production of REF-appropriate outputs, Karen spoke of research as an endeavour inclusive of scholarly activity and two star publications (section 7.4.2.2). Moreover, in introducing new and revised departmental research structures – a research mentorship scheme and research groups – Karen simultaneously constructed these as means of increasing the unit's REF-suitable research production, as well as sources of research support and anxiety alleviation for those unlikely to produce 'REF-able' publications (section 7.5.2.1). Although Karen drew on these arguably conflicting, if not “antagonistic discursive resources” (Clarke et al., 2009), she, like Ryan, seemed for the most part to place greater emphasis on the REF-informed, VC-promoted discourses than on departmental discourses, constructing a managerial identity similar to Gjerde and Alvesson's (2020) “performance drivers.” This was evident, for example, in her focus on creating additional research time for the potentially 'REF-able' academics by increasing the teaching and administration workloads of staff who were unlikely to be entered in the

REF 2020 (section 7.3.2.2). Moreover, Karen assigned a higher value to REF-suitable outputs than to those deemed unsuitable for the REF submission by, for example, essentially dismissing the production of research for societal benefit unless it led to outputs of at least two star value (sections 7.4.2.2, 7.4.2.3). However, in contrast to Ryan's insistence on the compatibility of the two sets of "antagonistic discursive resources" (Clarke et al., 2009), I observed how Karen's sense of managerial self constructed in reference to the opposing discourses was challenged by her staff in real-time at the unit's away-day. As several staff members did not seem to buy into or be appeased by Karen's proposals, she was placed in a situation where rather than succeeding in constructing a secure managerial identity, Karen's adoption of these conflicting discourses resulted in a sustained identity tension.

Unlike Ryan and Karen, who introduced or were about to introduce some form of division between the likely 'REF-able' staff and those unlikely to be entered in the REF – although Karen did not speak of it using the language of the NewU's staff categorization proposal – Dave firmly rejected the idea of staff categories. This meant that an identity tension arose as Dave was positioned between the university initiative and the departmental discourses – which were central to his managerial identities as HoD – which he believed were threatened by the idea of the proposed staff division. Given the fact that most of the Different Department academics engaged in research, the unit's collaborative research culture, the REF rules that sometimes resulted in certain staff not being entered in the REF despite their research activity, and the contributions of staff not entered in the REF to the unit's REF submission, Dave opposed the idea of assigning only the likely 'REF-able' academics to the Category NewIII. He challenged this notion by proposing to classify as Category NewIII a number of the Different Department members higher than the number of staff likely to be entered in the next REF. Dave and a few senior department members were then invited to discuss the issue with the PVC who was in charge of the matter, whereupon the PVC was considering that "different groups" should draw on "different models"

(section 8.5.2). In this process, Dave constructed an identity similar to Gjerde and Alvesson's (2020) "umbrella carriers" or "protectors," while in employing his agency also seemed to have inspired NewU to consider adjusting its structures (Watson, 2008, 2009). It is noteworthy, however, that despite Dave's criticisms of the NewU policy, his actions were informed not only by his aim to protect the unit's existing research culture, but also by his intention to ensure the Faculty UOA 2's satisfactory REF performance. This sometimes meant that individual academics were disadvantaged by not being entered in the REF – a practice arguably at odds with the unit's inclusive research culture – a sign that Dave was drawing on "antagonistic discursive resources" (Clarke et al., 2009). Another identity tension Dave experienced with respect to the NewU's drive to enhance its research performance related to the university's idea to move (part of) Different Department from Central to River Campus. Although Dave recognized the long-term benefits of the move – including solving his unit's estate issues and collaboration with the River Campus Faculty – he argued against it, emphasizing factors such as the preferences of staff – including himself – for remaining on Central Campus, the importance of the central location for student attraction, and the short-term upheaval the move would bring (section 8.6.2.1). In particular, Dave strongly rejected the idea of a partial relocation as this would pose a threat to the Different Department's integration of teaching and research activities as well as its collaborative research culture across the disciplinary subfields; in this case, Dave would have preferred a move of the entire department (sections 8.6.2.2, 8.6.2.4). In claiming such a managerial identity, Dave at various points opposed the VC, his own Dean and the Dean of the River Campus Faculty, as well as some of his department colleagues. While Dave succeeded in keeping the unit on Central Campus – indicating his success in ensuring that the departmental realities aligned with his favoured sense of managerial self – further identity tension arose as the Different Department's estate issues remained unresolved for the time being (section 8.6.2.5).

9.1.3 Discussing Academic Middle Managers’ Managerial Identities Construction

Having summarized the discourses that characterized the studied AMMs’ discursive environments and the AMMs’ use of available discursive resources in the process of identity work, through the lens of their experiences of identity tensions and their responses to them, below I offer a discussion of the overall findings of the present study, which set out to explore how AMMs discursively construct their managerial identities.

In line with the existing research on managerial, AMM and academic identities (sections 3.2.2.1, 3.2.2.2), this dissertation has pointed to the plurality of managerial identities constructed by the studied HoDs. The study has presented a large number of (potential) extra- and intra-organizational managerial identity sources, drawn from national, university, faculty and individual department- and HoD-specific discursive contexts (summarized in section 9.1.1). This contrasts with most previous individual studies of AMMs, which tend to be limited to examining relatively few elements that influence an AMM’s perception of their role (section 2.2.4.3). Such an approach has enabled unusually detailed insights (summarized in section 9.1.2) into how the interplay of complex sets of discursive identity resources available to individual HoDs led them to construct certain managerial identities – and not others. The latter included illuminating how the different circumstances of each HoD meant that some of their shared discursive identity resources fed differently into each HoD’s managerial identities. It should also be noted that although many of the managerial identity sources identified in this study have been acknowledged in the existing literature on AMM and academic identities (section 3.2.2.2), the present research has provided insights into several aspects of AMMs’ identities that, to my knowledge, have been rarely or have not been examined before. These include the influence of their multiple managerial roles, political identity, departmental location and estate issues, UOAs, faculty as an

organizational unit and external partnership organizations on AMMs' managerial identities.

Likewise resonating with the existing research on managerial, AMM and academic identities (section 3.2.2.3), this study has highlighted the often contradictory nature of the studied HoDs' managerial identities. It has identified eight broad categories of identity tensions that were prominent among the HoDs (summarized in section 9.1.2), providing examples of the three HoDs experiencing similar identity tensions as well as tensions specific to one or two of them. The forms of identity tensions examined are broadly consistent with the contradictions that characterize AMM posts found in the existing literature, notably those arising from their dual roles as academics and managers and their accountability to the many intra- and extra-organizational groups and communities (sections 2.2.1, 2.2.2). However, the analyses add extensive empirical detail to our understanding of AMMs' experiences of specific frictions and ambivalences, including by examining the role of some under-researched identity sources in the HoDs' experiences of identity tensions, listed at the end of the previous paragraph.

Given the embeddedness of the HoDs studied in a managerialism-imbued higher education environment, the examination of the HoDs' experiences of identity tensions as indicators of identity work (see e.g. Beech et al., 2012; Caza et al., 2018) has also enabled the study to add to the literature investigating the impact of managerialism on AMMs' experiences of their jobs. In particular, the dissertation's attention to the wide variety of possible discursive identity resources was designed to respond to the calls for studies on the specificities of AMMs' engagement with managerialism in particular contexts (see e.g. Creaton & Heard-Lauréote, 2021; and the discussion in section 2.4.1). Moreover, this enabled a focus on the intricacies inherent in this phenomenon, thus adding to our knowledge of the sometimes complex positioning of AMMs in relation it, which is related to their position between the management above

them and their academic colleagues below them (see e.g. Machovcová et al., 2019; and the discussion in sections 2.2.2, 2.2.3.1), and the ambivalent nature of managerialism and its supposed opposite represented by the traditional values of academia (see e.g. Trowler, 2010; and the discussion in section 2.2.3). The following subsections discuss the findings of this study that add to this literature, primarily from the perspective of the HoDs' engagement in research management-related efforts and activities.

9.1.3.1 Managerial Responsibilities Strengthening the Heads of Department's Sense of Self as Academics

In relation to AMMs being both academics and managers, much of the existing literature on this issue acknowledges the tensions associated with individual AMMs combining the two roles (see e.g. Deem et al., 2007; Sotirakou, 2004; and the discussion in section 2.2.1). This is consistent with my findings about HoDs who reported that they struggled (Ryan, Karen) or have all but given up (Dave) on maintaining their academic endeavours while fulfilling their managerial responsibilities. Associated with this identity tension is a sense of identity disintegration (see e.g. Down & Reveley, 2009; Thomas & Linstead, 2002), a fragmentation between a sense of self as academic and a managerial identity. Moreover, the constant struggle to maintain the two identities indicates the HoDs' sense of liminality (see e.g. Beech, 2011; Ellis & Ybema, 2010) that is arguably "perpetual" (Ybema et al., 2011) and leads to a pattern of repeating – only temporarily resolvable – identity tensions. For Ryan, and most visibly for Karen, the experience of liminality was compounded by their engagement in the faculty-wide roles of the Head for External Engagement and the Head of Research respectively.

However, indicating at least partial identity integration, Ryan and Karen also pointed to selected aspects of their HoD roles that positively fed into their sense of self as academics, a dynamic that, to my knowledge, has been under-explored in the AMM literature. Ryan's commitment to and success in implementing the external engagement

agenda he had initiated as HoD – in response to an identity tension arising from the lack of such a focus in his organizational environment – was consistent with, and arguably strengthened, Ryan’s sense of self as an academic who wanted to make a difference. Karen saw her research management responsibilities as a way of maintaining her “academic credibility.” She also explicitly mentioned the contribution of her faculty-wide role to the latter – a dynamic likely applicable to Ryan as well – suggesting that taking on an additional managerial role actually consolidated her sense of academic self. Like Ryan, Karen formed such a sense of self in a context where the importance she attached to research did not match the prevailing attitudes towards the latter in her organizational environment.

9.1.3.2 The Overlapping of Managerialist Ideas and Academic Values

In line with the existing literature, which acknowledges that “performance audits” such as the REF “reflect and reproduce the scholarly norms of academia to publish” (Clarke & Knights, 2015, p. 1880; see also e.g. Machovcová et al., 2019; and the discussion in sections 2.2.3.2, 5.1.3.2), the present research has pointed to the overlaps between ideas associated with managerialism and those aligned with what Trowler (2010) refers to as the “period of ‘collegiality’” (p. 202). Of particular relevance to this study – while the approaches to engaging in and managing research in the UK had certainly changed in recent decades, in a vital part due to the REF and its predecessors – according to Trowler, the “period of ‘collegiality’” was characterized by academics focusing on research, while teaching was seen by many as “a low status activity” (Trowler, 2010, p. 202). For the HoDs studied who were based at a traditionally teaching-oriented post-1992 institution, their push towards a more dominant position for research in their departments – in response to the identity tension arising from the discrepancy between the importance they attached to research and the departmental circumstances – in a sense meant that they were seeking resemblance to this “period of ‘collegiality.’” However, this continuation of the process of “academic drift” (Pratt, 1997) – to my

knowledge, a little-researched phenomenon in relation to AMMs' attitudes towards and roles in it (but see e.g. Ek et al., 2013) – went hand in hand with a simultaneous increase in managerialist approaches.

For example, Dave indicated that his commitment to raising the Different Department's research profile after the RAE 2008 was driven by his determination for the unit to perform better in the REF 2014; arguably in the absence of a strong pressure from the university management on Dave to make such a commitment. However, it is noteworthy that Dave's commitment to the REF goals did not in any major way compromise the Different Department's inclusive and collegial research culture. Moreover, the unit's high level of research activity and performance seemed to enable Dave – at least for the time being – to protect Different Department and its academics from the university's staff categorization that he believed would be detrimental to the unit's research culture and performance. This echoes the findings of Machovcová et al. (2019), who argue that HoDs of departments that tend to do well in the national research evaluation scheme are better able to support the academics they lead and shield them from the potential drawbacks of the initiative.

Ryan and Karen appeared empowered in furthering their existing departmental research agendas when NewU began to employ strong discourses of academization and accompanied them with managerialist discourses related to research performance management. This is consistent with Henkel's (2000) observation that "a wide range of" HoDs were enabled to strengthen the academic culture of their units through mechanisms such as the RAE, including in vocationally-oriented departments (p. 248). With respect to Ryan's and Karen's managerial identities construction – and considering the latter as an interplay between their agency and the structures of which they were part (see e.g. Ybema, Keenoy, et al., 2009) – this represented an example of the broader structures facilitating the HoDs' attempts to achieve a favoured sense of managerial self

and thus reduce the identity tension they experienced as a result of the NewU's previous lack of focus on research.

*9.1.3.3 The Use of the Contradictory Discourses of Managerialism and Inclusivity
by Heads of Department*

Building on the literature that recognizes the likelihood of AMMs simultaneously holding contradictory beliefs (see e.g. Trowler, 2010; and the discussion in section 2.2.3.1), the present study has examined the HoDs' use of "antagonistic discursive resources" (Clarke et al., 2009). Some of the examples demonstrating this pattern of identity work related to Ryan and Karen who were grappling with an identity tension arising from their commitment to raising their departments' research profile in a university context where there had been a recent increased focus on staff's REF-appropriate research performance. As Ryan and Karen responded to the low level of REF-suitable research activity of their staff, on the one hand, they spoke of a research agenda inclusive of research and scholarship not suitable for a REF submission, acknowledging that this was a more appropriate goal for many of their staff. On the other hand, Ryan and Karen drew heavily on the managerialist university discourses, which constructed, for example, a satisfactory REF 2020 submission as a departmental goal to be achieved through a selective research funding distribution and a management-by-objectives approach. However, the use of such "antagonistic discursive resources" (Clarke et al., 2009) carried different implications for Ryan's and Karen's managerial identities. For Ryan, the adoption of "antagonistic discursive resources" appeared to lead to a stable managerial identity (Clarke et al., 2009), at least for the time being. In Karen's case, on the other hand, this pattern of identity work seemed to sustain the identity tension as Karen's sense of managerial self was challenged in real-time by some of her staff who felt troubled by her proposals, arguably pointing to the incompatibility of the two sets of discourses she employed.

9.1.3.4 The Ambivalence of Heads of Department Towards Managerialist Initiatives

This study also provided detailed examples of the HoDs' ambivalent positioning towards certain managerialist initiatives, pointing to the sometimes very explicit examples of the context-dependent and fluid nature of identities (see e.g. Gubrium & Holstein, 2001a; Ybema, Keenoy, et al., 2009). Ryan, for example, expressed ambivalence when asked about his view of the REF. In line with the literature that acknowledges the overlaps between the REF and the high value academics place on research and publishing (see e.g. Clarke & Knights, 2015; Harley, 2002), on the one hand Ryan considered it "crude" and "elitist," while on the other he saw it as a measure of a department's research "health." This ambivalence translated into variation with respect to Ryan's experiences of identity tensions and observable fluidity of his managerial identities when he spoke of or implied REF-informed definitions of research activity and quality signifiers. For example, while Ryan seemed very reluctant to accept the submission to the previous REF as a criterion for a professorial hire, he spoke without hesitation of a certain level of publication quality according to the REF measures as a criterion for (Senior) Lecturer appointments.

9.1.3.5 Contrasting Attitudes of Heads of Department Towards Managerialist Initiatives Enabled by the Same Source

At times, the HoDs held contrasting attitudes to distinct managerialist discourses enabled by the same source. Karen, for example, appeared to buy into the NewU senior management's increased research performance demands, both as a manager managing the research performance of others and as an academic engaged in research production. Against this background, it is not surprising that Karen was critical of the university's administrative support arrangements, which she felt continued to act as a barrier to academics' greater engagement in research and limited academics' input in administrative support decisions that affected them. This was also an example of Karen

– in an attempt to resolve the identity tension indicated above – seeking to change the structures that informed her sense of self, but not succeeding. Moreover, Karen was uncomfortable with the process of the NewU’s research management structure revision as it posed a threat to her sense of managerial self as the Faculty Head of Research; however, this was an instance where Karen felt a lack of agency to act on the identity tension she was experiencing. The latter two examples – together with the observations on the interplay between structure and agency in the process of the HoDs’ discursive identity work in sections 9.1.3.2 and 9.1.3.8 – highlight the context-dependent nature of AMMs’ agency (see e.g. Branson et al., 2016) and its rather limited scope in certain circumstances, as acknowledged in the existing literature (see e.g. Saunders & Sin, 2015; and the discussion in section 2.1). Furthermore, the above cases illustrate the importance of examining the specificities of individual managerialist initiatives and discourses, rather than making generalized statements about and assumptions of unified top-down managerialist pressure, as has been common in the existing AMM research.

9.1.3.6 Contrasting Attitudes of Heads of Department Towards Analogous Managerialist Initiatives From Different Sources

The HoDs sometimes took markedly different stances towards managerialist initiatives and discourses originating from different sources that could be seen as analogous. For example, Dave was critical of several NewU initiatives on research management, including the staff categorization proposal, which he saw as a threat to his unit’s pervasive and inclusive research culture and its research performance. Notably, however, Dave did not speak of the REF as a source of threats to his unit’s research culture. Moreover, he suggested that the NewU’s staff categorization would run counter to ensuring the best possible REF outcome once the REF submission guidelines were taken into account. Dave’s differing attitudes to the related NewU and REF discourses mirrored Degn’s (2018) finding that academics’ experiences of identity threats related to ‘New Public Management’ ideas largely “stemm[ed] from ... the specific university,

and its interpretation of external pressure” rather than the “‘initial’ impulse” (p. 313; see also Garcia & Hardy, 2007). Additionally, Dave also spoke of opposing some of the Faculty’s research arrangements, as evidenced by his fight to ensure that the Faculty UOA 2 did not “lose staff” to the Faculty UOA 1 in the REF 2014, and Dave’s disagreement with the Faculty Head of Research post being held by a colleague from outside Different Department. These observations highlight the importance of examining the multiplicity of ‘tops’ – represented, for example, by national policy, the university and the faculty – and the interplay between them, rather than referring to a generalized ‘top’ or ‘senior management,’ as has been common in individual existing AMM studies. The findings indicate that these distinct ‘tops’ differed in their impact on Dave’s managerial identities construction. Moreover, they provide an example of an identity tension originating in Dave’s perception of a contradiction between two of the ‘tops’ in relation to the same issue, rather than the more commonly explored frictions arising from AMMs seeking to respond to conflicting demands from ‘the top’ and ‘the bottom.’

9.1.3.7 Heads of Department Managing Divided Units

In addition to the HoDs constructing their managerial identities with respect to multiple ‘tops,’ the units they led also consisted of a plurality of ‘bottoms.’ For example, when Ryan began work on a department research agenda, he acknowledged multiple staff groups: from those with very limited research experience to those producing high-quality research – and “all the shades in-between.” Arguably due to this diversity, although he sought to be supportive and inclusive of all Visionary Department staff, the inclusive research strategy which Ryan spearheaded led to multiple, distinct identity tensions for him. On one side, it remained unimaginable for some of those who had no research experience to implement the strategy. On the other side of the spectrum, the research strategy was seen as too inclusive by some of those who were committed to high-quality research pursuits. While the AMM literature acknowledges the existence of

multiple ‘bottoms’ overseen by AMMs, individual AMM studies typically refer to a generalized ‘bottom’ or ‘academic staff below,’ similar to the existing analyses of ‘tops.’ The above example demonstrates the importance of analysing the – potentially contradictory – multiplicity of staff groups that an AMM manages, even within a single organizational unit, as they may pose different challenges to an AMM’s managerial identities. Moreover, it indicates the likelihood of identity tensions to arise due to these multiple ‘bottoms’ and not only due to the more commonly explored conflicts between the demands of ‘the top’ and ‘the bottom.’ In addition, this case problematizes the assumption often found in AMM studies that ‘the bottom’ represents (solely) the home of ‘traditional’ academic values. As many academics cooperate with the demands of the REF (see e.g. Clarke et al., 2012; Knights & Clarke, 2014), the pressure on an AMM to require their staff to produce REF-suitable research outputs may not (only) come from the upper levels of the organization, but also from below. At the same time, this points to the likelihood that parts of numerous units in post-1992 universities – such as Visionary Department – do not lend themselves to being described as harbouring many of the ‘traditional’ academic values.

9.1.3.8 Heads of Department Simultaneously Challenging ‘the Top’ and ‘the Bottom’

The HoDs sometimes engaged in efforts that simultaneously challenged both the university senior management’s dominant stance and their departments’ prevailing mode of operation. Two visible examples of such dynamics were Ryan’s and Karen’s efforts to raise their departments’ research profile prior to the NewU’s increased emphasis on research, in response to their experiences of identity tensions arising from unsatisfactory departmental research circumstances. Arguably, this made Ryan and Karen strategic actors, which is consistent with the recognition in the existing literature of the potential for AMMs to take on such roles (see e.g. Kallenberg, 2015; and the discussion in section 2.1). However, in contrast to a typology of HoDs with respect to their attitudes to and role in organizational change (Degn, 2013, 2015), Ryan and Karen,

although “agenda setters,” did not, in my view, hold “a mainly positive view on university management” typical of this group of HoDs (Degn, 2013, p. 206). While acknowledging that the Faculty Dean supported their views, Ryan and Karen spoke of their dissatisfaction with the NewU’s former senior management’s lack of attention to research. At the same time, Ryan and Karen painted a challenging picture of their departments’ research profile, pointing out the difficulties they faced in implementing their departments’ research agendas because of the latter. This situation adds an interesting empirical example to the AMM literature, which has commonly assumed that AMMs align more closely with either ‘the top’ or ‘the bottom,’ or seek a compromise between the two when implementing organizational change. That Ryan and Karen – unlike Degn’s (2013, 2015) “co-ordinators” – took actions that simultaneously contradicted both the NewU senior management and the prevailing *modi operandi* of their departments was not the result of seeking a middle ground in order to meet the demands from above and below. Moreover, the HoDs’ successful use of their agentic potential to enhance their departments’ research profile – as evidenced by the progress they had made in advancing their research agendas, even if the latter remained to be developed further – meant that their identity work led not only to at least a partial resolution of their identity tensions, but also to the alteration of the research-related structures in which they were embedded (Watson, 2008, 2009).

9.1.3.9 The Commitments of Heads of Department

Beyond Managerialism and Collegiality

Finally, bearing in mind Clegg and McAuley’s (2005) call to think of AMM outside the framework of the common managerialism versus collegiality debates, this study, while acknowledging the managerialist and academization-inspired context as a crucial element in the HoDs’ managerial identities construction, was also suited to uncover discursive identity sources that fed into the HoDs’ identity tensions and/or responses to them that could not be clearly assigned to either side of the spectrum. One set of

such discourses related to what might be considered an HoDs' personal particulars and attitudes, but which played significantly into their managerial identities. These included, for example, Dave's strong preference for the Different Department's location on Central Campus, expressed in his statement that he would "hate to be on River Campus." Another example is Ryan's emphasis on and approach to "the leadership of people," which he described as being strongly influenced by his life experiences. Likewise, although Ryan's political values and identity could be seen as closely linked to the REF's impact agenda, thus enabling his commitment to this agenda, Ryan's "political identity" preceded his efforts as an academic and HoD. Thus, despite Ryan's embeddedness in a context where the REF-informed definition of impact played an important role, one would expect his political commitment to making a difference to mean that he did not see this managerialism-inspired mechanism as just a box-ticking exercise (Clappison, 2013).

9.2 Contributions to the Literature

Having presented and discussed the research findings, I now outline the contributions of this dissertation to the literature. I first turn to the contributions to the field of AMM studies and then describe its significance to organization studies-based research on managerial identities and identity work.

With respect to AMM research, what importantly distinguishes the present study from most previous AMM studies is its detailed, contextualized and processual examination of AMMs' lived experiences. Such analyses were facilitated by the organizational ethnographic approach – which is rather novel in AMM research – and in particular by shadowing techniques that enabled an in-depth focus on a small number of AMMs and encouraged the presentation of data in reference to individual AMMs rather than synthesizing it across multiple AMMs. Further enabling such an investigation was the conceptualization of AMMs' managerial identities as explicitly

multiple in nature and constructed through the process of identity work, the latter being seen as indicated by identity tensions. Notions that informed the explanations of AMMs' responses to a variety of identity tensions – such as AMMs' experiences of identity (dis)integration and “liminality” (see e.g. Beech, 2011; Ellis & Ybema, 2010), their use of “antagonistic discursive resources” (Clarke et al., 2009), and the variable interplay between structure and agency – enabled to shed light on several previously under-explored aspects of AMM. In particular, the study has furthered our understanding of the ambivalences and complexities associated with AMMs' position in managerialism-imbued higher education environments. The findings demonstrate: how an AMM's managerial responsibilities may positively feed into their sense of self as academics; how AMMs may draw on managerialist initiatives and academic values in a complementary way, or simultaneously employ managerialist discourses and notions that contradict them, and the implications this has for individual AMMs' managerial identities; how AMMs' ambivalent attitudes towards managerialist initiatives influence the variability of their experiences of identity tensions; how AMMs may adopt opposing attitudes towards managerialist initiatives enabled by the same source, or towards analogous managerialist initiatives originating from different sources above them; that the units AMMs oversee may be divided rather than unified, and how this leads to multiple, distinct identity tensions; how AMMs may drive organizational change that simultaneously challenges both their superiors and those they lead; and that AMMs' managerial identities may be informed by identity sources that do not neatly align with either managerialist or collegial notions.

In addition to the study's contributions to the AMM literature, this ethnographic exploration of AMMs' identities also furthers the efforts of managerial identities and identity work scholars based in the field of organization studies. Specifically, in contrast to existing in-depth studies of individual managers' managerial identities and identity work, commonly focusing on a single manager in a particular organizational (and broader social) context (see e.g. Down & Reveley, 2009;

Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008), the present study has thoroughly examined three managers heading different units within the same organizational and national setting. As such, this dissertation analysed in detail the processes of managerial identities construction of the HoDs studied, in which they often employed both some of the shared discursive resources available and additional – often dissimilar – identity sources, revealing the notably different managerial identities the HoDs formed as a result. Such an approach facilitated an atypically detailed comparative perspective between managers situated in – to some extent – shared intra- and extra-organizational discursive contexts, and pointed to the importance of an in-depth understanding of both the similarities and differences between individual managers in order to capture the differing effects of shared organizational and national discourses on their managerial identities.

9.3 Limitations of the Study

In this section I address the limitations of the present research. As suggested in an earlier section of this chapter, the chosen methodology – characterized by my extended presence among a limited number of research participants – was crucial in facilitating a detailed exploratory study of AMMs’ managerial identities and indeed enabled a number of novel insights. Nevertheless, this methodological choice was also a source of some of the main limitations of the study.

First, shadowing was limited to three HoDs from a single faculty over what was still a relatively short period of time. Given the aim of exploring the multiplicity and diversity of managerial identities and experiences of identity tensions among AMMs, the study would have benefited from the – originally planned – expanded set of participants in an additional faculty as well as from fieldwork over a longer period of time.

Second, while I gained uncommonly close access to the AMMs under study, I was not always able or approved to attend meetings that could have provided fuller explanations of the issues studied. Furthermore, I had very limited access to the AMMs' email traffic, which is presumably another important arena for their discursive identity work. In addition, at the time of my fieldwork, I was not always aware of or able to access all organizational documentation that might have been relevant to the study. Thus, as a result of the above access limitations, I may have inadvertently omitted details relevant to the analyses of the HoDs' experiences of identity tensions and their discursive identity work, although I attempted to mitigate this by sharing the narratives presented in chapters 6 to 8 with the appropriate HoDs before finalizing the analyses.

Finally, while the study strove to present a comprehensive account of the elements that feed into AMMs' managerial identities and their experiences of identity tensions, it did not aim to systematically examine all the potentially relevant discursive identity resources identified in the existing literature. Instead, much of the research relied on the HoDs themselves bringing up identity sources relevant to their managerial identities. Moreover, due to space constraints and/or to protect my research participants' privacy, the study does not report on all discursive identity resources relevant to the formation of the shadowed HoDs' managerial identities, including aspects such as gender, class and family.

9.4 Suggestions for Future Research

I conclude this dissertation with some ideas for future research. First, as an example of what I hope will be seen as constructive and quality cross-fertilization between higher education-focused scholarship and organization studies-based research, this study calls for further efforts to combine the approaches and knowledge of the two fields. Although there are studies of academic (middle) managers in both fields that draw expertly on organization studies concepts while demonstrating a deep understanding of

the higher education context (see e.g. Degn, 2015, published in a higher education journal, and Prichard & Willmott, 1997, published in an organization studies outlet), further steps could be taken to ensure that such endeavours continue. Strengthening both fields through such hybrid explorations is particularly important because, first, some AMM scholarship remains largely descriptive (see e.g. Smith, 2005) and could therefore benefit from organization studies-based theoretical and analytical insights and, second, AMM research conducted by organization studies experts sometimes seems to largely neglect the existing extensive knowledge about the phenomenon in the higher education community (see e.g. Brown et al., 2021).

Another, narrower, set of avenues for future research involves further steps in analyzing the AMMs' identity work by making clearer the role of various discursive elements and strategies that signal the emergence of identity claims in order to deepen our understanding of the 'how' of the AMMs' identity construction. One such example is the analysis of the use of personal pronouns such as 'I,' 'we,' 'us' and 'them.' The alternation between 'I' and 'we,' for example, implies a "conflat[ion]" of "self" and "organization" (Ellis & Ybema, 2010, p. 295). I observed such use of personal pronouns among the HoDs in my study, and a detailed analysis might reveal whether this practice was used more frequently by some HoDs than others, under what circumstances, and what this might have meant for their managerial identities construction. A related approach, paying attention to the use of 'us' and 'them' and/or other signifiers of similarity and difference (see e.g. Garcia & Hardy, 2007) that indicate a basic strategy of identity formation (see e.g. Ybema, Keenoy, et al., 2009), could shed further light on how the similarity-difference dynamic played into the HoDs' identity work. Indeed, the analyses presented in this dissertation point to the relevance of such observations, illustrated, for example, in the significance of Dave's claims of his own and his unit's difference from the counterparts in the Faculty and across NewU for his managerial identities. The AMMs' identity work could also be further analyzed through the lens of temporality (see e.g. Degn, 2015), that is by examining how one's perceptions

of the past, present and/or future might inform one's sense of self. For example, similar to a group of Degn's (2015) HoDs, Ryan's view of the past as bad importantly informed his managerial identity as an HoD committed to – and succeeding in – implementing positive change. Another promising venue for research on AMMs' identities lies in the connection between identity work and emotions (Winkler, 2018). In my study, the HoDs hinted at the role of emotions in the formation of their managerial identities at various points, which highlights the relevance of analysing their identity work through the lens of emotions. For example, Karen expressed that she “would probably be a very disgruntled HoD” if she did not also hold the additional post as the Faculty Head of Research. Dave explained that being “[really] pained by the [RAE 2008] result” led to his being “totally determined that we were gonna do better this time round [in the REF 2014].” Moreover, our current understanding of AMMs' managerial identities could also be deepened by examining AMMs' use of body and materiality. One such example is the use of clothing as a means of forming a particular identity (see e.g. Tsaousi, 2020). This is an aspect on which I generated limited but arguably significant data, as implied in, for example, Ryan frequently choosing not to wear shoes in the workplace and Karen's wardrobe choices and her – gendered – reflections on this topic, which were not reported in the analyses above.

Additionally, I concur with calls for further ethnographic studies of AMM and related phenomena (see e.g. Bolden et al., 2008). Given the still limited use of ethnographic techniques in AMM research (section 2.3.2.1), the strengths of such approaches – such as the level of contextualized and process-oriented detail it enables – outweigh the limitations described in the previous section. The existing document-, survey- and interview-based AMM research should therefore be complemented by ethnographic explorations conducted in different disciplinary, organizational and/or national contexts among HoDs and other groups of AMMs to gain a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the AMMs' lived experiences in general and their identities in particular. Wider application of ethnographic approaches would not only enrich the

narrower field of AMM studies, but also set a welcome precedent within the broader higher education scholarly community, which as a whole has tended to neglect observational research methods (Tight, 2022).

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Appendix

Summary

Academic middle managers (AMMs) – such as department heads and faculty deans – are a group of managers who sit between the top university management and the academic leaders below middle management. This position makes them crucial to the management of academic activities and the implementation of university directives. However, their responsibilities are rarely straightforward. The complications are in an important part related to the fact that universities have transitioned from mainly being characterized by collegial and professional academic values to being significantly influenced by managerialism-inspired practices aiming at making them more efficient and effective. In this context, the role of AMMs evolved from one largely defined by academic leadership to one in which these managers assume significant managerial responsibilities. As a result, AMMs' positions have become increasingly complex and often require addressing contradictory expectations, with individual AMMs fulfilling their sometimes conflicting and ambiguous roles in different ways.

To explore the different approaches AMMs take to their jobs, theoretically, the study draws on managerial identity – an AMM's sense of self as manager – and discursive identity work. The former emphasizes the possibility for managers to construct multiple managerial identities by drawing on different identity sources.

Furthermore, it assumes that identities are socially constructed through the interplay of an individual's agency and structural forces. Discursive identity work highlights identities as ever-evolving, context-dependent constructs that emerge from language use. Both concepts pay attention to identity tensions as, first, the plurality of managerial identities may result in them and, second, identity work becomes more intense when individuals experience identity tensions. Based on these premises, this dissertation examines how AMMs discursively construct their managerial identities. It does so by exploring the nature of AMMs' discursive contexts, on the one hand, and AMMs' use of available discursive identity resources, on the other. The latter is investigated by focusing on the forms of identity tensions that AMMs experience and their responses to them.

To achieve these objectives, a nearly six-month organizational ethnography was conducted focusing on three Heads of Department (HoDs) in the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences (the Faculty) at New University (NewU), an English institution (all pseudonyms). Multiple data generation techniques were employed: shadowing of the HoDs in their day-to-day activities; semi-structured interviews with the HoDs and 37 other organizational members; and collection of organizational documentation, supplemented by documents concerning the broader higher education context.

The findings of this atypically detailed – context-conscious and process-focused – account offer insights into both the HoDs' more general conceptions of their managerial identities and their discursive identity work in relation to research management specifically. The latter is an endeavour to which all the HoDs studied were strongly committed, and an example of an academic activity that has been importantly influenced by managerialist ideas.

The analyses detail the multiple discourses that characterized the HoDs' shared discursive environments, including national discourses (e.g. discourses regarding the Research Excellence Framework as the UK's national research assessment scheme and

those relating to the NewU's institutional type), university discourses (e.g. discourses regarding the NewU's past and then leadership and priorities, including in relation to research) and faculty discourses (e.g. discourses relating to the Faculty's (research) management and characteristics). In addition, a range of department-specific discourses (e.g. discourses referring to departmental (research) cultures, structures and performance) and individual HoD-specific extra- and intra-organizational discourses are described (e.g. discourses regarding the HoDs' experiences before becoming HoDs and those relating to their organizational roles beyond their departments).

The multiplicity of discursive identity resources available to the HoDs resulted in numerous identity tensions, some of which were experienced by all three HoDs, while others were experienced by one or two of them. The identified identity tensions are grouped into eight broad categories, with the frictions arising from: 1) the HoDs being both managers and academics; 2) the difference between the HoDs' notions and the university and/or faculty discourses regarding the HoD role; 3) the discrepancy between the HoDs' visions and the existing challenging – culture-, operations- and/or performance-related – departmental realities; 4) the different notions of heading a department; 5) the HoDs holding additional managerial roles; 6) the mismatch between the HoDs' commitment to research management and the national, university and faculty discourses; 7) the discrepancies between the HoDs' commitment to research management and departmental discourses; and 8) the university's increased focus on research.

The HoDs' responses to identity tensions, indicative of discursive identity construction at the core of this dissertation's overarching research question, signalled a diverse set of managerial identities claimed by individual HoDs. The study demonstrates how the interplay of complex sets of discursive identity resources available to individual HoDs led them to construct certain managerial identities – and not others – by illuminating, among other things, how the different circumstances of individual HoDs

led to some of their shared discursive identity resources feeding into each HoD's managerial identities differently. Notions that informed the explanations of the HoDs' responses to identity tensions – such as the HoDs' experiences of identity (dis)integration, liminality, their use of antagonistic discursive identity sources, and the variable interplay between structure and agency – enabled insights into several previously under-researched aspects of AMMs' lived experiences, particularly in relation to the ambivalences and complexities associated with AMMs' position in managerialism-imbued higher education environments. The findings demonstrate: how an AMM's managerial responsibilities may positively feed into their sense of self as academics; how AMMs may draw on managerialist initiatives and academic values in a complementary way, or simultaneously employ managerialist discourses and notions that contradict them, and the implications this has for individual AMMs' managerial identities; how AMMs' ambivalent attitudes towards managerialist initiatives influence the variability of their experiences of identity tensions; how AMMs may adopt opposing attitudes towards managerialist initiatives enabled by the same source, or towards analogous managerialist initiatives stemming from different sources above them; that the units AMMs oversee may be divided rather than unified, and how this leads to multiple, distinct identity tensions; how AMMs may drive organizational change that simultaneously challenges both their superiors and those they manage; and that AMMs' managerial identities may be informed by identity sources that do not neatly align with either managerialist or collegial notions.

Samenvatting

Academische middenmanagers (AMM's) – zoals afdelingshoofden en faculteitsdecanen – vormen een groep managers die tussen het universitaire topmanagement en de academische leiders en medewerkers onder het middenkader functioneren. Deze positie maakt hen cruciaal voor het coördineren van academische activiteiten en de uitvoering van universitair beleid. Hun verantwoordelijkheden zijn echter zelden eenvoudig. De complicaties houden voor een belangrijk deel verband met het feit dat universiteiten zijn veranderd van organisaties gekenmerkt door collegiale en professionele academische waarden naar organisaties beïnvloed door op privaat management geïnspireerde praktijken, gericht op efficiëntie en effectiviteit. In deze context is de rol van AMM's geëvolueerd van een rol die grotendeels wordt bepaald door academisch leiderschap naar een rol waarin aanzienlijke bestuurlijke verantwoordelijkheden belangrijk zijn. Als gevolg hiervan zijn de posities van AMM's complexer geworden en moeten vaak tegenstrijdige verwachtingen worden aangepakt, waarbij individuele AMM's hun soms tegenstrijdige en dubbelzinnige rollen op verschillende manieren vervullen.

Om de verschillende gedragingen van AMM's te onderzoeken, baseert dit onderzoek zich op managementidentiteit – het zelfbeeld van de AMM als manager – en

discursief identiteitswerk. Het eerste concept benadrukt het idee dat managers verschillende managementidentiteiten construeren door gebruik te maken van verschillende identiteitsbronnen. Bovendien gaat de benadering ervan uit dat identiteiten sociaal worden geconstrueerd door het samenspel van iemands agency en structurele krachten. Het tweede concept, discursief identiteitswerk, benadrukt identiteiten als voortdurend evoluerende, contextafhankelijke constructies die voortkomen uit taalgebruik. Zowel managementidentiteit als identiteitswerk benadrukken aandacht voor identiteitsspanningen, aangezien ten eerste de veelheid van managementidentiteiten hiertoe kan leiden en ten tweede identiteitswerk intenser wordt wanneer individuen identiteitsspanningen ervaren. Op basis van deze premissen onderzoekt dit proefschrift hoe AMM's op discursieve wijze hun managementidentiteit construeren. Het doet dit door enerzijds de aard van de discursieve contexten van AMM's en anderzijds het gebruik van beschikbare discursieve identiteitsbronnen door AMM's te onderzoeken. Dit laatste wordt onderzocht door te focussen op de vormen van identiteitsspanningen die AMM's ervaren en hun reacties daarop.

Om de onderzoeksdoelen te bereiken, werd een organisatie-etnografie van bijna zes maanden uitgevoerd, gericht op drie afdelingshoofden (*heads of departments*, HoD's) van de faculteit Politieke en Sociale Wetenschappen van New University (NewU), een Engelse instelling (de functies, naam van de faculteit en instelling zijn pseudoniemen). Er werden verschillende technieken gebruikt voor het genereren van gegevens: schaduwen van de HoD's bij hun dagelijkse activiteiten; semi-gestructureerde interviews met de HoD's en 37 andere leden van de organisatie; en documentanalyse (organisatiedocumentatie, aangevuld met documenten over de bredere context van het Engelse hoger onderwijs).

De bevindingen van dit atypisch gedetailleerde – contextafhankelijke en procesgerichte – onderzoek bieden inzicht in zowel de meer algemene opvattingen van de HoD's over hun managementidentiteiten als hun discursieve identiteitswerk in relatie

tot onderzoeksmanagement in het bijzonder. Dit laatste is iets waarvoor alle bestudeerde HoD's zich sterk inzetten, en is een voorbeeld van een academische activiteit die in belangrijke mate is beïnvloed door managerialistische ideeën.

De analyses tonen de verschillende discoursen die kenmerkend waren voor de gedeelde discursieve omgevingen van de HoD's, waaronder nationale discoursen (bijv. discoursen over het Britse *Research Excellence Framework* als het nationale onderzoeksbeoordelingskader en discoursen met betrekking tot de voormalige *polytechnic* status van NewU), universitaire discoursen (bijv. discoursen over NewU's verleden, leiderschap en prioriteiten, ook in relatie tot onderzoek) en facultaire discoursen (bijvoorbeeld discoursen over het (onderzoeks)management en de kenmerken van de faculteit). Daarnaast wordt een scala aan afdelingsspecifieke discoursen (bijv. discoursen die verwijzen naar afdelings(onderzoeks)culturen, -structuren en -prestaties) en individuele HoD-specifieke extra- en intra-organisatorische discoursen beschreven (bijv. discoursen over de ervaringen van de HoDs voordat ze HoDs werden en die met betrekking tot hun organisatorische rollen buiten hun afdelingen).

De veelheid aan discursieve identiteitsbronnen waarover de HoD's beschikten, resulteerde in talloze identiteitsspanningen, waarvan sommige door alle drie de HoD's werden ervaren, terwijl andere door een of twee van hen werden ervaren. De geïdentificeerde identiteitsspanningen zijn gegroepeerd in acht brede categorieën, waarbij wrijvingen voortkomen uit: 1) het gegeven dat de HoD's zowel managers als academici zijn; 2) verschillen tussen de opvattingen van HoD's en de discoursen van universiteiten en/of faculteiten over de rol van een HoD; 3) de discrepantie tussen de visies van de HoD's en de bestaande uitdagende – cultuur-, operatie- en/of prestatiegerelateerde – afdelingsrealiteit; 4) de verschillende opvattingen over het leiden van een afdeling; 5) de aanvullende managementfuncties die de HoD's uitvoeren; 6) de discrepantie tussen de toewijding van de HoD's aan onderzoeksmanagement en de

nationale, universitaire en facultaire discoursen; 7) de discrepanties tussen de toewijding van de HoD's aan onderzoeksmanagement en departementale discoursen; en 8) de toegenomen focus van de universiteit op onderzoek.

De reacties van de HoDs op deze identiteitsspanningen, indicatief voor discursieve identiteitsconstructie die de kern vormt van de overkoepelende onderzoeksvraag van dit proefschrift, wijzen op een variëteit aan managementidentiteiten. De studie laat zien hoe het samenspel van complexe sets van discursieve identiteitsbronnen die beschikbaar waren voor individuele HoD's hen ertoe bracht om bepaalde managementidentiteiten te construeren – en niet andere. De studie verduidelijkt, onder andere, hoe de verschillende omstandigheden van individuele HoD's ertoe leidden dat sommige gedeelde discursieve identiteitsbronnen op verschillende manieren werden ingebed in de managementidentiteiten van elke HoD. Begrippen die de verklaringen vormden voor de reacties van de HoD's op identiteitsspanningen – zoals de ervaringen van de HoD's met identiteits(des)integratie, liminaliteit, hun gebruik van antagonistische discursieve identiteitsbronnen en de wisselwerking tussen structuur en agency – maakten belangrijke wetenschappelijke inzichten mogelijk. Deze inzichten, vooral met betrekking tot ambivalenties en complexiteiten, kwamen onvoldoende naar voren in eerder onderzoek naar managementervaringen van AMM's. De bevindingen laten zien: hoe de managementverantwoordelijkheden van AMM's positief kunnen bijdragen aan hun zelfgevoel als academici; hoe AMM's op een complementaire manier kunnen putten uit managerialistische initiatieven en academische waarden, of tegelijkertijd managerialistische discoursen en opvattingen gebruiken die elkaar tegenspreken, en de implicaties die dit heeft voor de managementidentiteit van individuele AMM's; hoe de ambivalente houding van AMM's ten opzichte van managementinitiatieven de variabiliteit van hun ervaringen met identiteitsspanningen beïnvloedt; hoe AMM's een antagonistische houding kunnen aannemen ten opzichte van managementinitiatieven die door dezelfde bron mogelijk worden gemaakt, of ten opzichte van analoge

managementinitiatieven die voortkomen uit verschillende bronnen; dat de eenheden waarop AMM's toezicht houden, eerder verdeeld dan verenigd kunnen zijn, en hoe dit leidt tot verschillende identiteitsspanningen; hoe AMM's organisatorische verandering kunnen stimuleren die tegelijkertijd zowel hun superieuren als degenen die ze managen uitdaagt; en dat de managementidentiteiten van AMM's kunnen worden geïnformeerd door identiteitsbronnen die niet aansluiten bij de managerialistische of collegiale opvattingen.

(Participant) Information Sheet and Consent Form Templates³⁰

³⁰ Information included in the original (participant) information sheets and consent forms that could reveal the university where the fieldwork was conducted were removed or anonymized.

Participant Information Sheet

(Shadowing including qualitative interviews and observation)

Project working title: The curious works of academic middle managers: researching identity work as a form of institutional work

Researcher: Meta Gorup, PhD Candidate at the Centre for Higher Education Governance Ghent, Ghent University, and Visiting Scholar at New University

Supervisor: Professor Jeroen Huisman, Centre for Higher Education Governance Ghent, Ghent University

New University Contact: information eliminated for the purposes of anonymisation

Invitation to participate

I would like to invite you to participate in this original research project. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will have no detrimental effect on your relationship with New University. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Purpose of the research

It has been recognised that heads of departments (HoDs) play one of the most crucial roles in universities, but it has remained unexplored how this is enacted in practice. This research aims at understanding different roles and practices of HoDs in their everyday working life. It looks at the interactions HoDs are involved in, and tries to gain insight into the perceptions of individuals involved in these interactions. This objective is to be reached by understanding the processes of identity construction of individual HoDs since identity is, according to the literature, an important medium in understanding the relationship between individuals and their environments.

How long will the study last?

The research is expected to take place in March and April 2015 and from September 2015 to April 2016, approximately nine months in total. Four to seven HoDs will be shadowed and approximately 20-30 other university staff members will be interviewed. Shadowing will also involve observation of individuals who will be interacting with HoDs during the process of shadowing.

How will the data be collected?

The three main research techniques to be used are so-called 'shadowing' (including observation) and qualitative interviews.

'Shadowing' is a technique which involves the researcher's observation of individuals throughout their working day. This will imply 'following' an HoD as they go about their daily errands (including work in the office, potential teaching duties, formal and informal meetings, breaks) during up to 10 working days.

The HoD will be invited for three qualitative in-depth interviews, one at the beginning, the second in the middle, and the third at the end of shadowing. The interviews will focus on HoDs' reflections on their position, primarily in relation to their roles, tasks, and relationships with their colleagues on higher, lower, and comparable levels of organisation. The interviews will last approximately 60-90 minutes but the duration will also depend on how much time the individual HoD will have on disposal.

How will the data be used?

The data will be analysed according to the chosen theoretical framework. Research results will be presented in a doctoral dissertation and other scholarly publications.

Ethics, confidentiality and anonymity

This research project complies with the 1998 Data Protection Act and has received the approval of the Ethical Committee at New University. Confidentiality is an important aspect of the research and is discussed in depth with each participant to ensure that no disadvantage occurs as a result of the research. No organisation or individual, other than the researcher named above, will have access to audio recordings, transcripts and field notes. The identities of individuals and organisations will be anonymised. Individual participants will have the right to review typed transcripts of their interviews and may keep copies of these for their own purposes. Additionally, participants will have an opportunity to comment on, provide additional information, adjust or withdraw parts deemed sensitive from the texts intended for public dissemination (doctoral dissertation and other scholarly publications), which may include verbatim quotes and/or descriptions.

Agreeing to take part:

If you are happy to take part, please respond to the invitation e-mail and a suitable shadowing period and interview times will be arranged with you. If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign the Consent Form attached before you are shadowed and/or interviewed. You will be given a copy of both the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form to keep. You are free to temporarily or fully withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason. In this case, previously collected data deemed sensitive or detrimental may be withdrawn from the study. This can be done by notifying the researcher up to one week after data collection has taken place or when provided with the interview transcript.

Researcher Contact:

E-mail: meta.gorup@ugent.be

Mobile: +32 479 53 73 28

Supervisor Contact:

E-mail: jeroen.huisman@ugent.be

Phone: +32 9 264 6978

New University Contact:

E-mail: information eliminated for the purposes of anonymisation

Phone: information eliminated for the purposes of anonymisation

Consent for Participation

(Shadowing including qualitative interviews and observation)

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Meta Gorup who is PhD Candidate at Ghent University (Belgium) and Visiting Scholar at New University. I understand that the project is designed to explore different roles and practices of heads of departments in their everyday working life, interactions they are involved in, and to gather insights into the perceptions of individuals involved in these interactions.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary and choosing not to take part will have no detrimental effect on my relationship with New University. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. I will be given the option to withdraw previously collected data deemed sensitive or detrimental. This can be done by notifying the researcher up to one week after data collection has taken place or when provided with the interview transcript.
2. Participation involves being interviewed and observed by Meta Gorup, PhD Candidate at Ghent University and Visiting Scholar at New University. The time and duration of observation will be previously agreed upon. The interview(s) will last approximately 60-90 minutes. The interview(s) may be extended only with my express agreement. Notes will be written during the interview and/or the observation. An audio recording of the interview and a transcript will be made. I will be given an opportunity to review the interview transcript as well as comment on, provide additional information, adjust or withdraw parts deemed sensitive from the texts intended for public dissemination.
3. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview and/or observation, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview, and/or have the right to ask the researcher to pause or stop her observation.
4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name or institution in any reports using information obtained from the interview and/or observation, and that my anonymity as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.
5. Transcripts, field notes or raw data of any kind will not be shared with any other person or institution.
6. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

7. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Signature _____ Printed Name _____

Researcher Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher Contact:

E-mail: meta.gorup@ugent.be

Mobile: +32 479 53 73 28

Supervisor Contact:

E-mail: jeroen.huisman@ugent.be

Phone: +32 9 264 6978

New University Contact:

E-mail: information eliminated for the purposes of anonymisation

Phone: information eliminated for the purposes of anonymisation

Participant Information Sheet (Observation)

Project working title: The curious works of academic middle managers: researching identity work as a form of institutional work

Researcher: Meta Gorup, PhD Candidate at the Centre for Higher Education Governance Ghent, Ghent University, and Visiting Scholar at New University

Supervisor: Professor Jeroen Huisman, Centre for Higher Education Governance Ghent, Ghent University

New University Contact: information eliminated for the purposes of anonymisation

Invitation to participate

I would like to invite you to participate in this original research project. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will have no detrimental effect on your relationship with New University. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Purpose of the research

It has been recognised that heads of departments (HoDs) play one of the most crucial roles in universities, but it has remained unexplored how this is enacted in practice. This research aims at understanding different roles and practices of HoDs in their everyday working life. It looks at the interactions HoDs are involved in, and tries to gain insight into the perceptions of individuals involved in these interactions. This objective is to be reached by understanding the processes of identity construction of individual HoDs since identity is, according to the literature, an important medium in understanding the relationship between individuals and their environments.

How long will the study last?

The research is expected to take place in March and April 2015 and from September 2015 to April 2016, approximately nine months in total. Four to seven HoDs will be shadowed and approximately 20-30 other university staff members will be interviewed. Shadowing will also involve observation of individuals who will be interacting with the HoDs during the process of shadowing. Your participation in this research would involve the latter, namely observation during an HoD's interaction with you (and possibly other individuals).

How will the data be collected and how will I be involved?

'Shadowing' is a technique which involves the researcher's observation of individuals throughout their working day. This will imply 'following' an HoD as they go about their daily errands during up to 10 consecutive working days. In doing so, other people may be observed while interacting with the shadowed HoD. By agreeing to participate in this research you agree to be observed when in interaction with the shadowed HoD (e.g. in a meeting). Attention will be primarily paid to HoDs' interactions and the roles they take on in interactions with different people.

In addition to shadowing and observation, qualitative interviews will be conducted.

How will the data be used?

The data will be analysed according to the chosen theoretical framework. Research results will be presented in a doctoral dissertation and other scholarly publications.

Ethics, confidentiality and anonymity

This research project complies with the 1998 Data Protection Act and has received the approval of the Ethical Committee at New University. Confidentiality is an important aspect of the research and is discussed in depth with each participant to ensure that no disadvantage occurs as a result of the research. No organisation or individual, other than the researcher named above, will have access to audio recordings, transcripts and field notes. The identities of individuals and organisations will be anonymised. Individual participants will have the right to review typed transcripts of their interviews and may keep copies of these for their own purposes. Additionally, participants will have an opportunity to comment on, provide additional information, adjust or withdraw parts deemed sensitive from the texts intended for public dissemination (doctoral dissertation and other scholarly publications), which may include verbatim quotes and/or descriptions.

Agreeing to take part:

If you are happy to take part, please respond to the invitation e-mail. If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign the Consent Form attached before you are observed. In case you will give oral consent but will not manage to fill in the Consent Form before the meeting, you are kindly asked to do so after the meeting. You will be given a copy of both the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form to keep. You are free to temporarily or fully withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason by asking the researcher to leave the meeting location. Previously collected data deemed sensitive or detrimental may be withdrawn from the study. This can be done by notifying the researcher up to one week after data collection has taken place.

Researcher Contact:

E-mail: meta.gorup@ugent.be

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Supervisor Contact:

E-mail: jeroen.huisman@ugent.be

Phone: +32 9 264 6978

New University Contact:

E-mail: information eliminated for the purposes of anonymisation

Phone: information eliminated for the purposes of anonymisation

Consent for Participation (Observation)

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Meta Gorup who is PhD Candidate at Ghent University (Belgium) and Visiting Scholar at New University. I understand that the project is designed to explore different roles and practices of heads of departments in their everyday working life, interactions they are involved in, and to gather insights into the perceptions of individuals involved in these interactions.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary and choosing not to take part will have no detrimental effect on my relationship with New University. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. I will be given the option to withdraw previously collected data deemed sensitive or detrimental. This can be done by notifying the researcher up to one week after data collection has taken place.
2. Participation involves being observed by Meta Gorup, PhD Candidate at Ghent University and Visiting Scholar at New University. Notes will be written during the observation. I will be given an opportunity to comment on, provide additional information, adjust or withdraw parts – pertaining to me – deemed sensitive from the texts intended for public dissemination.
3. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the observation, I have the right to ask the researcher to temporarily or fully stop her observation.
4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name or institution in any reports using information obtained from the observation, and that my anonymity as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.
5. Field notes or raw data of any kind will not be shared with any other person or institution.
6. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
7. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Signature _____ Printed Name _____

Researcher Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher Contact:

E-mail: meta.gorup@ugent.be

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Participant Information Sheet

(Qualitative interview)

Project working title: The curious works of academic middle managers: researching identity work as a form of institutional work

Researcher: Meta Gorup, PhD Candidate at the Centre for Higher Education Governance Ghent, Ghent University, and Visiting Scholar at New University

Supervisor: Professor Jeroen Huisman, Centre for Higher Education Governance Ghent, Ghent University

New University Contact: information eliminated for the purposes of anonymisation

Invitation to participate

I would like to invite you to participate in this original research project. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will have no detrimental effect on your relationship with New University. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Purpose of the research

It has been recognised that heads of departments (HoDs) play one of the most crucial roles in universities, but it has remained unexplored how this is enacted in practice. This research aims at understanding different roles and practices of HoDs in their everyday working life. It looks at the interactions HoDs are involved in, and tries to gain insight into the perceptions of individuals involved in these interactions. This objective is to be reached by understanding the processes of identity construction of individual HoDs since identity is, according to the literature, an important medium in understanding the relationship between individuals and their environments.

How long will the study last?

The research is expected to take place in March and April 2015 and from September 2015 to April 2016, approximately nine months in total. Four to seven HoDs will be shadowed and approximately 20-30 other university staff members will be interviewed. Shadowing will also involve observation of individuals who will be interacting with the HoDs during the process of shadowing.

How will the data be collected and how will I be involved?

Your participation in this research would involve a qualitative in-depth interview. The interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes but the duration will also depend on how much time the individual interviewee will have on disposal.

Main topics to be addressed during the interview are: roles and tasks within the department, faculty, academic unit, university; perception of and reflection on your position within the working environment; main issues in carrying out your daily tasks and sources of influences on their practices; your position and attitudes towards higher, lower, and parallel organisational ranks.

The other two research techniques to be used are so-called 'shadowing' of HoDs and observation of other university staff members involved in interactions with HoDs. 'Shadowing' is a technique which involves the researcher's observation of individuals throughout their working day. This will imply 'following' an HoD as they go about their daily errands.

How will the data be used?

The data will be analysed according to the chosen theoretical framework. Research results will be presented in a doctoral dissertation and other scholarly publications.

Ethics, confidentiality and anonymity

This research project complies with the 1998 Data Protection Act and has received the approval of the Ethical Committee at New University. Confidentiality is an important aspect of the research and is discussed in depth with each participant to ensure that no disadvantage occurs as a result of the research. No organisation or individual, other than the researcher named above, will have access to audio recordings, transcripts and field notes. The identities of individuals and organisations will be anonymised. Individual participants will have the right to review typed transcripts of their interviews and may keep copies of these for their own purposes. Additionally, participants will have an opportunity to comment on, provide additional information, adjust or withdraw parts deemed sensitive

from the texts intended for public dissemination (doctoral dissertation and other scholarly publications), which may include verbatim quotes and/or descriptions.

Agreeing to take part:

If you are happy to take part, please respond to the invitation e-mail and a suitable interview time and place will be arranged with you. You are free to choose the location of the interview so as to make sure that your anonymity will not be at stake. If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign the Consent Form attached before you are interviewed. You will be given a copy of both the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form to keep. You are free to temporarily or fully withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason. In this case, previously collected data deemed sensitive or detrimental may be withdrawn from the study. This can be done by notifying the researcher up to one week after data collection has taken place or when provided with the interview transcript.

Researcher Contact:

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Supervisor Contact:

E-mail: jeroen.huisman@ugent.be

Phone: +32 9 264 6978

New University Contact:

E-mail: information eliminated for the purposes of anonymisation

Phone: information eliminated for the purposes of anonymisation

Consent for Participation

(Qualitative interview)

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Meta Gorup who is PhD Candidate at Ghent University (Belgium) and Visiting Scholar at New University. I understand that the project is designed to explore different roles and practices of heads of departments in their everyday working life, interactions they are involved in, and to gather insights into the perceptions of individuals involved in these interactions.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary and choosing not to take part will have no detrimental effect on my relationship with New University. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. I will be given the option to withdraw previously collected data deemed sensitive or detrimental. This can be done by notifying the researcher up to one week after data collection has taken place or when provided with the interview transcript.
2. Participation involves being interviewed by Meta Gorup, PhD Candidate at Ghent University and Visiting Scholar at New University. The interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes. The interview may be extended only with my express agreement. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio recording of the interview and a transcript will be made. I will be given an opportunity to review the interview transcript as well as comment on, provide additional information, adjust or withdraw parts deemed sensitive from the texts intended for public dissemination.
3. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name or institution in any reports using information obtained from the interview, and that my anonymity as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.
5. Transcripts or raw data of any kind will not be shared with any other person or institution.
6. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
7. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Signature _____ Printed Name _____

Researcher Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher Contact:

E-mail: meta.gorup@ugent.be

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Supervisor Contact:

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Phone: +32 9 264 6978

New University Contact:

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Phone: information eliminated for the purposes of anonymisation

Information Sheet

(Document query)

Project working title: The curious works of academic middle managers: researching identity work as a form of institutional work

Researcher: Meta Gorup, PhD Candidate at the Centre for Higher Education Governance Ghent, Ghent University, and Visiting Scholar at New University

Supervisor: Professor Jeroen Huisman, Centre for Higher Education Governance Ghent, Ghent University

New University Contact: information eliminated for the purposes of anonymisation

Purpose of the research

This research aims at understanding different roles and practices of heads of departments (HoDs) in their everyday working life. It looks at the interactions HoDs are involved in, and tries to gain insight into the perceptions of individuals involved in these interactions.

Method

The main methods to be used are observation and interviewing. The requested documents will be used as background information to contextualize the studied processes and will allow the researcher to prepare for the research undertaken in the field.

Ethics, confidentiality and anonymity

This research project has received the approval of the Ethical Committee at New University. All collected documents will be treated confidentially and will be fully anonymised.

Researcher Contact:

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